Paupers or riches: the perception of immigrants, tourists and ingroup members in a sample of Spanish children

Fernando Molero, María Soledad Navas, José Luis González, Pilar Alemán and Isabel Cuadrado

Abstract The aim of this study is to analyse the perception a group of 221 Spanish school children aged 10 and 11 years (116 girls and 105 boys) have of themselves, tourists and immigrants. The survey was carried out in an area of south-east Spain in which there is a significant presence of both tourists and immigrants. The children answered a series of open-ended questions and a semantic differential scale with questions regarding these three groups. Results show that although in absolute terms immigrants are not perceived negatively, their image is worse than that held of tourists and ingroup members. The opinion held about immigrants becomes more negative as children get older, especially among male participants. Moreover, immigrants are better perceived if they are seen as workers – less ‘strange’ and with more money – and if there is also a better perception held towards tourists. We explain these results from a socio-psychological perspective.

Keywords: Immigration; Prejudice; Social identity; Tourists; Ingroup favouritism

Introduction

Social psychology has an extensive and important tradition in intergroup research. Various theories and hypotheses have been used to explain why prejudice, discrimination and intergroup conflict take place (Allport 1954; Sherif 1966; Tajfel and Turner 1986). As Rothgerber and Worchel (1997) have stated, the basic paradigm in prejudice studies, and hence in intergroup studies, focuses solely on two groups: the dominant and the subordinated, or the ingroup and the outgroup. Even the most recent research on subordinated or disadvantaged groups has employed the same paradigm. But this approach does not respond at all to social reality, which is both more complex and involves more than two groups and factors. This is so because, first of all, there is usually never just one group which is the victim of prejudice. And secondly, because as Spears and Manstead (1989) or Tajfel (1981) have stated, intergroup perceptions do not take place in a vacuum, but are influenced by other social comparisons which take place in wider social contexts. In other words, the perception held of a group is not isolated from the socio-cultural context in which it takes place, and it reflects the existing relationships between the different groups present in a given situation (González 1996).

Rothgerber and Worchel (1997) have shown that the answers given on perceptions towards outgroups are influenced by their status and performance (better or worse than that of the ingroup), and also by the achievements of other
outgroups present in the particular context of the research. Two of the most important conclusions from their study are that estimates about an outgroup are dependent on the other groups present in the situation; and that subjects distinguish between outgroups with different features and do not cluster them together in one general outgroup category. Group members are sensitive to the specific relation between their own group and each outgroup. Rothgerber and Worchel state that these results are due to an instrumental factor: it makes it possible to create more positive social comparisons for the ingroup, and hence increase its worth or value, and finally attain a more positive social identity.

This article is focused on the perception a group of Spanish students have of their ingroup and two very relevant, and different, outgroups found in their particular social context, a region of south-east Spain (Almería) which has been transformed in recent years by tourism and intensive irrigated agriculture. One of these outgroups consists of African immigrants from the Maghreb and Central Africa. The other outgroup comprises European tourists. We believe that the comparison between ingroup and outgroup perceptions will allow us to analyse more fully the image these children have of both outgroups.

**Immigrants and tourists in Almería**

Due to the importance of the socio-cultural context in intergroup relations, we now describe those features which differentiate the two outgroups in our study. We begin with the African outgroup.

Spain has evolved in recent decades from being an emigrant society (mainly migrating to other European countries) to an immigration country. Different authors have formulated various, although in many ways complementary, analyses of this phenomenon (for example Aznar and Sánchez-Picón 2000; Cohen 1995; Gonzálvez 1998; Mateos and Moral 2000). Nevertheless, as Aznar and Sánchez-Picón (2000: 107) have stated, Almería, the province in which our study took place, has a series of features which makes this area a somewhat unique context in which to study immigration in Spain. First of all, due to its geographical location, Almería has become the ‘gateway’ for immigrants coming from the Maghreb and other sub-Saharan areas. Secondly, immigration has grown in Almería much more vigourously than in any other Spanish region. For instance, between the years 1992 and 1995 the number of African residents in the province increased fivefold, from 2,000 to 10,000 (Aznar and Sánchez-Picón 2000: 108); in the rest of Spain this rise was only twofold. Thirdly, in Almería there is an important presence of ‘irregular’ (non-legal) African immigrants. Official statistics for 31 December 1999 state that there were 20,000 non-EU immigrants in Almería, making up 4.3 per cent of the total population. According to the local NGO *Almería Acoge* (Almería Welcomes), this official figure must be increased by at least another 25 per cent to include immigrants living in an irregular situation. Approximately three-quarters of the African immigrants come from the Maghreb countries, mainly Morocco, and the other quarter are from Central African countries (Pumares 1998). They are mostly males (95 per cent), young people (86 per cent are between 18 and 35 years of age) and single (75 per cent). However, there is an increasing number of family regroupings and female immigrants. A fourth feature is that the African immigration in the province of Almería is very concentrated, both geographically and with regard to labour. There are towns in the province in which immigrants comprise 20 per cent of the
total population. Aznar and Sánchez-Picón (2000: 109) point out that some towns already have a similar percentage of immigrant population as that found in many European cities with a long tradition of immigration such as Frankfurt, Vienna, Brussels or Paris, but with an important difference: in these towns of the province of Almería immigration is barely a decade old. The reason for this ‘selective concentration’ is due to the type of work these people are engaged in – intensive hothouse agriculture, which is found mainly in the interior or western part of the province (80 per cent of African immigrants in Almería live in this area). Nine-tenths of the work permits given to African immigrants are for agricultural jobs. In fact it is virtually the only work they have access to (Aznar and Sánchez-Picón 2000; Pumares 1998). This type of work does not require any special qualifications and so is socially devalued. Moreover, economically speaking, these immigrants are not well-off, although the longer they stay in the area, the better-off they become. The reason for this economic paradox does not rest on the fact that they generally receive lower wages than native workers doing the same labour, but because many of them send most of their earnings back to their countries of origin. It is also true that many of them do not have working permits and work on a week in – week out basis (1 or 2 weeks per month). These special features lead us to believe that the native subjects will perceive these immigrants as a ‘poor outgroup’ in comparison with the ingroup and the tourist outgroup.

