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**The Relationship between Local Identification, Urban Disorder Sensitivity, and Prejudice Toward Immigrants: The Role of Autochthony**

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**Running Head: Local identification, urban disorder sensitivity, and ethnic prejudice**

**The relationship between local identification, urban disorder sensitivity, and ethnic prejudice:**

**The role of autochthony**

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**The relationship between local identification, urban disorder sensitivity, and prejudice  
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**Abstract**

Autochthony is the belief that a place belongs to those who were born there and that they are more entitled. Autochthony and local identification can foster sensitivity to any source of disorder that threatens local stability. The aims of this study were to determine whether: 1) local identification is associated with a higher level of sensitivity to urban disorder and a higher level of prejudice toward immigrants; 2) higher city identifiers use autochthony (entitlement for first comers) as a justification for both of these attitudes. A self-report questionnaire was administered to 254 adult residents of Turin, Italy. Local identification was found related to autochthony and to urban disorder sensitivity, autochthony was positively associated with both urban disorder sensitivity and prejudice toward immigrants and it mediated the relationship between local identification and prejudice.

Keywords: Autochthony; Local identification; Prejudice toward immigrants; Urban disorder sensitivity, Structural equation modelling

# **The relationship between local identification, urban disorder sensitivity, and prejudice toward immigrants: The role of autochthony**

## **Introduction**

Globalization and massive influx of immigrants have brought rapid changes to neighborhoods and streets. Globalization has rendered places more similar and less culturally distinct, while immigrant influx has engendered wide-reaching changes and reorganization in how spaces and places are configured. This has given rise to new forms of encounter and made new kinds of co-presence possible among diverse ethnic groups in places previously characterized by racial isolation (see Dixon, 2001; Dixon & Durrheim, 2004). Globalization has opened up many possibilities but it has also produced threats and uncertainty. People do not always find it easy to adapt to the instability of today's society. For many, these changes may be stimulating but also disorienting. Moreover, mass migration movements have fueled feelings of insecurity among oldcomers, who perceive the boundaries delimiting their places as ever more fragile and porous.

In community psychology the debate is still open over community and diversity, bonding and bridging ties (see: Brodsky, 2017; Stivala, 2017; Townley, Kloos, Green & Franco, 2011). Starting with Putnam (2007), many studies described the negative association between diversity and trust (for a summary, see Neal, 2017). Interventions that foster integration try to develop both bonding and bridging ties, since the former guarantee the need for connection and belonging while the latter make it possible to build connections with other communities, groups, and individuals. As Lewicka (2011) noted, despite these relevant changes, people's connection with their immediate surroundings is still relevant. Strong local identification besides a clear definition of boundaries and territorial rights may reduce the feeling of insecurity toward a complex and changing world (Dixon, 2001; Tartaglia & Rossi, 2015).

In an increasingly globalized and heterogeneous world characterized by greater decentralization, political and economic liberalization, mobility of goods and persons, and permeable borders, there is a growing focus on the psychological relevance of the local dimension. People look for a clear direction, something to cling to and refer to, and they find it in smaller communities with which they can easily identify (Verkuyten, 2014). From a psychological perspective, boundaries play an important role, as they provide legitimate and necessary tools for preserving internal community relations and ensure the physical and emotional safety of its members. On the one hand, they facilitate the processes of belonging and collective identification, support the feeling, conviction, and expectation of being part of a group, of having a role in it, and of being accepted by others. On the other hand, boundaries define who belongs to a community and who does not (Mannarini, Rochira, & Talò, 2012; Nowell & Boyd, 2010).

Furthermore, as Mannarini and colleagues (2017) noted, the identification processes inside communities can be connected to identification processes inside groups. The identification with a community, as well as with a group, gives shape to the social component of one's own personal identity and fosters a positive self-image. This identification mechanism involves a cognitive process by which people categorize themselves and others as members of their own group or members of groups other than their own. As Puddifoot (1997) highlighted in his study on psychological reactions to the perceived elimination of community borders, the Social Identity Theory (SIT; Tajfel, 1978, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1985) and the Self Categorization Theory (SCT; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, McGarty, 1994) provide a useful theoretical framework for examining such dynamics.

