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Italian Fascist propaganda was compared with contemporary right-wing material to explore how political propaganda depicts specific target groups in different historical periods. Taking the theory of delegitimization as the theoretical framework, we analyzed visual images concerning despised social groups used by the Fascist regime and current images of contemporary targets of social resentment used by Lega Nord (currently part of the governing coalition). Images of Jewish and Black people published in the Fascist magazine *La Difesa della Razza* were classified according to eight delegitimizing strategies, as were images of immigrants used on Lega Nord propaganda posters. Although the target group has changed, six of the eight strategies of delegitimization were used in both periods. In most cases, overlap was found in the way target groups were portrayed in the past and in the present.

Prejudice is a dynamic phenomenon that varies across cultures and societies, and across time within the same society. One group may be a target of prejudice during a given historical moment, while becoming the object of benevolent attitudes at another. In most Western societies, for example, intergroup attitudes became more positive during the second half of the twentieth century. However, the social advancement of some discriminated minorities (e.g., Jews) did not extend to others, which still experience severe inequalities (e.g., Gypsies). In fact, although overt prejudice is now socially and sometimes legally punished, blatant forms of discrimination are still directed towards some groups. Old targets of prejudice may be replaced by new ones.

For instance, prejudice against immigrants, especially Muslims, has increased over recent decades, peaking after September 11, 2001. In Italy, pre-existing prejudice against Muslims has been boosted since that event "by the frequent generalizations and the associations made in public debate and the media between Muslims and fundamentalism or terrorism" (ECRI 2006, 22; see also Cere 2002). In 2001 Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi claimed the superiority of Western civilization: "We must be aware of the superiority of our civilization, a system that has guaranteed well-being, respect for human rights and – in contrast with Islamic countries – respect for religious and political rights." Such a civilization is superior because "has at its core – as its greatest value – freedom, which is not the heritage of Islamic culture" (Di Caro, Il Corriere della Sera, September 27, 2001; Maltese, La Repubblica, October 3, 2001). As ECRI points out, surveys indicate a widespread perception among the Italian population that Islam and Muslims represent a threat to security and to the preservation of culture and traditions (Liguori 2006). This is worrying in the light of Staub's observation that ideologies are always involved in the generation of collective violence (1999): "When dominant groups engage in increasingly harsh acts to defend their dominance, … they usually are guided by such ideologies" (182). Even in the case of real conflicts of interests, Staub argues that they have crucial psychological and cultural components (e.g., mistrust and fear of the other). Furthermore, when a conflict occurs between dominant and subordinate groups it can lead to violence, especially because the subordinate group has little or no access to resources and power.

In particular in the last two decades, Italy has also been characterized by a sort of "involution" in terms of anti-

racism and egalitarian norms (International Labor Organization 2009). The rhetoric of populism, often based upon old prejudices and stereotypes, has returned to typify public debate. This phenomenon is unfortunately not restricted to extremist groups, but shared by many people and endorsed by some political leaders, upon which their success has been built (see Liguori 2006). Dal Lago (1999), for instance, refers to the strategies implemented against immigrants in Italy as a "fear-machine," while according to Asor Rosa (2009), representations and concepts typical of the Fascist ideology are coming back, along with conformism on the part of the Italian intelligentsia. Similarly, Mammone (2006) points out that a confused revisionist development is taking place in Italy, aiming sometimes to rehabilitate aspects of the Fascist regime, sometimes to remove the period from the collective memory. Finally, Hassner (2008) argues that in Italy – and in Europe in general – Fascism is resurfacing "under different forms" (see also *Independent*, May 6, 2008; *Guardian*, March 30, 2009).

Our present work investigates how Italian Fascist propaganda spread the belief that particular target groups deserved to be marginalized and excluded, and to discover whether contemporary Italian political propaganda deploys analogous strategies of spreading similar beliefs directed against "new" target groups. We focused specifically on the way visual images are used to communicate prejudiced beliefs.

1. Visual Images and Prejudice

Mendelberg observes that "visual images are a more effective way to communicate implicitly … Stereotypical or threatening images can communicate derogatory racial meaning in a more subtle way than an equivalent verbal statement" (2001, 9), while Greenwood shows that "the combination of elements captured in the image … suggests whether the viewer should adopt a sympathetic, respectful, disdainful or some other attitude toward the subject" (2005, 1). Thus, it is not surprising that some of the many, many studies of images have addressed issues of prejudice and stereotyping.

Chavez (2001), for instance, investigates the role played by images in the U.S. discourse about immigrants and immigration over the period 1965 to 1999. Analyzing the covers of ten magazines (e.g., *National Review*, *Nation*, *Time*), he provides a historical account of depictions of immigration, using the covers as a tool to identify common media messages about immigration. He found interesting historical patterns: for instance, during the 1970s positive portrayals of refugees emerged, while in the 1980s the number of refugees became a concern. Chavez argues that the way the immigration issue was constructed and debated on magazine covers reflected the ambivalent attitude of U.S. society toward immigration. An analogous investigation by Gilbert and Viswanathan (2007) examined covers and articles published in two Canadian magazines (from 1960 to 2006) to find out how immigration and multiculturalism were depicted and what was conveyed about national politics concerning the issue. Their work revealed a dualistic pattern, depicting immigrants as a cultural enrichment on one side, and as a threat on the other. Mullen (2004) analyzes the portrayal of ethnic immigrant groups in American children's books from the beginning of the last century, finding a simplified and negative cognitive representation where the fictional children were described more in physical than in personal terms, with smaller heads and lower verbal complexity. These results "suggest a means whereby the cognitive representations of some ethnic immigrant groups would be particularly resistant to change" (258). The simplified and negative portrayals would make it difficult to challenge unfavorable cognitive representations popular in the culture at the time.

Going further into the past, Cooks (2007) investigates caricatures of African-American fairgoers at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, an event that served to solidify America's national identity. Analyzed racist images addressing issues relating to the roles of race, class and social hierarchy in turn-of-the-century America, Cooks finds that the portrayals of African Americans reveal that they were an unwanted presence at the exposition, disclosing social anxieties of white Americans that their national identity would be tainted by including African Americans in the nation.