As we have already stated, immigration is concentrated in specific areas: rural and agricultural, not urban. These rural areas have distinct socio-legal features: most of them have only recently been created both geographically and administratively. They are not fully structured recipient societies since they are still undergoing a process of formation. Probably all these features mentioned about both the immigrant and native population have been of importance in shaping the nature of the conflicts between the groups. These conflicts have been understood and explained in often contradictory ways by the different social actors involved. Many local and national media have stressed the existence of racial prejudice in Almería, while the native population vigourously denies this.

Studies conducted in Spain on attitudes the native population have towards immigrants, especially those coming from non-EU countries (Actis et al. 1995; Barbadillo 1997; Diez-Nicolás 1998; González 1998; Mateos and Moral 2000), have presented a situation which varies from certain optimism to the acknowledgement of racist and xenophobic attitudes, whilst other studies have shown more subtle and ambiguous patterns of results and attitudes. These different results have been obtained using both different methodological tools (e.g. questionnaires, self-reports, interviews, discussion groups, etc.) and different sample groups (young people/adults, workers/unemployed, men/women, etc.). A study conducted by Martínez et al. (1996) concerning the integration of African immigrants in five Andalusian provinces shows that when questionnaires are used, the Andalusian population express, in general terms, a positive attitude towards foreign workers. Nevertheless, discussion groups composed of agricultural managers and housewives show a completely different perspective, more in accordance with the way in which the immigrants perceive they are treated by the native population. Moreover, Rueda and Navas’ work (1996) with a sample of 160 university students from Almería and Granada who answered Pettigrew and Meertens’ (1995) subtle and manifest prejudice scales also found a relatively positive view of immigrants (70 per cent of the subjects could be
termed as ‘equalitarian’, and only 30 per cent showed subtle prejudice). A similar result appears in Navas’ (1998) study using in this case an adaptation of McConahay et al.’s (1981) modern racism scale in a sample of 263 subjects, mostly university students living in Almería.

Due to the social context we have just described, the main objective of our research will be to validate (or otherwise), by using a different sample, results obtained in previous studies. We wish to know the opinions a group of children (aged 10–11) from Almería have regarding a very important new social element in their province: the immigrants. As Aboud (1988) states, there is enough evidence to suggest that young children identify with ethnic and gender categories and are capable of expressing distinct evaluative preferences. As with adults, the nature and direction of these preferences seem to depend on different factors, one of which is the possible competition among groups or the groups’ position in society.

Although research in child prejudice has a series of added problems to those found in any study (the lack of standardised instruments, or problems involved in formulating questions in accordance with respondents’ level of development and/or knowledge), we believe that nevertheless it is very important to know children’s opinion for various reasons. First, to test the degree to which their opinions coincide with that of other sectors of the population which have been previously researched. In this sense we agree with Brown (1995: 158) when he states that children cannot be considered as empty recipients into which the dominant prejudices of an adult society slowly drip. Second, we believe that it is important to know the perception which children have of immigrants because this knowledge will encourage us, if necessary, to develop appropriate sensitisation campaigns within school curricula.

With the aim of adequately focusing on the image which children have of African immigrants, we compare it with the perception these same people have of their own group and of another relevant outgroup which is very different from the one mentioned thus far. In the province of Almería, the tourist sector employs approximately 17 per cent of the total population and is, after agricultural employment, the second most important economic activity. Unlike the immigrant group, tourists are an outgroup who have been visiting Almería for decades. Since the 1960s there has been an important flow of tourists to Spain during holiday periods, especially to the southern parts of the country. The familiarity with which their presence is perceived is not the only feature which differentiates them from the immigrant outgroup. The former stay only for a short period of time, while immigrants stay longer. The tourists’ economic position is deemed better off and wealthier than that of their immigrant counterparts. And finally tourists do not need to work because they are in the area on vacation. This series of characteristics leads us to believe that our subjects will perceive tourists as a ‘rich’ outgroup in comparison with the immigrant outgroup, and maybe also in comparison to their own ingroup.