Identifying with local place can be seen as an attempt to counterbalance the complexity of today's world, which should be familiar and ordered. Scholars broadly agree that stable and relevant experience of place can promote health and well-being, providing people with a membership that they can adopt to delineate their identity (Gattino, De Piccoli, Fassio, & Rollero, 2013; Mannarini et

al., 2012; Mannarini, Talò, & Rochira, 2017; Nowell, Berkowitz, Deacon, & Foster-Fishman, 2006). It is this kind of local identification, through which places form part of the self-image, that fosters the sensitivity that any source of disorder will threaten a local place's stability. Indeed, the social and the physical dimension of a community are closely related and constitute the space where individuals form social exchanges and meaningful relationships (Long & Perkins, 2007; Mannarini et al., 2012). Disorder in the local environment can be either physical (e.g., graffiti-covered walls, trash-filled streets, and other signs of decay) or social (e.g., presence of new ethnic and social groups). Such disorder may contribute to increasing the sense of threat and violation of spaces and boundaries, whether physical and/or symbolic, also heightening the sense of threat to one's identity. Since identity threats are likely to be more relevant for those who closely identify with the ingroup, the reaction is a rise in differentiation from and rejection of the outgroup (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2007).

Accordingly, one would expect that people with strong local identification will be more sensible to violation of the territory (e.g., physical and social disorder and presence of strangers). This relation may be justified by an ideology that affirms the right of the ingroup members over new arrivals to the community. This ideology is termed autochthony, i.e., the idea that "first comers" have more rights to a place than newcomers.

The present study goes beyond existing work by investigating the relationships between local identification, autochthony, sensitivity to local disorder, and prejudice toward immigrants. The aim was to show that autochthony is related not only to the exclusion of immigrants, as earlier research has demonstrated (i.e., Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2013), but also to a higher sensitivity to urban disorder caused by the presence of domestic deviant outgroups. This paper focuses on one of several dialectics between opposing points of view in community psychology, namely, the dialectic between diversity and inclusion. The aim is to contribute to the *community-diversity dialectic* debate (Brodsky, 2017; Stivala, 2017; Townley, Kloos, Green & Franco, 2011).

## **Local Identification and Sensitivity to Urban Disorder**

The psychological relationship between individuals and their surroundings has been studied through the concept of place identification. Place identification is related to cognition about the self as a member of a physical space. Like social identity, it contributes to define the identity of residents of a place and enhances the sense of being part of the physical dimension of a community (Bonaiuto, Breakwell, & Cano, 1996; Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983; Uzzell, Pol, & Badenas, 2002). The level of identification with place may affect how people perceive and evaluate the context. For example, high place identification may imply sensitivity to place violation. For the urban environment, Jaskiewicz and Besta (2017) define this sensitivity as *urban disorder sensitivity* (UDS). They assume that individual differences in the perception that objects are out of place in a city concern both social (*spatial intrusion*; SI) and spatial aspects (*place transgression*; PT). Social aspects refer to the presence of certain categories of people, usually stigmatized groups (i.e., beggars, prostitutes, vagrants, etc.), whereas spatial aspects concern the spectrum of inappropriate and undesirable behaviors in a public space that can denote a fracture from the norms governing public interaction and social order. In this context, behavior in itself is the source of the problem rather than the person who acts it out.

Jaskiewicz and Besta (2017) showed that there is a relationship between individual sensitivity to violation of the socio-spatial order in urban contexts and the level of identification with the city. Specifically, using SIT and SCT to interpret their results, they highlighted that city identification predicted urban disorder sensitivity. The theories posit that one of the peculiarities of group processes is the development of a positive identity by underlining the supremacy of one's ingroup. As explained by SIT, identification with a group provides for the formation of the social part of personal identity and it plays an important role in promoting individual self-esteem and supporting a

positive self-image. People who identify firmly with their group express a noticeable disposition to favor members of their own group and to discredit outgroup members.

This also occurs in the milieu of the place of residence. As Jaskiewicz and Besta (2017) suggest, individuals who identify deeply with their local context believe that place is a very important part of their self-concept. Consistent with SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1985; Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Brown, 2000), the strength of local identification not only increases self-esteem but also fosters distress if one's own group is damaged or threatened. Place can therefore be considered a social category subject to the same rules as social identification and derived from processes of identification, cohesion, and satisfaction (Tweigger, Ross & Uzzell, 1996; Uzzell et al., 2002). Indeed, it applies specifically to the aspects of identity and self-categorization on the basis of membership to a locally defined group (Rollero & De Piccoli, 2010). Thus, feeling profound distress when uncivil behaviors occur can be driven by self-protection among individuals who hold that their city is a significant aspect of their self-definition.