Images are also interesting material for investigating changes in social representation of groups. Peng (2004) analyzes how U.S. newspapers (*New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times*) portrayed China over time (1992–2002),

finding a significant increase in the total number of photographs, especially relating to economic and human-interest issues, more portrayals of ordinary people, and a positive overall tone. According to Peng, several factors could have contributed to such an increase, including China's growing international influence and the consequent increase in international media exposure, increased contact and understanding between the United States and China, and the growing openness and accessibility of Chinese society.

So visual images and mass media play an important role in conveying group social representations, stereotypes, and prejudices. Investigating how a group is visually portrayed in a given historical period can provide us with important clues to its social status and intergroup relations, helping us to understand whether it is a target of delegitimization (Bar-Tal 1989), moral exclusion (Opotow 1990), or dehumanization (Haslam 2006). For instance, in his famous book *Le juif médiéval au miroir de l'art chrétien* (1966), Bernhard Blumenkranz analyzes the images of Jews in medieval Christian art to trace the history of Western anti-Semitic sentiment. Religious and political power systems have often used images to inoculate people with particular ideologies. One only needs to think of the role played by pictorial representations during and since the Middle Ages to convey the Roman Catholic Church's precepts in order to control a mostly illiterate population. In the twentieth century, thanks to the development of mass media, the use of visual images became fundamental, especially for political propaganda.

As already mentioned, old targets of prejudice may be replaced by new ones, but the way these targets are portrayed might remain the same, at least within the same society. Therefore, exploring similarities in the way minority groups are represented visually in two different historical periods offers an opportunity to identify recurring mechanisms of derogation. In this study we first investigate images published during the Fascist era, in order to identify the processes responsible for the severe moral exclusion of certain groups. Then we compare these with images used by the Lega Nord in order to investigate whether similar processes are at work today, addressed to contemporary targets of social resentment. The Lega Nord was founded during the 1980s and is currently part of the governing coalition. At the last general election (April 2008) it gathered around the 8 percent of the consensus (that is, around three millions votes), the majority of which came from the richest Northern regions, such as Veneto and Lombardia, where Lega Nord won up to around the 27 percent of the vote (see Ministero dell'Interno, Archivio storico delle elezioni). Recent regional elections (March 2010) brought Lega Nord up to 35 percent of the vote in the Veneto region (see section 5 for further information).

2. The Historical Archive

To investigate the visual images of Fascist propaganda we used *La Difesa della Razza* (The Defense of the Race), a bimonthly magazine that was one of the most important vehicles of Fascist propaganda (Cassata 2008). The magazine first appeared on August 5, 1938, while the last of its 118 issues came out on June 20, 1943 – on the eve of the fall of the Fascist regime. Initially, circulation was high by the standards of the time (150,000 copies per issue), although from November 1940 the number of copies printed fell due to wartime restrictions on the use of paper. *La Difesa della Razza* addressed topics concerning anti-Semitism and racism, racial stereotyping, eugenics, and racial politics. It was characterized by aggressive graphics and sensationalist headlines, and crucially for us, it was full of photographs, cartoons, and photomontages, often accompanied by offensive and vulgar captions. A considerable number of articles were written by important scientists of the time and were based on biological racism (Raspanti 1994). *La Difesa della Razza* was highly regarded by the regime and was distributed in schools (Cassata 2008).

3. Theoretical Background

Delegitimization theory (Bar-Tal 1989, 2000) is particularly suitable for the aims of the present research: exploring similarities in the way minority groups are visually represented in two historical periods to identify recurring mechanisms of derogation. Examining beliefs shared within a group or society, Bar-Tal proposes an analysis of the process of delegitimization that prepares and accompanies outbreaks of more extreme forms of discrimination and collective violence. The process of delegitimization is a categorization of groups into extreme negative social categories, which are ultimately excluded from society and even human-

ity. This process results in the permanent exclusion of the delegitimized group, which is thus placed outside the circle of groups with which contact is allowed. Bar-Tal argues that the origins of delegitimization lie in the desire to elevate or differentiate the ingroup or exploit the outgroup, or in situations of violent intergroup conflict (1989). A sense of being threatened and the existence of sharp differences between the groups are conditions which facilitate the process of delegitimization. This process is an extreme case of stereotyping and prejudice, and "leads to an array of behaviors including malevolent treatment and preventive steps to avert potential danger to the ingroup. Delegitimization is also a consequence of brutal and cruel behavior because it serves as a justification mechanism" (Bar-Tal 1990, 78).

Besides a clear definition of the delegitimization process, Bar-Tal's theory offers a straightforward list of delegitimization strategies and functions that are useful for empirical investigations. Delegitimization may involve: *dehumanizing* the outgroup, labeling its members as inhuman, subhuman (e.g., animals), or negative superhuman creatures (e.g., demons, monsters); categorizing the outgroup into groups considered violators of central social norms (e.g., murders, maniacs), i.e., *outcasting*; *trait characterization* attributing negative physical and personality traits (e.g., stupidity); using *political labels* where the outgroup is categorized into political groups which are totally rejected by the ingroup (e.g., capitalists, communists); and through *group comparison*, which occurs when the outgroup is categorized into groups that symbolize the most undesirable groups for the delegitimizing society (e.g., vandals), or when the comparison positively differentiates the delegitimizing group. According to Bar-Tal the process of delegitimization serves several functions, such as providing the ingroup with a justification for negative behaviors toward others, reinforcing and emphasizing intergroup boundaries, experiencing a sense of superiority, and maintaining ingroup uniformity (1989, 2000).

Bar-Tal's theory has so far been applied to texts published in *La Difesa della Razza*, but not to images (Volpato and Cantone 2005; Volpato and Durante 2003; Volpato, Durante, and Cantone 2007). Three new ways of delegitimization have emerged from that research, namely: *outgroup numerousness*, emphasizing the numerousness of the outgroup in order to increase the perception of threat; *segregation*, accusing the outgroup of refusing to assimilate (and therefore being the first racists) and pursuing discriminatory behaviors aimed at isolating it; and *using the delegitimized group to delegitimize other groups*, where groups are delegitimized by association with a despised group.

