Prejudiced attitudes in university students towards irregular immigrants: an exploratory study

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Abstract

Introduction. The main objective of the research was to analyze the existence of prejudice among university students of Melilla Campus (Spain) towards migrants who cross the border illegally. The role of educators and health professionals has a special interest in this context; they are who will have more contact with them. This requires the development of research on this subject.

Method. The study focuses on knowing if there are prejudiced attitudes among university students, using the scale of subtle and blatant prejudice towards illegal immigrants in the Autonomous city of Melilla. The sample consists of 205 students. It has been used empirical-analytical methodology to be an ex post facto correlational study in which descriptive and inferential analyzes were performed.

Results. The results show no significant differences regarding the prejudicial attitudes and gender variable. By contrast, the data indicates that the variable qualifications and culture of origin affect the attitudes which university students show about migrants.

Discussion and Conclusion. The results of the study highlight the existence of college students with certain amount of prejudice against irregular migrants. Concerned that students with social qualifications, such as primary education and nursing show this type of ratings to people who, for various reasons, have had to emigrate from their countries (either by poverty, wars, political persecution or sexual orientation).

Keywords: Subtle prejudice; blatant prejudice; attitudes; illegal migrants.

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Las actitudes prejuiciosas del alumnado universitario hacia los inmigrantes en situación irregular: un estudio exploratorio

Resumen

Introducción. El objetivo principal de la investigación fue analizar la existencia de prejuicios en la población universitaria del Campus de Melilla (España) hacia los migrantes que cruzan la frontera en situación irregular. El papel de los educadores y el personal sanitario cobra un especial interés en este contexto; ya que son ellos los que van a tener un mayor contacto con los ellos. Esto hace necesario el desarrollo de investigaciones sobre esta temática.

Método. El estudio se centra en conocer si existen actitudes prejuiciosas en estudiantes universitarios, usando la *Escala de prejuicio sutil y manifiesto* hacia los migrantes en situación irregular en la Ciudad Autónoma de Melilla. La muestra está compuesta por 205 estudiantes de los Grados en Educación y Enfermería que se imparten en el Campus de Melilla. Se ha utilizado una metodología empírico-analítica siendo un estudio Ex Post Facto de tipo correlacional en el que se realizaron análisis descriptivos e inferenciales.

Resultados. Los resultados muestran que no existen diferencias significativas en torno a las actitudes prejuiciosas y a la variable de género. Por el contrario, los datos indican que la varible titulación y cultura de origen inciden en las actitudes que los universitarios muestran hacia las personas migrantes.

Discusión. Los resultados del estudio ponen de relieve la existencia de estudiantes universitarios con cierta carga de prejuicios hacia los migrantes en situación irregular. Preocupa que estudiantes de titulaciones de áreas tan sociales como la educación y la sanidad muestren este tipo de valoraciones hacia personas que, por diversos motivos, han tenido que emigrar de sus países (ya sea por pobreza, guerras, persecuciones políticas o por orientación sexual).

Palabras Clave: Prejuicio sutil; prejuicio manifiesto; actitudes; migrantes en situación irregular.

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Introduction

Spain has been under irregular migration pressure for several years now, with Melilla and Ceuta being its main gateways into Europe. The number of people crossing our borders every year is increasing. Between 2005 and 2011 there was a sharp increase in irregular migrants coming into Spain, and a steady decrease in following years. In 2013 there was a 48.5% rise in migrants passing through these two border cities (*Europa Press*, 2014), while in 2014 there was a 200% increase (Gallego, 2014), and this tendency continued in 2015 (FRONTEX, 2015). The massive influx of irregular migrants into the cities has meant that the sense of community has become distorted, giving rise to an upsurge or exacerbation of racist, xenophobic or prejudiced attitudes directed to persons in this situation. These terms relate inevitably to a concept that is common to them all: attitude.