### **Local Identification and Prejudice toward Immigrants**

Spatial dimension and identity building are tightly connected; this connection plays an important role in intergroup relations. As Dixon (2001) states, an individual's sense of self stems also from activities with natural and built environments because our social identities may arise from our symbolic and tangible commitments with the physical world. It is within this connection that people bond with their physical and social environments and that they establish the spaces that outsiders can share with insiders. Again, it is within this relation that people define the boundaries that outsiders can cross without posing a threat to insiders.

Following on from the studies of geographer David Sibley (1988, 1992, 1995), Dixon (2001) highlights the significance of territorial borders for group processes. Taking up Sibley's thesis (1985), he considers practices of border building and regulation as basic to social life because

boundary processes are involved in the formation of individuals' social identities and, even more so, in mediating the interaction between oneself and others. This ecological dimension of identity is particularly evident in contexts where territorial claims are overtly established and assigned. In such places, insiders feel "at home" and outsiders tend to be perceived as disturbing, dangerous, and impure elements; people who infringe spatial boundaries are categorized as "matter out of place". These contexts are designed to delineate a uniform group identity and anyone or anything that is nonnative is quickly revealed. In other words, the process of identification with one's own territorial context gives rise to a sense of "us" that is in contrast to "them", according to the logic and dynamics that characterize the relationship between ingroup and outgroup and encourage ingroup biases.

Research on identification processes has contributed to in-depth study of how individuals perceive their community and how they perceive those who are not part of it. In the analysis of the consequences that these processes can have on the relationships between ingroup and outgroup, studies have shown that high levels of local identification may help residents cope with identity crises and provide them with a sense of stability; nonetheless, Jaskiewicz and Besta (2017) noted that there are negative consequences to the perception of outgroup members and ingroup members who are not considered appropriate for the group (e.g., social deviants, rule-breakers). High identification with a territorially defined group may imply the idea that the people living there have the right to establish the place rules and that other groups (e.g., immigrants) should respect them.

As Townley and colleagues (2011) noted, SIT helps to explain the tendency to foster ingroup similarity. Moreover, SIT suggests that when people are very aware of their belonging to the group, and it is of importance and emotionally relevant to them, they are claimed to have strong ingroup identification. In this perspective, strong local identification may harbor prejudice toward immigrants. Some studies have analyzed the relationship between identification with one's own community (i.e., sense of community) and ethnic prejudice (Prezza, Zampatti, Pacilli, & Paoliello,

2008; Mannarini et al., 2017), others have investigated the impact that living with immigrants has on sense of community (Hombrados-Mendieta, Gomez-Jacinto, & Dominguez-Fuentes, 2009), and still others have focused on the role played by identification processes in fostering or lowering sense of community in territorial communities (Mannarini et al., 2012) and on the community-diversity dialectic (Brodsky, 2017; Stivala, 2017; Townley et al., 2017; Rochira, 2018). To the best of our knowledge, no study to date has specifically investigated the relationship between local identification and prejudice toward immigrants.

Therefore, we wanted to determine whether identification with one's own place of residence is related to a dislike of domestic deviant outgroups (urban disorder sensitivity) and foreign outgroups because considered a source of threat to the stability of one's local context (prejudice toward immigrants). In line with previous work (Mannarini et al., 2012; Obst, Smith, & Zinkiewicz, 2002), we referred to SIT (Tajfel, 1978, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1985) and SCT (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, McGarty, 1994) to conceptualize identification with the group of inhabitants as a process interconnected with the relationship with the outgroup (i.e., immigrants).

### **Autochthony as a Link between Local Identification, Urban Disorder Sensitivity, and Prejudice Toward Immigrants**

Autochthony is an ideology rooted in classical Athens. Literally, it implies an origin "of the soil itself" and, by inference, a direct claim to territory (Geschiere, 2010; 2009; Geschiere & Jackson, 2006). At present, the term "autochthonous" is used by anthropologists to indicate groups that feel they are primo-occupants of a specific area and the belief that a place appertains to those born from the soil. These occupants feel that they are entitled to decide on relevant collective topics concerning their land and that newcomers endanger their resources and power (Geschiere & Jackson, 2006; Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2013; Verkuyten, 2014). Importantly, autochthony is not

identical with the concept of ethnicity. The notion of ethnicity encompasses a core meaning, because an ethnic group requires a name, a particular history and usually a language, whereas autochthony only requires being the first (Geschiere & Jackson, 2006).

