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This is a pre print version of the following article:

Original Citation:

Availability:

This version is available <http://hdl.handle.net/2318/2039250> since 2024-12-17T21:22:40Z

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Facing the negative stereotypes of a social identity: the case of southern Italians. [Poster abstract].
2024 Social Identity Meeting Abstracts, University of Kent, Canterbury, UK.

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When the national soccer team plays against another team, Italians feel bound together as supporters, as it fosters such a strong sense of belonging. By contrast, when socio economic issues are involved, a divide emerges that gives rise to stereotypes, prejudices and even more or less hidden forms of discrimination. The present study aims to explore the dimensions of the social identity of Southern Italians, investigating the relationship between group identification and stereotypes. Social inequality in Italy reflects differences in socio-economic status, distribution of resources and educational and professional opportunities, which results in a divide between northern and southern areas. In fact, more than 2.5 million people left the south between 2002 and 2021, 81% of whom moved to the north or center of Italy. The last migration flow mainly concerns young adults, as 808,000 of them were under 35 years old and 236,000 were graduated (Svimez, 2023). Therefore, we hypothesized that examining the facets of the vertical and horizontal stereotypes (Abele et al., 2021) of the southern Italians would provide new insights, considering the relationship between ability, assertiveness, and socioeconomic status (Yzerbyt et al. 2022) and their effects on identity and decision-making (Abele, 2022; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019). We investigated the sociability, morality, ability and assertiveness stereotypes and their relationship with status, inequality and intergroup relations using quantitative and qualitative methods. Descriptive analysis and correlational results of studies 1 and 2 showed that Southern Italians were stereotyped as high in sociability and low in morality, ability, assertiveness, and status. The intergroup relation between southern and northern Italians was perceived as uncooperative. Southern Italians perceived their inferiority in socio-economic status and they rated it as illegitimate but largely stable over time. Ingroup identification correlated positively with all facets. Nevertheless, a negative relationship was found between assertiveness and the perception of socio-economic stability. This could offer new insights for investigating the effects of threatening assertiveness on well-being, social distancing and, consequently, social identity management through upward mobility and social creativity rather than promoting social change. In the next studies, we will experimentally investigate the effects of stereotype threat (Hauke & Abele, 2020) on strategies for coping with negatively stereotyped social identity (Jetten et al., 2017).