Volpato and Durante (2003) use all the aforementioned strategies to classify 421 articles relating to the Jewish group. Their findings show that delegitimizing strategies unfolded coherently over time: the delegitimization enacted in the magazine's early years aimed at the inoculation of beliefs designed to produce an oppressive sense of threat in the ingroup (which demanded adequate solutions). The strategies associated with later years (e.g., *trait characterization*) reinforce the stereotyping of the minority, and introduce *group comparisons* and (in the final year of publication) *using the delegitimized group to delegitimize other groups*. Volpato and Durante argue that first it was asserted that the outgroup was undesirably different, and that the group then became separated, appearing as threatening aliens, overwhelming in numbers. Then, other groups could be smeared and delegitimized by their association with the delegitimized group. However, no dehumanizing content was found in the analyzed texts, diverging from the later finding of Volpato and Cantone (2005) in their classification of articles concerning Africans and half-castes (N = 232). In fact, dehumanization was used by *La Difesa della Razza* to delegitimize the colonized people: Africans were "animalized," while half-castes were described as negative superhuman creatures (e.g., monsters or devils) and accused of corrupting the precious good of "racial purity."[1] Interestingly, in some of the articles focused on Africans and half-castes, the Jewish group was also mentioned and similarly dehumanized in a sort of "guilt by association." Volpato and Cantone (2005) did not, however, find any pattern in

1 The Fascist and Nazi ideologies regarded all racial "cross-breeding" as acts against nature (Raspanti 1994)

the way delegitimization of Africans and half-castes was expressed through the six years of the magazine's publication. According to historians, Italians did not have strong anti-Semitic feelings (Arendt 1963; Sarfatti 2000). Thus, while the Fascist regime had to introduce Italians to anti-Semitism gradually, this was not necessary for Africans and half-castes, which had been delegitimized for centuries by the European culture (Jahoda 1999). Finally, "reversing" Bar-Tal's model, Volpato, Durante, and Cantone (2007) investigate ingroup "hyper-legitimization" strategies glorifying the Italian ingroup and classify 325 articles concerning Italians published in the Fascist magazine.

The present study goes a step further, examining the role played by the visual images published in *La Difesa della Razza* in delegitimizing Jewish and Black populations.[2]

4. The Analysis of the Fascist Images

Three independent judges classified images of Jews and Blacks which appeared in *La Difesa della Razza* during its six years of publication. All photographs, cartoons, and photomontages depicting individuals belonging to the aforementioned groups were classified according to delegitimizing strategy and year of publication. Eight strategies of delegitimization were used as categories of classification: five proposed by Bar-Tal (*dehumanization*, *outcasting*, *political labels*, *trait characterization*, *group comparison*) and three that emerged from previous studies (*outgroup numerousness*, *segregation*, *using the delegitimized group to delegitimize other groups*). When images were accompanied by captions, these were taken into consideration for coding. Images with no delegitimizing content were classified as neutral.

A considerable number of images were found: 835 concerning Jews, 478 concerning Blacks. Thirty-five images depicting Jews and fifteen depicting Black people were classified as neutral. The results for the remaining images are presented in Table 1. All eight strategies were found for the images of Jews (eight strategies x six years of publication); 64 percent emphasized the physical and personal features stereotypically attributed to Jews, and were therefore classified as *trait characterization*. This finding is not surprising given that the Fascist regime endorsed biological racism, using pseudo-scientific notions supposedly showing a close relationship between physical and psychological data and thus legitimizing the claimed inferiority of the "colored race" and the supposed differentness of the Jewish "race" (Raspanti 1994). This is why *trait characterization* was also the most frequently used strategy of delegitimization for Black people (70 percent) (see Table 1). Examples of images classified in this category are shown in Figure 1 (all figures in the Appendix).

Figure 2 shows examples of images classified as *group comparison*: intergroup comparisons that favor the delegitimizing group. Examples of using the *delegitimized group to delegitimize other groups* are reported in Figure 3: here we see how the enemy democracies (France, England, United States) were delegitimized by association with the Jewish group. Jews were also delegitimized using *political labels*: the examples shown in Figure 4 emphasize the link between Judaism and communism, socialism, and terrorism. For Jews, *outcasting* (see Figure 5) and *outgroup numerousness* (see Figure 6) were also found. For Blacks, these latter two strategies were not found, while only two images were classified as *political labels* (see Table 1).

Finally, images of *segregation* and *dehumanization* were found for both groups. *Segregation* was also frequently used in articles about Jews in *La Difesa della Razza* (see Volpato and Durante 2003). These texts discussed the racial laws which came into force in Italy in 1938, along with the "fantasy" of segregating all the Jews outside Europe (i.e., Madagascar). The image shown in Figure 7 is the visual representations of such topics. Those illustrated in Figure 8 refer to segregation into concentration camps and were published after 1940. Interestingly, this latter content was not found in the texts concerning Jews.

2 The label "Blacks" refers to the following groups: negroes (the term used by *La Difesa della Razza* for Africans), dark-skinned people, and African Americans. The way the authors and editors of the Fascist magazine described these groups undoubtedly reveals a homogeneity bias (Voci 2000), which characterized the Italian social sciences of the day (Volpato 2000). See Faloppa (2004) for similarities in the use of the words "negro" and "indigenous" in *La Difesa della Razza*.