Attitudes towards immigation

In life we use the term *attitude* to refer to different things, especially when we talk about the behaviour of others, but what is attitude? From the social psychology perspective, this term has evolved over the years and has been adapted and defined according to different paradigms that have come to the fore (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953; Hovland, 1959): from Allport's (1935) proposal, for example, which defined it as “a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive and dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related” (p. 810), to Ovejero-Bernal's (2010) position, which defined it as “a learnt predisposition to respond in a consciously favourable or unfavourable way towards a given object (physical, persons, groups)” (p. 192). However, in all of these definitions we may observe a number of common features, such as: it is a construct which is not directly observable (Ubillos, Páez, & Mayordomo, 2004); it implies a readiness to respond; it is learnt and lasts over time (Worchel, Cooper, Goethals, & Olson, 2002); it presents an organized multidimensional structure; it is made up of cognitive, affective and conative elements (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960).

In addition, over the years researchers have offered numerous models in an effort to explain attitudinal dimensions. Amongst them, Petty and Cacioppo's (1981) unidimensional one is outstanding, as is the tridimensional one, first put forward by Rosenberg and Hovland (1960). At the present time, the latter is one of the most accepted models, also known as the

ABC (Affective, Behavioural, and Cognitive) model. This model affirms that attitudes are made up of three basic components: affective (a set of sensations or feelings that the object arouses in the subject; behavioural (the subject's own intentions and dispositions towards an object); and cognitive (an amount of information that the subject possesses about the object of his/her attitude).

When talking about attitudes, especially racist ones directed towards a group of outsiders, we cannot help but think about concepts such as stereotype, discrimination, and prejuduce. Upon the foundation of Eagly and Chaiken's (1993) theories, and following the multdimensional proposal of the ABC model, we can link each of these concepts to one of the dimensions proposed. In this way, the model encompasses stereotype within the cognitive dimension (Stephan, 1989; Macrae, Stangor, & Hewstone, 1996); discrimination within the behavioural dimension (Banaji & Gelman, 2013); and prejudice within the affective dimension (Devien, 1995; Stevens, 2016).

First, *stereotype*, as a concept, was introduced into social psychology by Lippmann (1922), who defined it as a preconceived mental image which is activated in individuals when they think about a social group. By contrast, *discrimination*, and its different forms, such as racism (modern, symbolic, classic), is defined as behaviour directed towards members of a group, not as a consequence of any action on their part, but simply for belonging to that group (Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick, & Esses, 2010). *Prejudices* may be considered as negative attitudes which are held towards other persons or groups. For Light, Keller, and Calhoun (1991), prejudice is a categorical readiness to accept or reject people because of their real or imagined social characteristics. It was in the decade of the 1920s that the concept of prejudice started to be taken into account, but it was in the 1990s that a new multidimensional perpective of the term came to the fore together with new methodologies and instruments that enabled its measurement (Cuadrado, 2007). From a group perspective, many theories which delve into the determinants of prejudice are widely accepted, amongst which the following stand out: contact theory (Allport, 1954), conflict theory (Sherif, 1966; Levine & Campbell, 1971), social identity thoery (Tajfel, 1978), and belief congruency theory (Rokeach, 1960).

The first of these, developed by Allport (1954), maintains that one of the factors which contributes to reducing hostility among groups is contact amongst them, although the mere fact of bringing together different groups in the same place does not in itself bring about this

reduction (Smith-Castro, 2011); the second theory, proposed initially by Sherif (1966), asserts that if two or more groups are in search of a scarce resource, a conflict will ensue that will turn into attitudes of hostility, prejudice or discrimination, thereby creating an atmosphere of animosity amongt them; the third thoery, put forward by Tajfel (1978), refers to the sense of similarity a subject perceives as regards others who are part of the same group, while in addition, he/she feels different from members of other groups (Morales & Yubero-Jiménez, 1999); and the fourth theory, posited by Rokeach (1960), affirms that in contexts in which there is no social pressure or in which this is not effective, beliefs are the only means of giving rise to racial or ethnic discrimination.

According to Falanga, De Caroly Sagone (2014), and Fedor (2014), *stereotypes* and *prejudices* are closely linked. In Gómez-Berrocal and Navas's (2000) investigation, the most prejudiced persons displayed the most negative sentiments towards the outgroup analysed. For this reason we introduced a list of descriptors with the aim of ascertaining what characteristics our participants assigned to irregular immigrants, that is, stereotypes. Pettigrew and Meertens (1995), building on Allport's (1954) theories, were the first to demonstrate that there is a clear difference between blatant prejudice and subtle prejudice. The former is the traditional type (vehement, close, and direct), while the latter is the modern type (cold, distant, and indirect). These authors devised a scale for the measurement of prejudices, consisting of two subscales, one for subtle prejudice and one for blatant prejudice. These subscales are in turn divided into different factors (perceived threat, opposition to intimate contact, defense of traditional values, cultural differences and exaggerated expression of positive emotions) detected in Pettigrew and Meertens's (1995) original study and corroborated by Rueda and Navas (1996).