Bearing these facts in mind, our second objective is exploratory. We will study which variables influence the perception held of the various groups, and see if our results coincide with those we may derive from psycho-social theories of intergroup relations, mainly Social Identity Theory (SIT). This theory, proposed by Henri Tajfel in the 1970s (Tajfel 1972; Turner and Brown 1978), states that people strive to achieve and maintain a positive social identity, and that the way they obtain this is by positive comparison between their own social group and
other relevant groups. Due to this, as numerous studies using the ‘minimal
group paradigm’ (Tajfel et al. 1971) have shown, those people assigned to a
group using a trivial criterion (i.e. toss of a coin) favour their group and not the
outgroup. Social Identity Theory was originally formulated to explain ingroup
favouritism in experimental settings, although it was later also used to explain
intergroup relations in real social contexts (Tajfel and Turner 1986) by including
socio-structural variables such as the groups’ status and power, or different
comparative dimensions (Huici 1999). SIT has generated, and continues to do so,
numerous studies, and is possibly one of the most productive and important
theories used in social psychology to explain intergroup relations (see for
instance Abrams and Hogg 1999; Capoza and Brown 2000 or Ellemers et al.
1999).

With regard to our study, from a Social Identity Theory standpoint we may
expect to find first of all that subjects will show strong ingroup favouritism.
Nevertheless, this result could be mediated by the different characteristics of
both outgroups (status and power) which also may determine, in the end, the
different type of relations which the ingroup establishes with each one of the
outgroups. For instance, we expect children to have a positive view of the
tourists for two reasons. First of all because it does not seem that the phenom-

enon of tourism has reached the threshold of saturation at which, according to
Doxey (1975), the negative effects of its presence seem to become clearly felt.
And secondly because recent developments in SIT stress that when the compari-
son outgroup has a higher status (which is what may happen with tourists),
ingroup favouritism is held back, and outgroup favouritism may even appear.
In the case of the immigrant outgroup, our predictions are somewhat different.
As we have already stated, this is an outgroup which may easily be perceived
as of low status compared to the ingroup. Due to this, and according to SIT, we
could expect subjects to show ingroup favouritism and outgroup discrimination
towards the immigrant group.

Method

The sample was composed of 221 students (116 girls and 105 boys) from the 5th
and 6th grades (N = 113, N = 108, respectively). The respondents’ average age
was 10.49 years with a standard deviation of 0.62. The children studied in all
four schools in a small rural town in the province of Almería. This town is
located some 15 km from the main tourist resorts of the western part of the
province (Almerimar, Roquetas and Agua dulce), and has a numerically impor-
tant immigrant population (approximately 20 per cent of the total). A large
percentage of children (73.7 per cent) belonged to families in which the parents
worked in agriculture, followed by services (16.4 per cent) and construction (5.2
per cent).

The children answered a series of open-ended questions regarding immigrants
and tourists, as well as a semantic differential scale in which they had to
evaluate the three groups studied. The semantic differential was composed of 12
pairs of adjectives. Children had to mark, using a five-point scale, the pole in
which they evaluated each group (tourists, African immigrants, and people from
Almería). The adjectives which comprised the scale were carefully chosen using
two criteria. First, they had to be comprehensible for children aged 10–11.
Second, the negative pole of the scale should not be ‘too’ negative in order not
to affect susceptibilities if an immigrant child answered the questionnaire (in the end this possibility did not occur). For instance, we preferred to use the pairs ‘clean—not so clean’ instead of ‘clean–filthy’, or ‘good–not so good’ rather than ‘good–bad’. In the case of the ingroup (people from Almería, called Almerienses, we included an item which measured the level of similarity with the group. This item was ‘they are very similar to me–they are not very similar to me’.

The open questions and their answers are important for various reasons. They allow us to perceive the image or perception children have of tourists and immigrants without the researcher contaminating the ascribed characteristics. They also serve as validation criteria for the answers obtained in the semantic differential. Finally, they reflect the extent to which children of this age have clear ideas regarding the categories ‘immigrants’ and ‘tourists’.

The questionnaires were distributed in class in one session which lasted approximately 75 minutes. Teachers, who had previously been informed of the study and its aims, were present in each classroom and introduced the researchers as ‘people from the university who are interested in knowing the opinion children have regarding different things’. As we were not sure what the children understand when asked about ‘tourists’ and ‘immigrants’, these tags were not used. Instead, in the case of the tourists we asked them to ‘think about those people you see on the beach each summer and who come from different places from yourself’. In the case of immigrants they were asked to think of ‘other people who have also come from other places or countries, but who are not here on holiday’. In general the children quickly recognised the social categories we were referring to. The questionnaires were handed out to the children and instructions were given on how to fill them in.

First of all, the children answered a semantic differential regarding Almerienses (the ingroup); later on, a series of open-ended questions pertaining to tourists; and then a semantic differential referring to this same group. Next, they did the same with immigrants as the target outgroup. At the end they were asked for some simple socio-demographic data.

Results

Open-ended questions

According to the answers given by the respondent children, we created a series of categories which would allow us to adequately analyse the information. As is common in this type of study, we only employed those categories mentioned by at least 10 per cent of the sample in their description of the reference group. Nevertheless, in specific cases, in order to obtain more information, we also took into account some categories mentioned by fewer children. Categories and their features were evaluated by three independent judges who confirmed the content of these categories. Answers given to each question are not mutually exclusive. In other words, when asked ‘What are the immigrants like?’ a child could answer with more than one trait. Notwithstanding, in order for the category to be taken into account it had to be mentioned by at least 22 children, to exceed the 10 per cent threshold.