Table 1. Images of Jews and Blacks classified by delegitimizing strategy and year of publication

Strategy	Images of Jews								Images of Blacks							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	Total	%	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	Total	%
Dehumanization	2	15	4	5	5	0	31	4%	1	2	1	4	1	1	10	2%
Trait characterization	42	170	87	96	56	62	513	64%	48	66	70	70	55	15	324	70%
Political labels	6	10	7	17	2	1	43	5%	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	0.4%
Group comparison	4	4	2	1	2	1	14	2%	7	12	10	11	2	4	46	10%
Segregation	4	19	2	16	16	1	58	7%	3	14	1	1	5	15	39	8%
Using the delegitimized group to delegitimize other groups	3	17	2	20	11	11	64	8%	3	15	4	4	12	4	42	9%
Outgroup numerousness	12	8	5	10	11	0	46	6%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Outcasting	4	11	3	10	2	1	31	4%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	77	254	112	175	105	77	800	100%	62	110	86	91	75	39	463	100%

While *dehumanization* was used marginally in articles referring to Jews, it was often found in the visual images. These were very vivid and "creative": Jews were portrayed as spiders, vipers, apes, vultures, parasites, microbes, ogres, and devils (see Figure 9 for examples). Again, we found in images what was left unsaid in words. Blacks were dehumanized by animalization (apes) or objectification (pictures of parts of the body, such as hands and feet) (see Haslam et al. 2008).

The classification of visual images was submitted to correspondence analysis separately for Jews and Blacks in order to investigate patterns of delegitimizing strategies over the years (Benzécri 1980; Clausen 1998; Greenacre and Blasius 1994). The correspondence analysis carried out on the classification of the images of Jews shows that the first two dimensions account for 69.5 percent of the total inertia. The first dimension (43.5 percent of total inertia) shows the contrast between the first year (1938) (cos^2 =.44; *contr* =.23) and the sixth year of publication (1942–43) (cos^2 =.66; *contr* =.33).[3] The first year is associated with *outgroup numerousness* (cos^2 =.79; *contr* =.44) and *segregation* (cos^2 =.52; *contr* =.26), the sixth with *trait characterization* (cos^2 =.89; *contr* =.25). The former seems to reflect the presence of Jews within Italian society and the desire to segregate them, while the latter suggests an obsessive stereotyping representation of the "enemy": in the face of imminent defeat Fascist propaganda had no other "weapon" than to distance the ingroup from the outgroup through stereotypes. The second dimension (26.1 percent of total inertia) shows the opposition of the first (cos^2 =.48; *contr* =.41) and third (1939-40) (cos^2 =.54; *contr* =.29) years versus the fourth (1940–41) (cos^2 =.17; *contr* =.10) and the fifth years (cos^2 =.20; *contr* =.15). The first and third years are associated with *group comparison* (cos^2 =.53; *contr* =.14), while the fourth and fifth years are associated with *using the Jewish group to delegitimize other groups* (cos^2 =.72; *contr* =.40). This is clearly connected with the beginning of the war, which for Italy started in 1940 and according to historians was not universally welcomed (Cordova 2010; De Felice 1990). Associating the Allies with the Jews served to justify the war. As with the texts, the results show a pattern of delegitimization that varies according to the year of publication.

Concerning the images of Blacks, our results did not show any pattern of delegitimization developing over the years: only one dimension emerged (accounting for 77.3 percent of total inertia), and the same strategies were associated

3 The Fascist regime came to power in October 1922 with the March on Rome and imposed a parallel calendar beginning then. The Fascist year began on November 1 and ended on October 31.

with early and later years of publication.[4] The same kind of result was also found for articles concerning Africans and half-castes (Volpato and Cantone 2005). With reference to the Blacks, *La Difesa della Razza* merely conveyed the delegitimization that characterized European racism against colonized populations, which were considered wild and impervious to civilization (Jahoda 1999).

Although the results concerning images published in *La Difesa della Razza* are consistent with those which emerged from the magazine's articles, delegitimizing strategies were used differently in texts and images. This is probably due to the nature of these means of communication: some strategies are more suitable to be used in images (e.g., *trait characterization*), others in words (e.g., *political label*, *outcasting*). Results relating to *dehumanization* are particularly interesting: *dehumanization* of Blacks appeared consistently – though not frequently – in texts and images over the six years of publication. Instead, given the weakness of Italian anti-Semitism (Arendt 1963; Sarfatti 2000), it is plausible that *dehumanization* of the Jewish group could not be accomplished explicitly with words. Images, on the other hand, could subtly convey dehumanizing content, showing what cannot be said. Future research is required on this issue.

In line with previous results, in the images we found a progressive pattern of delegitimization for Jews, but not for Blacks. The former were a small successful minority, so the Fascist regime needed to create and spread resentment to remove them from Italian society: the perception of threat had to be increased progressively. For the latter delegitimization was repeated and reinforced, but not extended: the naturalization of Black inferiority was taken for granted.

5. Comparing the Old with the New

So are the strategies of delegitimization used by *La Difesa della Razza* still present in current Italian political propaganda? Over the past two decades the zeitgeist in Italy has changed, with a significant portion of the population renouncing anti-racism norms. As also noted by Zick and Küpper with reference to modern anti-Semitism in Germany, "people are not motivated to be perceived as tolerant and friendly" (2005, 55), because they perceive that certain racist opinions and stereotypes do not contradict norms, and are accepted by the majority. The Italian specific is that this phenomenon is spread and promoted by politicians who are currently in power.

As a consequence, "political correctness" is widely rejected both in everyday speech and in the mass media, which are instead permeated with prejudice. Immigrants (especially Muslims) are most heavily targeted but also Southern Italians, political adversaries, and women also suffer attacks. For instance, the newspaper *Il Giornale* (whose owner is the Prime Minister's brother), recently used the word "negri," the most derogatory term to address black people, both in headlines and articles.[5] On April 21, 2009, the newspaper *Libero* published an article entitled "Siamo razzisti" (We are racists) on its front page, where being racist was treated as a positive feature. The explicit reference to the Fascist ideology, which was heavily built around the concept of race and racial purity, is clear.