Two recent studies (Verkuyten, Sierksma & Martinovic, 2015; Verkuyten, Sierksma & Thijs, 2015) have shown that children also use the criterion of “first come” to decide who the owner of a piece of land is. From these experimental studies Verkuyten and colleagues gleaned evidence that children deduce ownership of a piece of land based on the person who arrived first. They showed that the first arrival principle is the criterion for establishing individual (see Verkuyten, Sierksma & Thijs, 2015) and collective place ownership (Verkuyten, Sierksma & Martinovic, 2015). According to Verkuyten and Martinovic (2017), property confers special rights with respect to what is owned and thus legitimizes the rights of the owners against others.

Currently, autochthony is a pivotal concept in debates on immigration and multiculturalism by right-wing parties in Europe (i.e., Front National in France, Flemish Nationalists in Belgium, Lega in Italy, and the British National Party in the United Kingdom). The belief that “we are the first” as a basic form of belonging for citizenship affects intergroup relations: autochthonous slogans cry for the expulsion of “foreigners”, whoever they are, and autochthony demands exclusion (Geschiere, 2010). Having arrived first is a precondition for entitlement to fully participate in the life of a society in which a part of a population (e.g., immigrants) cannot and should not take part. As noted by Geschiere (2010), the exact meaning of who belongs and who should be excluded can change drastically and suddenly, and “the ‘true’ autochthon tends to be constantly redefined at ever-close range. The search for an impossible purity in a world long marked by migration and mixing triggers constant concern about one’s own autochthony and constant obsession to unmask traitors hiding inside” (p. 46).

Martinovic & Verkuyten (2013) have highlighted that autochthony is a predictor of prejudice toward latecomers and that it mediates the relationship between staunch national identification and

prejudice toward migrant groups. Higher national identifiers are inclined to refuse migrant groups because they sustain the idea that only their ingroup – i.e., the first comers, has the right to make decisions that concern their country. Moreover, higher national identifiers are especially fervent in laying claim to autochthony; as a consequence, the claims of autochthony are linked to negative feelings towards immigrants. In brief, as an ideology that justifies an aversion to outsiders, autochthony mediates the relationship between local identification and prejudice toward immigrants.

Accordingly, autochthony may positively relate also to urban disorder sensitivity because of the feeling of intrusion by domestic outgroups (e.g., beggars, vagrants, prostitutes, the mentally ill, etc.) that violate the social norms of ownership. Furthermore, the perception of place ownership – such as local identification – can create profound distress when uncivil behavior occurs. This is consistent with research that has demonstrated the relationship between individual sensitivity to violation of the socio-spatial order in urban contexts and the link to the city (Jaskiewicz & Besta, 2017).

When an individual's identity is closely tied to a neighborhood, a city or a country, the desire to maintain and preserve such identity can strengthen a sense of "proprietary attachment" (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2017). This sense of "place ownership" that people experience towards the areas where they feel at ease (at the individual and the group level) underscores the implicit association between what is "me" and what is mine. Such proprietary attachment can lead to claims of ownership in relation to others and outgroups, as it implies stressing that this is "my" / "our" place (city, neighborhood, country) and not "yours" / "theirs". Summarizing, ownership adds to "who we are" a powerful justification for what "we" rightfully can do with what is "ours," including the right to exclude others (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2017, p. 1025).

## **The Present Study**

Drawing on the previously cited literature, this study investigated the relationships among place identification, autochthony, urban disorder sensitivity, and prejudice toward immigrants. Our hypotheses were:

- a) Local identification should positively relate to autochthony (Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2013), to urban disorder sensitivity (Jaskiewicz & Besta, 2017), and to prejudice toward immigrants as a rejection of the outgroup (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2007).
- b) Autochthony should positively relate to prejudice toward immigrants (Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2013). Moreover, as an ideology that legitimizes the right to exclude outgroups, autochthony should also relate positively to the social and spatial aspects of urban sensitivity to disorder. In fact, both the perception of encroachment on urban spaces by domestic outgroups who transgress social property norms (e.g. beggars, homeless, prostitutes, etc.) and undesirable behaviors within urban space (place transgression) represent a violation of the rules established by the owners of places.
- c) Local identification should be indirectly positively related to prejudice toward immigrants and urban disorder sensitivity through autochthony (Jaskiewicz & Besta, 2017; Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2013).