In order to check if the children had a clear idea of which outgroups they had to evaluate, we asked the following three questions regarding tourists and
immigrants: Why do they come here? What do they do when they are here? Where do they come from?

Results show that children have a clear image of who these two groups are, and why they come to Almería. Immigrants come to work (83 per cent) and to earn money (11 per cent), while tourists come for reasons related to leisure and holidays (52 per cent), beaches (20 per cent) and getting to know the country (18 per cent). Regarding what they do when they are in Spain, immigrants work (89 per cent), and tourists go to the beach (53 per cent), enjoy themselves (26 per cent), get to know places (26 per cent), and stroll around (15 per cent).

With regard to outgroups’ countries of origin, probably due to the children’s age the pattern is not as clear. A large number of subjects do not mention any specific place of origin – 43 per cent for tourists, 36 per cent for immigrants. The children simply state that they come from ‘abroad’ or ‘other countries’ which, although true, does not give us much information. Nevertheless, approximately a third of the children correctly locate the countries of origin, mentioning that tourists come from European countries: England (31 per cent), France (29 per cent) and Germany (23 per cent), and immigrants from the Maghreb (36 per cent) and Africa (18 per cent).

With regard to their knowledge of the outgroup, 73 per cent of the children state that they personally know an immigrant. Only 56 per cent state that they know a tourist. These results demonstrate that, for these children, immigrants are more familiar than tourists (not at all a strange fact if we analyse the area in which the study is located), and that there is more contact with them.

When children were asked to evaluate the two outgroups’ internal homogeneity, this was perceived to be higher for immigrants (44 per cent of respondents believed that immigrants are similar amongst themselves) than for tourists (37 per cent similarity). We shall return to this difference later in the paper.

Perceived characteristics of immigrants and tourists

We now present the results of a series of questions pertaining to the perceived characteristics of immigrants and tourists. The first question, shown in Table 1, is ‘What are these people like?’ Subjects use six significant categories in order to describe immigrants. Four of these may be considered as positive (good, pleasant, workers, normal), another could be considered at first as neither positive or negative (strange), and the last one is clearly negative (bad). In order to describe tourists, only four categories were used. Two are clearly positive (good, pleasant), one is ambiguous (strange), and the final one is a description of physical traits (blonde, tall, etc.).

In sum, immigrants are positively perceived, stressing their role as workers.
Table 2. Features most noteworthy of immigrants and tourists (% of children mentioning each category for each target group)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What catches your eye most about these people?</th>
<th>Shared categories</th>
<th>Only immigrants</th>
<th>Only tourists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Workers</td>
<td>Positive traits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourists</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nevertheless, 12 per cent of the children perceive them negatively (‘bad’). With regard to tourists, more people view them as good and pleasant but also as ‘stranger’ than immigrants. If we interpret that ‘strange’ means different from the ingroup, we witness that this difference does not imply a negative connotation. Physical traits are only mentioned in order to define tourists, not immigrants.

In Table 2 we show answers given to the question ‘What catches your eye most about these people?’. For both tourists and immigrants, their language and their clothes (more so in the case of tourists) were seen as the most striking features. It is only for immigrants that their role as workers and some other traits – both positive (good people) and negative (they steal, smell bad, etc.) – seem noteworthy. As with the previous question, only when describing tourists do physical traits appear as an important factor. Interestingly, aspects such as customs, religion or food do not appear spontaneously as noteworthy features of any of these groups.

Reviewing the results thus far, it seems that although tourists are viewed in a more positive way than immigrants, these latter are also perceived in a positive manner. Moreover, it seems that immigrants are viewed as a ‘closer’ outgroup than tourists. They are perceived as less ‘strange’, their physical features are not viewed as important, and their language and clothes are also mentioned by fewer children than the equivalent ascriptions to tourists.

Responding to the question ‘In what way are they different from you?’ (Table 3), children perceive both immigrants and tourists as different from themselves in language and physical attributes (tourists to a greater extent than immigrants), and in negative traits (in similar ways). In this occasion, and for the first time, colour of skin is used to differentiate immigrants but not tourists. Nevertheless, only tourists are perceived to be different from the ingroup in their customs and in that they are strange.

Table 3. Perceived differences between immigrants, tourists and the ingroup (% of children attributing each category to the target group)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In what are they different from you?</th>
<th>Shared categories</th>
<th>Only immigrants</th>
<th>Only tourists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Physical aspects</td>
<td>Negative traits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourists</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4. Mean scores for each target group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People from</th>
<th>Immigrants</th>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>F and significance (436.2 df)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Almeria</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>6.77 p &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grateful</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>5.05 p &lt; .007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handsome</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>20.18 p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clever</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>3.24 p &lt; .04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strange</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>24.05 p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They do not fight</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>11.33 p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>49.38 p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They have money</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>77.59 p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polite</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>27.76 p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>44.65 p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>5.12 p &lt; .006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They tell the truth</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>3.40 p &lt; .03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup identification</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Scores range from 1 to 5. Scores close to 1 indicate that the characteristic is possessed to a high degree. Scores close to 5 indicate that it is not possessed to a high degree.