So there is an obvious case for investigating whether the delegitimization strategies used in *La Difesa della Razza* are still used today in visual images of immigrants. We chose to focus on the political propaganda of the Lega Nord. The Lega Nord built its success on social worries and insecurity, appealing to the xenophobia of a society unready for immigration and using it as a means to gain power (Diamanti, *La Repubblica*, March 31, 2010). It is one of the major allies of the Popolo delle Libertà (PdL) led by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and plays a prominent role in the government, supplying three current ministers including the Secretary of the Interior, who is responsible for immigration. In a country that has always been uncertain about its own identity, Lega Nord proposes an identity model based on tradition,

4 As suggested by an anonymous reviewer, we checked for the association between target groups and years of publication in the use of each delegitimization strategy. Chi-square tests revealed significant results for *trait characterization*, $\chi 2(5) = 40.2$, $p < .001$, and *segregation*, $\chi 2(5) = 29.9$, $p < .001$ (see Table 1).

5 See, for example, *Il Giornale*, January 9, 2010, front page, or January 19, 2010, front page.

for the most part invented (see Hobsbawm et al. 1983), and on the familiar Us/Them dichotomy, where "them" refers to foreigners (see Liguori 2006). Lega Nord members are always talking about the issues of "land" and "blood," calling for defense of the "roots," in terms closely resembling the Fascist ideology (Mosse 1978). In 2002 and 2006 ECRI expressed concern about the widespread use of racist and xenophobic discourses particularly by members of the Lega Nord and reported that racist and xenophobic discourses have gone as far as presenting Rom, Sinti, Muslims, and members of other minority groups "as a threat to public health and the preservation of national or local identity, resulting in some cases in incitement to discrimination, violence or hatred towards them" (ECRI 2006, 26; see also Liguori 2006).

We considered visual images concerning immigrants which appeared on propaganda posters used by Lega Nord. To our knowledge there is no systematically archived material, so we examined the posters accessible on local and national Lega Nord websites. We found twenty-five posters relating to the period 1999–2009. Three independent, trained judges classified them according to the aforementioned eight delegitimizing strategies. Twenty-one out of twenty-five images were coded, while the remaining four images were not classified because they were either too ambiguous or the textual part was predominant.

Six out of the eight strategies were found in the selected material. Seven images were classified as *outgroup numerousness* (see Figure 10 for examples; all figures in the Appendix), five as *trait characterization* (Figure 11). Images coded as *group comparison* (2) are shown in Figure 12, while examples of *segregation* (2) are given in Figure 13. Three images were classified as *political labels* (Figure 14), and the remaining two as *using the delegitimized group to delegitimize other groups* (Figure 15).

The Lega Nord images strikingly resemble those published in *La Difesa della Razza*. The target group has changed, but not the strategies. In most cases, even the way the strategy is visually represented seems the same. Consider, for instance, the posters coded as *segregation*: here, immigrants are banned from voting just like the Jews were banned from the Italian schools, institutions, and society during fascism (compare Figure 7 to Figure 13). Likewise, in both "old" and "new" images classified in the category *using the delegitimized group to delegitimize other groups*, symbols of the "enemy" are superimposed on maps to stress the enemy's power, and most likely to increase threat perception (compare Figure 3 to Figure 15). The perception of threat is also increased by emphasizing the *outgroup numerousness* (compare Figure 6 to Figure 10). No matter the actual size of the delegitimized group, both the Fascist regime and the Lega Nord stress that "there are many of them", that "we are being invaded" by outgroup members. This is consistent with recent surveys showing that although the percentage of Muslims in Italy is just 2 percent (according to official statistics), 50 percent of Italians believe there are too many Muslims (Zick and Küpper 2009). According to intergroup threat theory (Stephan and Stephan 2000), group size may elicit realistic threat. Perceptions of larger outgroup size leads to greater perceptions of threatened ingroup interest: outgroup members are perceived as able to inflict harm or control valued resources.

Interestingly, economic crisis is a common denominator then and now. Especially under these circumstances, emphasizing outgroup size increases the perception of threat, leading to behavioral consequences (along with negative emotional reactions) such as opposing policies that favor the outgroup (Renfro et al. 2006; Sawires and Peacock 2000), which seems particularly relevant for the inclusion of the immigrants in the host society. As also noted by Bar-Tal (1989), delegitimization serves several functions, including providing the ingroup with a justification for negative behaviors toward others and reinforcing intergroup boundaries. The strategies of delegitimization found in the visual images used by both the Lega Nord and the Fascist regime seem designed to serve these aims.

Both kinds of propaganda seem to offer the public a scapegoat for social tensions, thus diverting ingroup members' attention from pressing problems which are difficult to solve (i.e., the economic crisis). Thus, the delegitimized group becomes the direct cause of complex and distressing events in a given society: on the basis of the spread of such perverse beliefs, it is considered to be the cause of the event,

and at the same time, an explanation for everything that took place during the event (Tajfel 1981). To quote Bar-Tal on the delegitimization of the Jews in Nazi Germany: "there is little doubt that the distance between delegitimization of this intensity and behavioral harm is very small" (1990, 78).

6. Conclusions

We believe that the reason why the Lega Nord images do not make Italians indignant is partly because a deeper reflection of the Fascist past never took place in Italy. Consider, for instance, recently events in Bologna, where the local council (ruled by a left-wing party) advertised a self-defense course for women using an image dating from 1944 of a black man sexually assaulting a white woman (*La Repubblica*, April 16, 2009). The image was originally used in Fascist propaganda during the period of the "Salò Republic" (1943–45) to warn Italians that the African troops in the Allied armies would rape Italian women. The way the Bologna council used such an image is, in our opinion, a clear sign of historical revisionism: the current zeitgeist in Italy is permeated with words and images emanating from a past that has never been properly discussed. As Staub notes in his exploration of the origins of evil, "once devaluation becomes part of a culture, its literature, art, and media are perpetuated in social institutions, and, especially once it gives rise to discrimination or other institutionalized forms of antagonism, it becomes highly resistant to change. Even when its public expression is relatively quiescent for a period of time, … it often remains part of the deep structure of the culture and can re-emerge when instigating conditions for violence are present" (1999, 183–84).