Pettigrew and Meertens's (1995) scale established three groups into which most individuals can be classifiesd. They called the first group *equalitarians*, who obtained low scores in both subtle and blatant prejudice; they called the second group *subtles*, who obtained high scores on subtle prejudice and low scores on blatant prejudice; the third group is the so-called *bigots*, who scored highly on both the subtle and the blatant prejudice scales. Low scores on subtle prejudice and high scores on blatant prejudice attained by the same subject are considered erroneous and invalid because they do not comply with the structure of the construct un-

der measurement (Augoustinos, Walker, & Donaghue, 2014). Although research has shown a fall in scores indicating prejudice on the attitudes scale, the same thing has not happened in other aspects measured, such as discrimination. This indicates that prejudices have not in fact been decreasing, but have become concealed or are manifesting themselves indirectly (Molero, Navas, & Cuadrado, 2006). This leads us to think that the concept has evolved, and even though it may not be detected directly, it may emerge indirectly or in a subtle way. In addition, present circumtances mean that it is an ideal time to analyse this topic in depth.

At the present time in Western societies no-one openly recognises that they are prejudiced towards persons of other groups because they are of a different culture, ethnic origin or religion; but we must point out Morales and Moya's (1996) report that in answer to the question "Would you be reluctant to send your children to a school where half the pupils were black?" 80% of respondents in 1989 answered no, while in 1942 only 30% had given the same answer. Revealing one's prejudiced attitudes is not only socially undesirable but is even punishable by law. For this and other reasons prejudice does not now manifest itself clearly. In this regard, Montes (2008) pointed to "the dichonomy between the maintaining of prejudiced attitudes and the explicit rejection of the same, as it is socially undesirable to manifest prejudiced attitudes in our society" (p. 6). This concealment of prejudice has led several authors to posit the existence of new forms of prejudice, which they call subtle prejudice. This kind of prejudice, in spite of its subtlety, is no less harmful to the persons who are its object (Molero, Recio, García-Ael, Fuster, & Sanjuán, 2012).

Navas, Cuadrado, Molero, and Alemán (2000) found that subjects manifested more subtle prejudice towards Sub-Saharan and Maghrebi migrants, the latter group being viewed the most negatively. What is more, these authors concluded that new prejudiced attitudes are characterised by ambivalence. Subjects support positive future immigration policies, but they are not in favour of opening borders, and what is most significant is that when they find a non-racial justification they defend the controlled expulsion of migrants. In addition, they consider that the migrants' arrival has brought with it many negative consequences (rise in conflicts, delinquency, etc.) but at the same time, they recognise the migrants' contribution to local economic development and to the enhancement of our culture. Later, Navas, García, Rojas, Pumares, and Sánchez-Miranda (2006) again discovered the predominance of subtle prejudice over blatant prejudice and found that the highest prejudice scores (blatant or subtle) were related to a wish to exclude (and also to segregate in the case of affective prejudice) both

groups of migrants (Maghrebi and Sub-Saharan) while lower scores were associacted with a preference for their integration.

While some investigations have focused on the relations among groups, some have gone further and have attempted, for instance, to find links between subjects' subtle and blatant prejudice scores and their political leanings. In this respect, Gómez and Huici (1999) found that persons with a right wing orientation scored more highly on subtle prejudice than those who were left wing. Guardia and Nacarí (2013) discovered that many subjects scored more highly on the subtle form than on the blatant one. Similarly, persons who identified with right-wing political ideas presented less favourable attitudes towards social minorities than did those who identified with the left. In addition, persons who were negatively disposed towards outgroups tended to be against granting them more rights (Cárdenas, 2007; Cárdenas & Barrientos, 2008; Cárdenas, Music, Contreras, & Calderón, 2007; Cea D'Ancona, 2009).