Semantic differential results

We next analyse the results of the semantic differential scales. First of all (Table 4) we present the group means in each of the traits. Scores range from 1 (very high on the positive pole of the trait) to 5 (very high on the negative pole). Only the positive pole is shown in the table, which also displays results from a repeated measures variance analysis using each of the traits as dependent variables, and the scores given to each group as the independent variable.

A first approach to the analysis of the results is to examine the scores each group obtains separately. This allows us to obtain a ‘portrait’ of the children’s opinion regarding each group. With respect to the ingroup Almerienses, with the exception of ‘strange’, the rest of the features which are positive are attributed to them in some degree (all scores are below the theoretical mean which is 3). The ingroup’s most attributed feature is workers (1.73), followed by pleasant (1.97) and clean (2.01). It is interesting to note the low level of ingroup similarity (3.42). When asked ‘Are the Almerienses very similar or not very similar to me?’, children tend to think that they themselves are not so similar to the rest of the people from their region.

With regard to immigrants, the most attributed feature is also that of being workers (1.84), followed by pleasant (2.20) and good (2.20). Two out of three of the features most attributed to immigrants and Almerienses are the same (workers and pleasant). Immigrants are also perceived as having little money (3.37) and not very handsome (3.44). Other positive traits are attributed to them but with low intensity.

Finally, tourists are perceived as clean (1.77), polite (1.86), pleasant (1.87) and good (1.92). They are also attributed the rest of the positive traits, and also that of being strange (2.72), but with less weight.

In sum, although there is a positive perception of all groups, tourists are ‘best’ evaluated, followed by Almerienses and finally immigrants. Whilst these are interesting results, they can only be fully understood when compared with the
Table 5. Significance of differences comparing target groups two by two (Student’s t)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significance of differences between Almerienses and immigrants</th>
<th>Significance of differences between Almerienses and tourists</th>
<th>Significance of differences between tourists and immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant</td>
<td>t = -2.42; p &lt; .01</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grateful</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>t = 2.62; p &lt; .009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handsome</td>
<td>t = -5.83; p &lt; .0001</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clever</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strange</td>
<td>t = 5.82; p &lt; .0001</td>
<td>t = 5.79; p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not fight</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>t = 3.28; p &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>t = -8.90; p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They have money</td>
<td>t = -8.13; p &lt; .0001</td>
<td>t = 4.83; p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polite</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>t = 7.33; p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean</td>
<td>t = -6.47; p &lt; .0001</td>
<td>t = 2.43; p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>t = 2.52; p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They tell the truth</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>t = 2.38; p &lt; .02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Degrees of freedom range from 215 to 220 depending on lost cases in each particular comparison.

evaluations each group has received. The repeated measures variance analysis stresses that the target group of an evaluation establishes significant differences in all dimensions.

In Table 5 we can see results of the Student’s t differences comparing groups two by two. Comparing first the scores of Almerienses and immigrants, we find significant differences in five out of 12 traits. As would be expected from the standpoint of SIT, there is clear ingroup favouritism in four of these traits. Almerienses are perceived as cleaner, more handsome, more pleasant and more wealthy than immigrants. With regard to the remaining characteristic, subjects perceive the outgroup as stranger than the ingroup.

Comparing next the scores of Almerienses and tourists, we observe that there are significant differences in nine out of 12 features. Three of these seem logical: tourists are perceived as stranger, less as workers (because they are here on holiday) and having more money (if you are on holiday you usually have money to spend). Nevertheless it is not so logical that tourists are perceived as less aggressive, more grateful, polite, clean, good and sincere than ingroup members. The only traits in which there are no significant differences are being pleasant, handsome and clever. Moreover, there are significant differences in pleasantness and being handsome/ugly in the comparison with immigrants. This suggests that there are different comparison dimensions depending on which group children compare themselves with. In this case there seems to be no trace of ingroup favouritism, and in fact we observe features of outgroup favouritism. These results coincide with predictions derived from SIT with respect to higher status groups which were mentioned before.

When analysing the comparison between immigrants and tourists, differences are even stronger. There are significant differences in 11 of the 12 features. With the exception of being strange (both groups are viewed as strange), tourists are more pleasant, grateful, handsome, clever, they have fewer fights, more money, and are more polite, clean, good and sincere than immigrants. The latter are viewed as more workers than the tourists, a fact consistent with what they do in Almería (one group works, the other is on holiday).
Analysis of possible variables related to ingroup–outgroup perceptions

In this subsection we try to find variables (i.e. socio-demographic characteristics) which may be related to perceptions held of each group. In order to assist this analysis, dimensions were reduced by means of a factor analysis of the adjectives used in the semantic differential. However, this produced different results for each group. For immigrants two factors emerged, for Almerienses three, and for tourists four. This result suggests that the sample’s perception of immigrants is more homogeneous than that of tourists. This hypothesis is further supported by the answers given by the respondents to the perceived homogeneity question mentioned before. Due to this disparity we could not group items following this criterion.

In view of this, and although it was not part of our original research design, we will see if the traits used in the semantic differential could be considered as a scale and in this way obtain a score for each group. Prior to this we deleted three of the traits, and retained those which we believed were an index of outgroup acceptance/rejection. The characteristic ‘strange’ was deleted because it did not seem to have acceptance/rejection connotations (tourists are perceived as being as strange as immigrants, yet despite this they are better evaluated). We also deleted the items ‘having money’ and ‘worker’ because they reflected true group features and did not indicate emotions of liking/disliking towards them (these variables will be used in other analyses). Thus we used only those traits we thought reflected like or dislike towards the outgroups.