We think that this is the case. As Gentile argues (2009), postwar Italy never properly confronted its own Fascist legacy, and the self-comforting assumption that fascism was a "soft totalitarianism" led Italians to forget instead of critically analyzing it (Asor Rosa 2009). The result is that as soon as a political vacuum occurs, old or new forms of fascism arrive to fill it. After the end of World War II, fascism was considered a period to be parenthesized and forgotten. For more than forty years the Fascist experience has been removed from the collective memory and conscience, along with the crimes committed, especially those perpetrated in the African colonies (Mari et al. 2010). This probably led many Italians to interpret the phenomenon of migration according to old beliefs. The old-fashioned stereotypes have been applied, without criticism, to the new migrants (Blanchard and Bancel 1998). In other words, the negative attitude targeting Blacks and Jews spread by the Fascist regime has been redirected toward immigrants (Volpato and Durante 2010).

We found that although old targets of prejudice have been replaced by new ones, the delegitimizing strategies are mostly the same. One limitation was the disproportionality of the two image collections, which limits the reach of our conclusions. The number of images available for the political propaganda of a single party cannot even come close to the number of images coming from a propaganda magazine published twice a month for six years during a dictatorship. These are preliminary results and further research, also focusing on the textual parts of this kind of material, is needed. However, the way immigrants are portrayed by a governing party, and the fact that these depictions resemble those of Fascism, does tell us something. First of all, Fascist content is back in the Italian political arena; secondly, public opinion seems to be unaware of the origins and meanings of certain images, suggesting that a process of historical revisionism is currently taking place.

Finally, we believe that the use of these kinds of depictions by a political party that is in power and in charge of immigration policy is unhelpful for the process of integration, for both immigrants and Italians. The over-simplified and extremely negative portrayals of immigrants are likely to reinforce already unfavorable cognitive representations held by Italians. Liguori's survey of 2,200 Italian teenagers aged 14–18 in 110 different places (2006), found that racism and stereotypes towards strangers were increasing. Echoing the imagery of Lega Nord's posters, 56 percent of participants said that Muslims have "cruel and barbarous laws", 66 percent that "women are not respected, they have no rights," and 52 percent that Muslims "support terrorism" (303, footnote 476). In our opinion, the portrayals of immigrants analyzed for the present work are likely to exacerbate the sense of being threatened and the sharp differences between groups, which are among the conditions that might lead to intergroup conflict.

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Appendix: Fascist and Lega Nord propaganda images

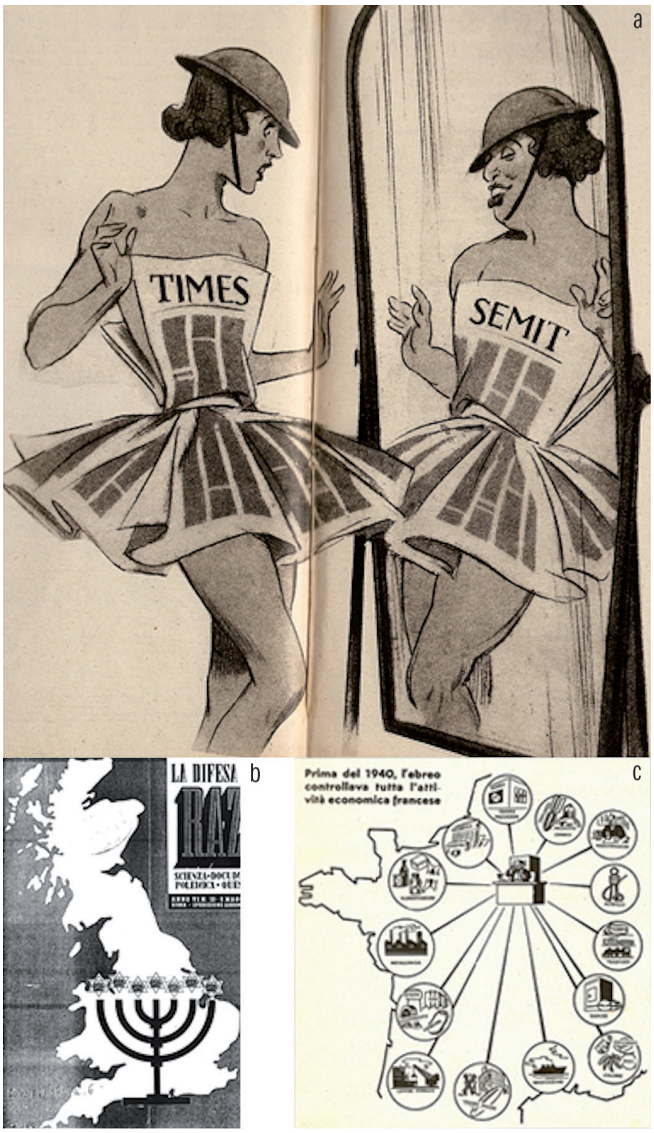
Figure 1: Fascist propaganda classified as "trait characterization."

Source: a. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year I – 1938), issue 3, 10.
b. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year I – 1938), issue 1, 17.
c. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year I – 1938), issue 1, 133.

Figure 2: Fascist propaganda classified as "group comparison."

Source: a. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year I – 1938), issue 2, 28.
b. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year V – 1941/1942), issue 5, 28.
c. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year I – 1938), issue 1, front cover.

Figure 3: Fascist propaganda classified as "using the delegitimized group to delegitimize other groups."