Measuring attitudes and prejudices

The ways in which attitudes and prejudices have been measured over the last few years have changed, especially with regard to immigration (Etxeberria, Murua, Arrieta, Garmendia, & Etxeberria, 2012). We have gone from measuring prejudices in a direct way to a more subtle and indirect way, in line with social changes that have occurred over the last decade. Moreover, Núñez-Alarcón, Moreno-Jiménez, and Moral-Toranzo's (2011) studies into the relationship between religious orientation and ethnic prejudice concluded that there are correlations among religiousness in its most conservative forms, and homophobia, sexism, and religious intolerance, and that "the Religious Prejudice Scale" is a useful instrument for finding out about the complex religion-prejudice relationship" (p. 858). Sniderman and Tetlock (1986) analysed links between prejudice and scarcity of resources in society (poverty, crisis...) and concluded that prejudice is more evident in situations in which tensions among different social groups influence the distribution of economic resources. Brown and Hewstone (2005) came across a correlation between between ethnic and racial prejudice and negative attitudes towards other minorities. In this regard, persons who manifest prejudice towards ethnic minorities usually obtain high scores correlating with other measures of general prejudice (Dunbar, 1995), of sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1995; King, 2003), of prejudice towards women (Fiske & Von Herdy, 1992; Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995), towards homosexual persons (Cárdenas, 2007), and of antisemitism (Dunbar, 1995; Dunbar & Simonova, 2003).

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What is more, these persons usually have little contact or intimacy with persons belonging to outgroups. As regards connections between gender and ethnic prejudice, some research concludes that women tend to be less prejudiced than men (Cárdenas & Barrientos, 2008a, 2008b) and that younger women with a higher socio-economic level are less prejudiced than their male counterparts (World Values Survey, 2005).

Objetives

Little research has been conducted in such a singular context as the Autonomous City of Mellilla: it is particulary valuable considering the multicultural character of the city, as well as the fact that it is one of the southern borders of Europe and that our study has been carried out within the context the university. In this investigation we attempt to ascertain if prejudiced attitudes exist in university students towards irregular migrants in a multicultural context and in an atmosphere in which immigration seems to have become a main topic of interest in recent months.

Therefore the objectives of this investigation are: on the one hand, to ascertian the degree of prejudice felt by university students towards irregular migrants, and on the other, to analyse sociodemographic variables which might influence prejudices towards them. To be more precise, the sociodemographic variable of special interest in the study is the culture of origin of the participants, as the Autonomours City of Melilla is characterised by the coexistence of cultures (Merino & Ruiz-Román, 2005; Sánchez-Fernández, 2010), and by two predominant religions: the Christian religion (European culture) and the Islamic religion (Berber culture).

Method

Participants

A total of 205 students took part in the study, 40 men (19.5%) and 165 women (80.5%), aged between 18 and 28 years. All were enrolled at the *Facultad de Educación y Humanidades* (Faculty of Educuation and Humanties) and at the *Facultad de Enfermería* (Faculty of Nursing) at the Melilla Campus of the University of Granada, taking the following degree courses: *Educación Social* (Social Education, N = 70), *Educación Infantil* (Pre-school Teacher Education, N = 18), *Educación Primaria* (Primary School Teacher Education, N = 32), *Enfermería* (Nursing, N = 50), and *Itinerarios Curriculares Concretos de Educación*

Primaria e Infantil, ICC (Specific Curricular Itineraries for Pre-School and Primary Education, N = 35). One hundred and twenty-five participants were from Europe, 71 were of Berber origin, two were Jewish, and four were Hindu. The selection criterion was participants' degree course, favouring those after which graduates will have most contact with migrants; therefore the sample of participants was intentionally not random.

Instruments

We used the Blatant and Subtle Prejudice Scale (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), which has been validated internationally by the authors, and in a Spanish context by Rueda and Navas (1996). This scale has 20 items, 10 for subtle prejudice and 10 for blatant prejudice. Participants indicate the degree to which they agree/disagree with each item, ranging from “In total disagreement” (1) to “In total agreement” (5). The authors proposed two subcategories for blatant prejudice and three for subtle prejudice. In addition, we added a section for sociodemographical data.