The nine remaining features present an acceptable internal consistency. Cronbach alphas for Almerienses, tourists and immigrants were 0.68, 0.77, and 0.88 respectively. Moreover, in all cases the correlation of each trait with the scale total was significant (p < .0001). These results allow us to use the total scores from the scales in further analyses.

The means obtained for each group were the following: 2.44 for Almerienses, 2.17 for tourists, and 2.64 for immigrants. The same pattern of results was found when each trait was analysed separately. Tourists are the most positively evaluated group, followed by Almerienses and finally immigrants. No group is badly evaluated because all scores are below the theoretical medium point in the scale, which is 3. Differences between scores are significant for each group. Between immigrants and Almerienses there is a t(209) = 2.91, p < .004; between tourists and Almerienses t(209) = –4.13, p < .0001; and between tourists and immigrants t(209) = –6.21, p < .0001.

We performed a variance analysis for each group using age, sex and school as independent variables, and the total scores given to each group as the dependent variable. With respect to Almerienses there was a main effect due to the childrens’ school [F(3,198) = 4.96, p < .002]. Moreover there were interaction effects between school and age [F(3,198) = 4.47, p < .005], and age and sex [F(3,198) = 3.46, p < .06]. In synthesis, these results indicate that the opinion held of one’s ingroup varies depending on one’s school, and that there is a tendency for girls to have a better opinion of Almerienses as they grow older.

With regard to tourists, there is also a significant main effect due to school [F(3,181) = 3.46, p < .01], and an interaction between age and sex [F(3,181) = 5.62, p < .01]. As in the previous case, the child’s school is a factor which establishes differences in the opinion held of tourists. Moreover, girls have a better opinion of tourists as they grow older.
Table 6. Regression analysis with perception of Almerienses as criteria variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strange</th>
<th>Workers</th>
<th>They have money</th>
<th>Ingroup identification</th>
<th>Perception of tourists</th>
<th>Perception of immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>−0.21</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>−3.43</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>&lt;.0007</td>
<td>&lt;.00001</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>&lt;.0008</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
<td>&lt;.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $R^2 = 0.24$; $F(5,194) = 12.20$. $p < .00001$

Table 7. Regression analysis with perception of tourists as criteria variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strange</th>
<th>Workers</th>
<th>They have money</th>
<th>Ingroup identification</th>
<th>Perception of Almerienses</th>
<th>Perception of immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beta</td>
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<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>−0.003</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>−2.74</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>−0.05</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>2.49</td>
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<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>&lt;.006</td>
<td>&lt;.00</td>
<td>&lt;.00001</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $R^2 = 0.20$; $F(4,197) = 12.95$. $p < .00001$

Table 8. Regression analysis with perception of immigrants as criteria variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strange</th>
<th>Workers</th>
<th>They have money</th>
<th>Ingroup identification</th>
<th>Perception of Almerienses</th>
<th>Perception of tourists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>−0.20</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>−0.03</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>−4.05</td>
<td>7.35</td>
<td>7.58</td>
<td>−0.56</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $R^2 = 0.50$; $F(4,198) = 50.29$. $p < .00001$

For the case of immigrants there is an interaction between age and sex [$F(1,182) = 9.06$, $p < .003$], and age and school [$F(3,182) = 5.02$, $p < .002$]. In general boys tend to have a worse opinion of immigrants when they reach the age of 11 (in comparison to when they are 10). This fact was especially present in one school where, independent of sex, perception of immigrants was notably worse in the higher level course (1.96 vs. 2.92).

By means of a regression analysis (stepwise method) we analysed the degree in which the perceptions held of the different social groups could be predicted on the basis of variables such as ingroup identification (similiarity with the ingroup), and the perception of ‘strangeness’, ‘wealth’ and ‘being hard workers or not’. In each case the evaluations of the other groups were also included as predictor variables (see Tables 6, 7 and 8). These tables are largely self-explanatory so our comments are brief. In Table 6, where Almerienses are the criteria variable, percentage of explained variance with all six variables was 24 per cent. Those variables which best predict the opinion held of the ingroup were, in order of importance, being ‘workers’, strange (negatively), ingroup identification, perception held of the immigrants, and perception held of tourists. Having or not having money does not contribute significantly towards the
positive or negative perception of *Almerienses*. Moving on to tourists (Table 7), the explained variance in this case is 20 per cent. The predictor variables regarding the image held of tourists are, in order of importance, having money, being hard workers, being strange (negatively), and the perception held of immigrants. In this case the predictive accuracy of the criterion variable is not significantly increased by ingroup identification or the perception held of the ingroup. Finally, in the case of immigrants (Table 8), explained variance is 50 per cent, a much larger score than in the other cases. Predictor variables are, in order of importance, having money, being hard workers, being strange (negatively), and the perception held of tourists. As in the case of tourists, ingroup identification and perception held of the ingroup do not significantly affect the results.