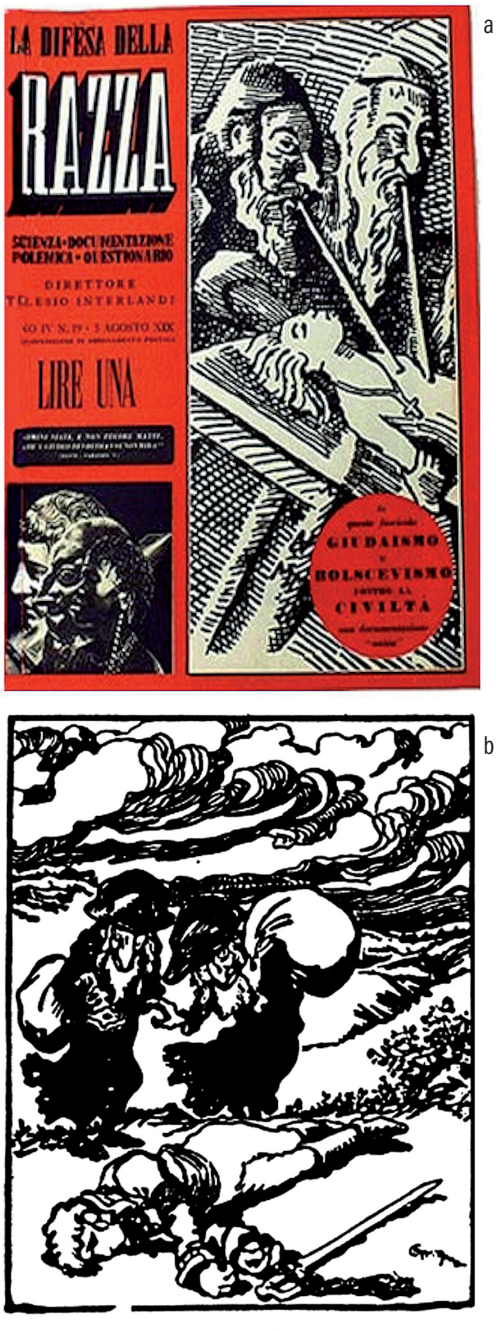


Source: a. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year IV – 1940/1941), issue 18, 16–17.
b. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year IV – 1940/1941), issue 13, front cover.
c. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year IV – 1940/1941), issue 20, 13.

Figure 4: Fascist propaganda classified as "political labels."

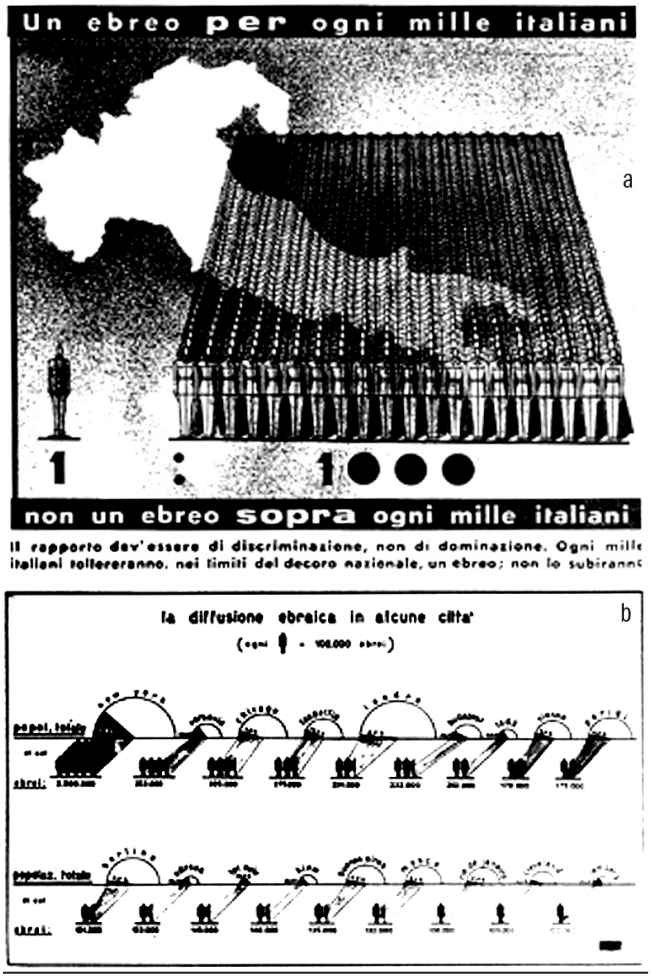
Source: a. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year IV – 1940/1941), issue 19, 29.
b. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year II – 1938/1939), issue 14, 23.
c. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year I – 1938), issue 6, 53.
d. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year I – 1938), issue 6, 52.

Figure 5: Fascist propaganda classified as "outcasting."



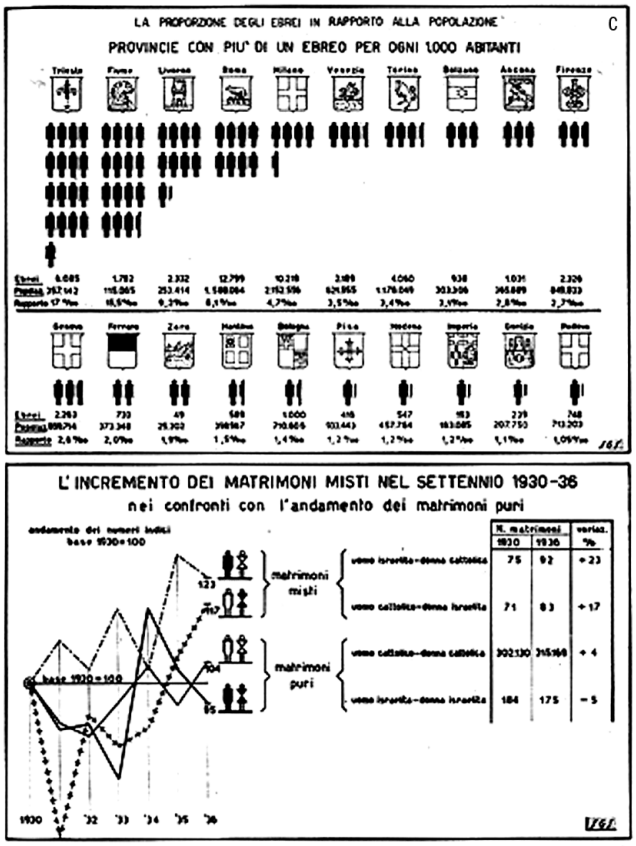
Source: a. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year IV – 1940/1941), issue 19, front cover.
b. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year II – 1938/1939), issue 9, 31.

Figure 6: Fascist propaganda classified as "outgroup numerousness."