Although in the majority of investigations means are used to separate particpants into different typologies, we opted for a more restrictive criterion, namely, we selected participants who scored over the 75th percentile (see Table 1). By this method we found that bigots are those who score highly on both scales, that is to say, on the subtle subscale the score is greater than or equal to 30, and on the blatant scale the score is higher than or equal to 27. In the case of the subtles, the score is low on blatant, but high on subtle: on the subtle scale they score 30 or over, and 27 or less on the blatant scale. Finally, the equalitarians are those who present low scores on both scales: on the subtle scale the score is less than 30, and on the blatant scale it is less than 27. Because of incongruency with the construct, some participants were discarded as they scored less than 30 on the subtle scale, and over 27 on the blatant scale. See Table 1.

Table 1. *Quartiles for subtle prejudice and for blatant prejudice*

		Subtle	*Blatant*
N		205	205
Mean		25.4	22.3
	25	21	18
Percentiles	50	25	21
	75	*30*	*27*

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As regards reliability of the Blatant and Subtle Prejudice Scale as measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the subtle prejudice scale obtained α = .875, and the blatant scale presented α = .813, for the total answers analysed together. These data demonstrate the reliability of the internal consistency of the scale used. Although this measure has been widely employed in sociological research, we considered it necessary to complement it with another kind of analysis to avoid bias of the test itself (Sijtsma, 2008), such as indeces of composite reliability and the average variance extracted. To calculate composite reliablity (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. Results showed a CR of .922 and an AVE of .545 for subtle prejudice; and a CR of .908 and an AVE of .504 for blatant prejudice.

List of positive and negative feelings and emotions aroused by the irregular migrant, extracted from Gómez and Huici (1999). Participants select from 1 to 5 on this list of feelings and emotions, in which 1 means "not at all", 2 means "a little", 3 means "somewhat", 4 means "quite a lot", and 5 means "a lot." Feelings and emotions are grouped into positive (attraction, sympathy, and pity) and negative (hatred, hostility, insecurity, fear, envy, discomfort, and disgust), and respondents are not obliged to answer all items.

Procedure

Data were collected in class time, following the authors' instructions. The research was presented to students as an investigation into their opinions about irregular migrants in the city. Participation was voluntary and the questionnaire was completed anonymously. Time taken was approximately 20 to 25 minutes. Teachers had given their permission previously for the quesionnaire to be completed in their classes.