**Discussion and conclusions**

Results from this study, using both open-ended and semantic differential responses, show that Almerian children aged 10–11 do not have a general negative perception of the immigrant outgroup. Nevertheless, when comparisons are made between their view of immigrants and the opinion they have of their own group and another relevant and higher-status outgroup (tourists), immigrants are the most negatively evaluated group. These results stress the need to have other comparison groups if one is to adequately analyse the image held of a concrete social group in a certain social context. It also confirms that children are capable of differentiating outgroups with different characteristics.

Various psychosocial approaches (see Mullen *et al.* 1992) have predicted that, due to ethnocentric tendencies, the image held of one’s own group is nearly always better than that of other social groups. This implies that children in our sample should have a more positive image of their own group than of immigrants and tourists. In our study this prediction is fulfilled only with regard to immigrants, but not with tourists. We believe this result may be explained in different ways.

First, the limited strength of ingroup identification in our study has some influence. Various studies (Allen and Stephenson 1983; Hong and Harrod 1988; Taylor *et al.* 1978) have shown that the increase of ingroup salience augments ingroup bias. In our study, and due to the fact that our social categories were real, we did not believe it was necessary to stress ingroup belonging. Moreover, and in order to disguise the aim of the study, children first evaluated the *Almerienses*, without knowing that they would subsequently be asked to evaluate other groups. As different studies conducted within the Minimal Group Paradigm have shown, the mere presence of an outgroup increases ingroup favouritism. These reasons could explain why the sample’s identification with its own group is not high (see Table 4), and so group evaluations are due not so much to ingroup discrimination but in fact reflect each group’s relative social position. The higher-status group (tourists) is better valued than the lower-status group (immigrants). The ingroup is in the middle.

Secondly, our data are consistent with results found by Sachdev and Bourhis (1987) in a laboratory setting experiment. In their study high-status groups were more discriminant than low-status groups, and the latter favoured the higher-status groups in certain comparison dimensions. If we assume that for the children we surveyed, *Almerienses* have a higher status than immigrants,
but lower than tourists, this could well explain the pattern of results. Nonetheless we must remember that although the perception of immigrants was worse than the image held of tourists, immigrants were not on the whole viewed negatively. In another study, Sachdev and Bourhis (1991) also found similar results. They found that dominant, majority and higher-status groups (such as the Almerienses with respect to immigrants) developed an affinity strategy in the allocation of rewards to outgroup members. In the words of these authors, ‘with the security of strength in number within a stable intergroup structure it seems that high status majorities could afford some “noblesse oblige” towards subordinated low status minority group members’ (1991: 20).

Another explanation which, although different from the above-mentioned one, does not contradict it, is that proposed by Brown (1995: 154). This author mentions various studies which show that there is a critical period between the age of 5 to 8 years in which ingroup favouritism seems to reach its peak, and later on declines during the pre-adolescence years. In line with this reasoning, the low ingroup favouritism found in our sample could be due to the fact that they are at this pre-adolescence period.

Nevertheless, these ‘a posteriori’ explanations are speculative: to show their validity, it would be necessary to replicate this study controlling all those variables involved. For instance, it would be necessary for the sample to clearly categorise themselves as belonging to the group of Almerienses (it could be that children spontaneously identify themselves more with the category ‘pupil of school x’, or ‘child’ than with the general category proposed by the researcher). Brown (1995: 123) mentions, when referring to studies conducted on prejudice with children, that changing the context, for instance the micro-context of the task of categorisation, or the wider cultural milieu in which the study takes place, could have important effects on the probability of using certain social categories. In our case, and because the study was conducted in a natural context, it was important to be very careful when nominating categories which could result in a worse perception of the outgroup. In relation to status, which seems to be another important variable in explaining these results, we would have to confirm, using adequate measures, the relative status which the sample awards each group.

Our results also show that children perceive themselves as being more similar to immigrants than to tourists. In the open-ended questions immigrants are described as less strange, they do not have noteworthy physical features, and language and clothes are less salient characteristics than in the case of tourists. In the semantic differential the two traits used more intensely to describe Almerienses and immigrants are the same (workers and pleasant), and in the different features there are more significant differences with tourists (9 out of 12) than with immigrants (5 out of 12). There are certain circumstances that could explain this stronger perceived similarity between the subjects and immigrants even though there are more ethnic and cultural differences between them. First of all, there is more contact with the members of this group. Secondly, this contact tends to take place in contexts in which immigrants act in a similar way to the Almerienses, for instance in regard to work, residential location, etc.

In any case, results show that, at least in this sample, more similarity does not induce a better opinion because tourists (although judged less similar to the ingroup) were better evaluated than immigrants. At this point it is interesting to mention the relationship established by Worchoel (1998) between in/outgroup
similarity and intergroup conflict. Worchel considers that the same variables which help create groups (i.e. similarity, proximity, etc.) are those which, in certain circumstances and with some outgroups, foster intergroup conflict. For instance Worchel (1998: 127–8) mentions that we feel attracted to groups comprised of people similar to us, and that we also use similarity to classify other people into categories or psychological groups. But due to the fact that similarity allows us to define our own group, its unique identity is threatened by that of other similar people who belong to different groups. This similarity is viewed as a menace because it produces fuzzy intergroup frontiers. It may be difficult to accept that people whom we do not like share with us important features or beliefs. Moreover, while similarity may be the link which fosters friendship and group formation, it may also be the reason which sparks off intergroup conflict and discrimination. In this study, we could infer that perceiving immigrants, rather than tourists, as more similar to the ingroup could lead children to feel more threatened and as a result they could try to differentiate themselves positively from the immigrant outgroup by evaluating themselves more positively.