Source: a. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year I – 1938), issue 2, 7.
b. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year I – 1938), issue 5, 11.

Figure 6: Fascist propaganda classified as "outgroup numerousness."



Source: c. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year I – 1938), issue 6, 25.

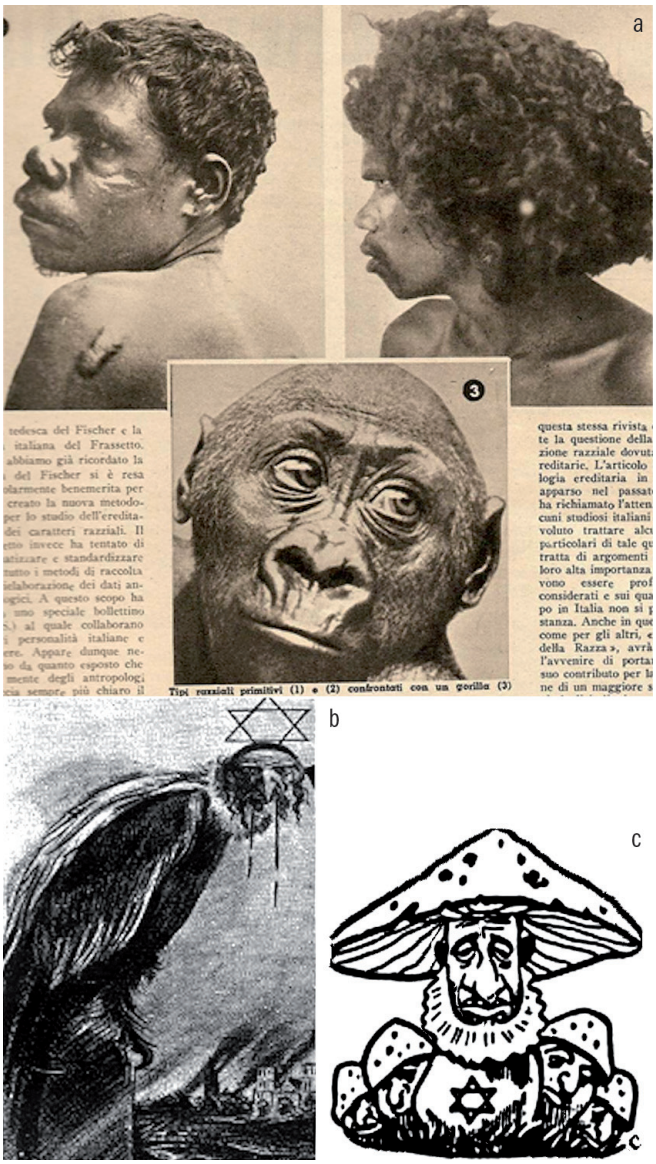
Figure 7: Fascist propaganda classified as "segregation."

Source: *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year II – 1938/1939), issue 2, 24–25.

Figure 8: Fascist propaganda classified as "segregation."

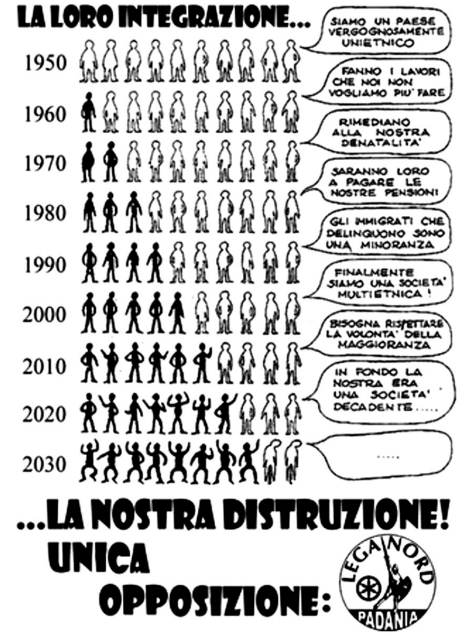
Source: a. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year IV – 1940/1941), issue 16, 8.
b. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year IV – 1940/1941), issue 17, 29.

Figure 9: Fascist propaganda classified as "dehumanization."



Source: a. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year III – 1939/1940), issue 18, 15.
b. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year II – 1938/1939), issue 8, 32.
c. *La Difesa della Razza* (Rome: Editrice Tumminelli, year II – 1938/1939), issue 9, 34.

Figure 10: Lega Nord propaganda classified as "outgroup numerousness."



a

b

Source: a. http://www.leganordmestre.org/ (accessed February 20, 2010).
b. http://www.giovaniorobici.org/categoria.asp?s=28&c=29 (accessed March 20, 2009).

Figure 11: Lega Nord propaganda classified as "trait characterization."

a

b

Source: a. http://leganordbasilicatamanifestievolantini.blogspot.com/ (accessed March 20, 2009).
b. http://leganordbasilicatamanifestievolantini.blogspot.com/ (accessed April 20, 2010).

Figure 12: Lega Nord propaganda classified as "group comparison."

a

b

Source: a. http://www.leganordromagna.org/manifesti/campagne.php (accessed March 27, 2010).
b. http://www.leganordromagna.org/manifesti/campagne.php (accessed March 27, 2010).

Figure 13: Lega Nord propaganda classified as "segregation."

Source: a. http://www.mgpvenexia.org/MGP_NoIslam%202%20copia.jpg (accessed March 20, 2009).
b. http://www.leganordromagna.org/manifesti/campagne.php (accessed March 27, 2010).

Figure 14: Lega Nord propaganda classified as "political labels."

Source: a. http://www.robertocota.it/index.php (accessed February 20, 2010).
b. http://www.lega-lombarda.org/pag_01.htm (accessed March 27, 2010).

Figure 15: Lega Nord propaganda classified as "using the delegitimized group to delegitimize other groups."

Source: a. http://www.claudiobottari.org/images (accessed April 20, 2010).
b. http://leganordbasilicatamanifestievolantini.blogspot.com/ (accessed March 20, 2010).

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