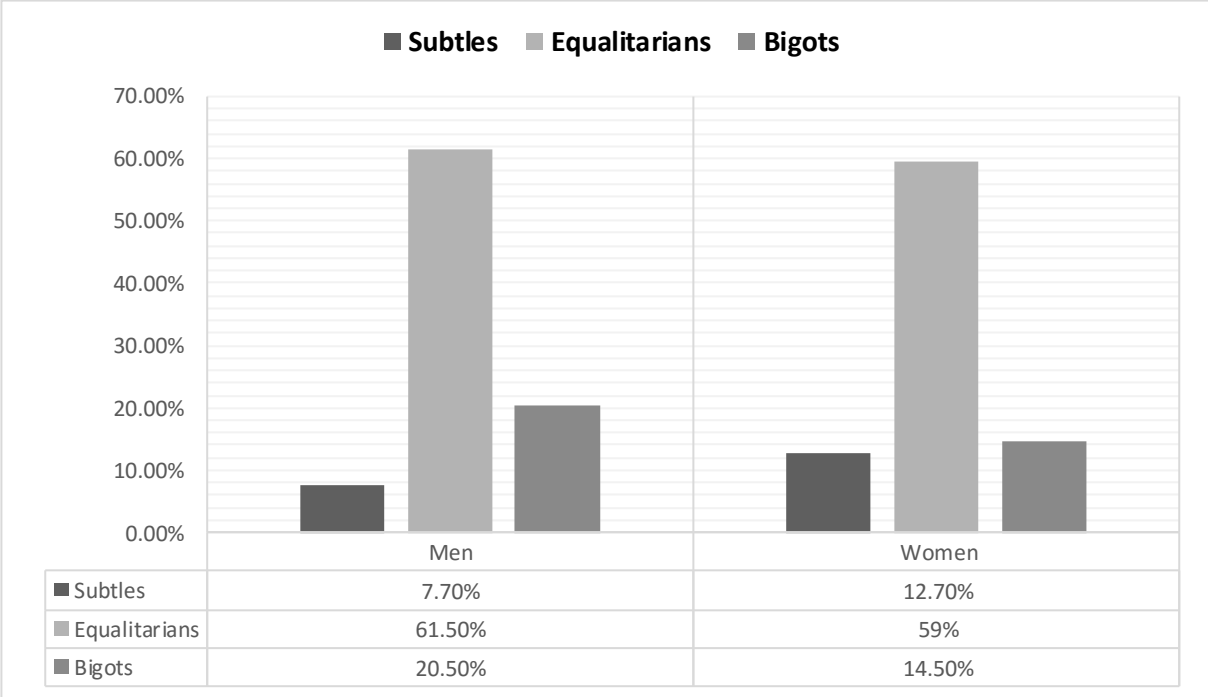
Data Analysis

Data were analysed by means of the 22.0 version of SPSS (*Statistical Package for the Social Sciences*). Descriptive statistics and reliability analyses were carried using this software. Once the adjustment of the normal distribution of scores had been contrasted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test with Lilliefors and Shapiro-Wilk's correction; homoscedasticity by means of Levene's test; and the independence of cases by means of the Rachas test, statistical

contrast analyses were conducted (*Student's t-test* and *ANOVA*) to ascertain the existence or not of statistically signficant differences among the different groups of participants. In order to detect significativity a confidence interval of 95% was used.

Results

Attending to the cut off points shown in Table 1, we obtained the following results for the different variables analysed (see Figures 2 and 3). 12.70% of the participants were considered invalid, 60% were considered equalitarians, 11.70% were subtles, and 12.70% were bigots.



	Men	Women
Subtles	7.70%	12.70%
Equalitarians	61.50%	59%
Bigots	20.50%	14.50%

Figure 2. Typology of participants classified by gender

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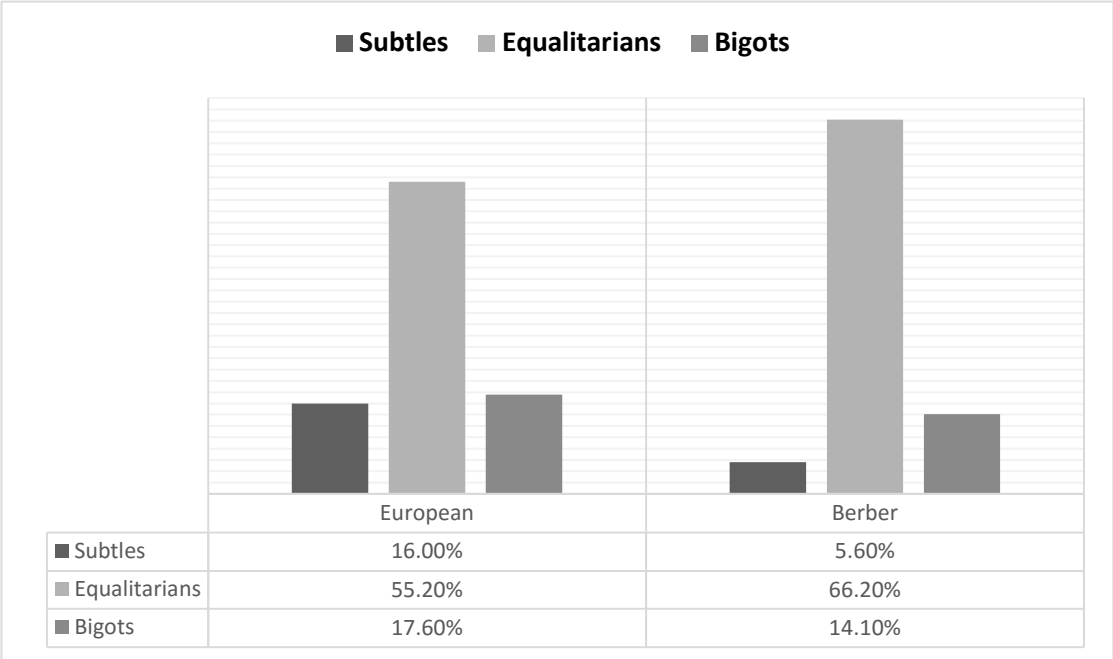