Proximity or closeness is another important factor in the creation of social categories or groups, both from a cognitive and personal interaction perspective (Worchel 1998: 123). We could expect physically close groups to be categorised as one group and that some attraction would appear among them. Nevertheless, once categorisations are created, the proximity of people who are not included in our group (‘they are not one of us’) may lead us to point them out as our enemies. Worchel states that this happens because closeness or proximity of these ‘non-members’ may be perceived as a threat to our group’s independent identity. As Brewer (1979) has stated (cited in Worchel 1998), physically close outgroups are viewed as more similar to the ingroup, but at the same time these outgroups will also be evaluated as potentially more hostile than outgroups perceived to be further away. In our study, immigrants are physically closer than tourists, and their proximity, in the workplace, in houses etc., is far stronger. Maybe immigrants are more negatively evaluated than tourists because they are perceived to be a stronger threat to their identity.

Another important result is the differential homogeneity with which the outgroups are perceived. Perceived outgroup homogeneity is higher for immigrants (44 per cent of the sample believed immigrants are similar among themselves) than for tourists (only 37 per cent). The immigrant outgroup is perceived as more homogeneous and also worse evaluated. Rothgerber and Worchel (1997) suggest that group homogeneity perceptions could fulfil an instrumental function. Following Vanbeselaere (1991), Rothgerber and Worchel (1997) consider that perceived homogeneity facilitates the process of discrimination. The perception of an unwanted group as homogeneous deindividualises this group’s members and favours a common attitude towards the group: it justifies ingroup favouritism and outgroup hostility.

Variance analyses did not show major effects in the perception of immigrants on the basis of age, sex or the school they attended. This could be interpreted as a sign of perceived outgroup homogeneity. Nevertheless, there are significant interaction effects among some variables (age and sex, and sex and school) which indicate for instance that it is the older boys who have a worse image of immigrants. In one of the schools, regardless of sex, the perception of immigrants was drastically worse in the older age group (1.96 vs. 2.92). This school...
is located in the most depressed area of our study town. Results indicate that although among these children there is a ‘non-negative’ perception of immigrants, it is still necessary to conduct preventive campaigns now that ingroup bias seems to be relatively low. Of course it would be necessary to have more extensive samples and with more age groups in order to test if this worsening of the perception of immigrants by older-aged male subjects is substantiated. We are following this line of investigation in our further work.

In summary, we can state that our results are similar, at least in some aspects, to those obtained in previous national, regional or provincial studies carried out with both young and adult populations in which questionnaires or surveys were used to obtain information and results (i.e. Barbadillo 1997; González 1998; Martínez et al. 1996; Mateos and Moral 2000; Navas 1998; Rueda and Navas 1996). In all these studies the overall evaluation of immigrants cannot be termed as negative. In other words, attitudes towards immigrants, when questions are formulated in general and in an abstract fashion, seem to be positive, or at least favourable. But results are quite different when participants are told to bear in mind the economic implications of migration, or when they are asked to state the perceived consequences of an immigrant population in Spain, or the degree of contact, or avoidance, with immigrants (for example Díez-Nicolás 1998 or Mateos and Moral 2000). In other words, favourability in general attitude towards immigrants changes into attitudinal ambiguity, and in some cases blatant rejection, when we study more carefully the answers given, or when another research method is employed (for instance discussion groups; see Martínez et al. 1996).

Both the method and the population with which we carried out this study show some differences with regard to the above-mentioned studies. Nevertheless we also find some parallelisms. For example, although it is true that the children from our sample positively evaluate immigrants both in the open-ended questions and in the semantic differential, this is the group which obtains the worst evaluation in comparison to the tourist outgroup, or the ingroup. Moreover, the children’s general attitude towards immigrants, inferred on the basis of their responses, is in sharp contrast with results from research conducted with an adult non-university student population (Molero et al. 2003; Navas et al. 2000) and with a certain ‘negative’ climate in the area towards immigrants which has been highlighted by the mass media. This difference in results could be due to the different methodologies employed in each study, but it could also reflect a situation in which, except in serious conflicts, outgroup perception in a given society and context is not homogeneous. To explore possible psychological or social reasons for these differences could be an important goal for future research.

In February 2000, we witnessed in Almería an outburst of racist and xenophobic violence directed towards immigrants coming from the Maghreb. The images of havoc and destruction of property must lead us as social psychologists to reflect on what happens in our society. Why do our studies show that there is not a strong racist feeling among the population living in these areas, and reality shows us that when a certain event takes place (in this case the stabbing of three people by two different men from Morocco during a two-week period) all the hatred and violence erupts? A month later (March 2000) in the Spanish general elections those political parties which capitalised on the situation obtained more than two-thirds of the votes. We believe more studies are needed to understand
these social reactions and how to put an end to them. Our results confirm the need to conduct new research increasing the age range and the number of schools. Currently we are carrying out another research project in which 20 schools from the whole province are taking part. The age range in this new study is from 8 to 16 years. We hope this new research will shed further light on some of the questions we have posed in this article.

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