	European	Berber
Subtles	16.00%	5.60%
Equalitarians	55.20%	66.20%
Bigots	17.60%	14.10%

Figure 3. Typology of participants based on culture of origin

The mean score on the blatant prejudice scale was 27.17 (standard deviation 4.17 and median 27), and the mean score on the subtle prejudice scale was 28.52 (standard deviation .46 and median 29). Results show that the difference between the two scores was statistically significant [$t(205)= 4.04$; $p= .001$], that is to say, the number of participants with subtle prejudice was greater than the number of those who manifested blatant or traditional prejudice. The correlation between the scores on the two scales was statistically significant at .570 ($p = .000$).

We then attempted to ascertain if there were significant differences as regards the culture of origin of the students. For this analysis we focused on the two major cultures who made up the sample, European and Berber (an ethnic group indigenous to North Africa, *Imazighen* in the Berber language). Data indicated that there were differences in subtle prejudice but not in blatant prejudice. Berber participants displayed less subtle prejudice (Table 2).

Tabla 2. *Student's t-test for European and Berber participants*

	Ethnic group	*Mean*	*t*	*p*
Subtle	European (125)	29.18	2.215	.028

	Berber (71)	24.00		
Blatant	European (125)	22.71	1.272	N.S.
	Berber (71)	21.36		

Finally a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted taking students' degree course as factor, with subtle prejudice scores and blatant prejudice scores as dependent variables. As a measure of effect size the partial eta-squared coefficient (η_p^2) was employed, as this is one of the most frequently-used procedures in education research (Sun, Pan, & Wang, 2010). For the interpretaion of effect sizes we followed the criterion established in Cohen's (1998, 1994) research, which suggested the following guidelines: values of between .2 and .3 indicate a small effect, of about .5 indicate a moderate effect, and values of over .8 indicate a large effect. In investigations in the education context, following Morales (2012), a value of about .30 is considered noteworthy.

Once the effect of the degree course variable was controlled for [λWilks = .741, F (7, 885 = 10; $p < .000$, $\eta_p^2 = .139$; small effect size], data indicate that there was a statistically significant effect of the interaction between the independent variable (degree course students belonged to) and the dependent ones (the kinds of prejudices they had). As regards data referring to each dependent variable individually, there were statistically significant differences depending on the type of prejudice possessed, obtaining [F (9, 031) = 17.94, p = .000, η_p^2 = .156; small effect size] for subtle prejudice, and [F(8, 453) =17.94, p = .000, η_p^2 = .147; small effect size] for blatant prejudice (see Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3. *Means for subtle prejudice and for blatant prejudice for each degree course*

Degree course	*Subtle prejudice*	*Blatant prejudice*
Social Education	22.41	19.84
Pre-school Teacher Education	27.00	25.94
ICC	25.30	21.60
Nursing	28.14	22.06
Primary Teacher Education	28.06	27.00

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Tabla 4. *Summary of the MANOVA for the factor degree course on the dependent variables subtle prejudice and blatant prejudice*

Effect	*Type of Prejudice*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*Sig.*	η_p^2	*Observed Power*
Degree course	Subtle	25.44	6.614	9.031	.000	.156	.999
	Blatant	22.25	7.016	8.453	.000	.147	.999

*The difference between means is significant at the $p \leq .05$ level.

A Mann-Whitney U Test ($n < 30$) detected differences between means situated at the two extremes, subtles and bigots. Results show the existence of significant differences in two feelings, specifically, attraction and pity. In the former, attraction, subtles obtained the highest scores ($M_{subtle} = 2$). In the latter, pity, the subtles also scored most highly ($M_{subtle} = 3.71$). See Table 5.

Tabla 5. *Mann-Whitney U Test for feelings in accordnace with participants' subtle or blatant prejudice tendencies (subtles or bigots)*

	Subtles (*M*)	Bigots (*M*)	*U*	*p* <.
Hatred	1.13	1.30	296.5	.182
Attraction	2	1.23	171	**.**001
Hostility	1.64	1.83	266	.198
Fear	2.04	2.56	277.5	.067
Envy	1.04	1	330	.253
Sympathy	2.71	2.32	258	.192
Discomfort	2.18	2.42	296	.399
Disgust	1.27	1.68	298	.345
Pity	3.71	2.94	251.5	.034
Insecurity	2.63	2.84	355.5	.628

Discussion and Conclusions

Our results allow us to confirm that they are comparable to those observed in the original studies and in different adaptations carried out in different countries (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995; Navas, Cuadrado, Molero, & Alemán, 2000; Cárdenas, Music, Contreras, Yeomans, & Calderón, 2007).

As regards the typology of the participants, we have found that most of them, in line with Pettigrew and Meertens's (1995) proposal, may be classified as equalitarians (60%). We have observed that the percentage of bigots is greater than that of subtles. This indicates that participants do not mind openly admitting their prejudiced beliefs towards irregular immigrants, although the proportion in relation to the sample is not noteworthy. These results differ from those of Espelt, Javaloy and Cornejo (2006), in which the number of bigots was significantly smaller that of the subtles. By contrast, our findings are in line with those of Molero, Navas, and Cuadrado (2006), in which the outgroup under examination was comparable to the one present in the city of Melilla. This result is of concern since the professional areas of the participants (education and health care) involve direct contact with migrants. Even so, this detail contrasts with the finding that 60% of students are in the equalitarian group, who therefore have low levels of prejudice.

Our research has yielded different results from those of Guardia and Nacarí (2013), who found that a high number of participants scored more highly on the subtle prejudice scale than on the blatant one. Even though their study involved university students, the social context in which it was carried out was very different from the current investigation. In Melilla, contact with irregular migrants is frequent and migratory pressure is great.

Student's t-test scores for subtle and blatant prejudice revealed significant differences only for subtle prejudice, participants of European origin being those who displayed greater prejudice. A possible explanation for this may be, in line with Allport's (1954) theory, that the group of Berber origin may identify in some way with migrants for religious and cultural reasons, while, as asserted by Licata and Klein (2002), participants who identify themselves as European with full rights may be less tolerant towards foreigners. What is more, we have not found any research which directly relates cultures of European and Berber origin to this kind of prejudice.

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Analysis of particpants' degree courses shows that Social Education students present the fewest prejudiced attitudes, in both their subtle and blatant forms, in comparison to those taking other degree courses. This may inicate that students enrolled in this course may have a more favourable disposition towards irregular immigrants, as social education students are usually more committed to disadvantages groups.

As far as type of sentiments and their means are concerned, we find that pity and sympathy score most highly, even in the group considered bigots. In addition, in both the subtles and the equalitarians, one feeling stands out, namely, insecurity. Therefore, participants of both subtle and blatant profiles show negative feelings towards irregular migrants. These results support Molero, Navas and Cuadrado's (2006) research on new prejudice theories, which seem to indicate scant feelings of either a positive or a negative nature towards migrants. By contrast, García, Navas, Cuadrado, and Molero's (2003) work suggests that both negative emotions (hatred, hostility, rage, and disgust) and positive ones (attraction and sympathy) predict modern racism towards the outgroup.

Our findings point to the existence of a certain amount of prejudice in university students towards irregular migrants. It is worrying that students studying in the socially oriented areas of education and health care display these kinds of feelings towards persons who have had to flee from their country for various reasons (through poverty, war, political persecution, or sexual orientation), above all because any kind of prejudice can turn into discrimination, harassment or violence, especially when the outgroup is considered immigrant (McDuie-Ra, 2012).

As in work by Espelt, Javaloy, and Cornejo (2006), Pérez (1996), Pettigrew and Meertens (1995), Rueda and Navas (1996), and Khalfani (2006), our research has shown that the manifestation of this kind of prejudice is becoming more concealed (subtle prejudice), arousing less social rejection.

In answer to the aim of our investigation, we can affirm that there are students at the Campus of Melilla, Spain, who are prejudiced towards illegal migrants, and that intervention to eliminate these attitudes is essential, especially in view of the social nature of their degrees.

Limitations and future research

We propose the following ways to improve the investigation: increase the sample of participants and extend it to the whole campus; analyse the same relationships in the context of a city similar to Melilla, such as Ceuta (Spain); analyse the relations between ingroups and other cultural outgroups.

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