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The study was carried out in Turin, a major city in the north of Italy (pop. approximately 900,000). Like the rest of the country, Turin is currently undergoing rapid growth in cultural and ethnic diversity through the influx of immigrants. It ranks third by number of resident immigrants. According to the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT, 2016), immigrants made up 15.5% of the resident population as of 1 January 2016.

We recruited participants through snowball sampling and asked them to participate in a survey about urban living conditions. Every attempt was made to access a wide range of respondents for age, gender, educational level, and occupational status. The proportions generally correspond to the actual ones in the city<sup>1</sup>. The sample included 254 native adults (41.7% males, 58.3% females; average age  $46.02 \pm 15.35$  years). The breakdown of educational level was 38.2% college, 37.5% high school, and 24.3% less than high school; 57.7% were employed, 6.5% were students, 18.5% were retired, 10.1% were unemployed, and 7.3% were housewives.

## **Measures**

Data were collected via a self-report questionnaire that took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Respondent anonymity was guaranteed. The following indicators were used in the analyses.

### *Local Identification*

The Identification with the inhabitants of the city scale (Rollero & De Piccoli, 2010) comprises five items (e.g., “When someone criticizes the inhabitants of my city, I feel personally insulted”).

Participants rate items on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The scale showed good internal coherence (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.75$ ).

### *Autochthony*

A measure of autochthony (Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2013) comprising four items (e.g., “The original inhabitants of a country are more entitled than newcomers”). Participants rate items on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The internal coherence of the scale was very good ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ).

### *Urban Disorder Sensitivity*

The Urban Disorder Sensitivity Scale (UDSS; Jaskiewicz & Besta, 2017) includes 12 items rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Six items (e.g., “Beggars should be removed from the city center”) belong to the Space Intrusion subscale ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ). The other six (e.g., “I believe that young people should not use the stairs or public squares for riding a skateboard”) belong to the Place Transgression subscale ( $\alpha = 0.80$ ).

### *Prejudice towards Immigrants*

The Classical and Modern racial prejudice scale (Akrami, Ekehammar, & Araya, 2000; Gattino, Miglietta, & Testa, 2011) includes 15 items grouped together into two subscales: the Classical Racial Prejudice subscale (7 items,  $\alpha = 0.78$ ; e.g., “Generally speaking, immigrants have high moral principles”, reverse coded; “Immigrant camps should be placed far out in the countryside”) and the Modern Racial Prejudice subscale (8 items,  $\alpha = 0.79$ ; e.g., “Immigrants are getting too demanding in the push for equal rights”; “It easy to understand immigrants’ demands for equal rights” reverse coded). Response options range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

### *Sociodemographic measures.*

Data on gender, age, educational level, and occupational status were collected.

After performing the descriptive analyses, we verified the hypothesized relationships via structural equation modelling with the bootstrap procedure to examine the indirect effect of local identification on prejudice.

## **Results**

### **Descriptive Statistics and Correlations**

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics of the scales and the correlations between them. Scores were higher for the Place Transgression subscale of the UDSS than the Space Intrusion subscale ( $t(253)=-11.81; p < .01$ ); scores were higher for the Modern prejudice subscale than the Classical one ( $t(253)=-6.54; p < .01$ ). All the correlations reported in Table 1 were statistically significant, and their signs were coherent with theoretical expectations. As expected, local identification was positively correlated with autochthony scores, the two dimensions of the UDSS, and both dimensions of prejudice, although the correlation with modern prejudice was lower ( $p < .05$ ). Consistent with theoretical expectations, autochthony showed a positive correlation with both dimensions of the UDSS and the two forms of prejudice toward immigrants. There was also a positive correlation between the UDSS and both forms of prejudice toward immigrants. Finally, the subscales of urban disorder sensitivity and prejudice toward immigrants were positively correlated each other (UDSS  $r = .76$ ; Ethnic prejudice  $r = .71$ ).

### **Verification of the Hypotheses**

Assuming the above hypothesized relationships, we tested a structural equations model. Since preliminary analyses showed that SI and PT were strongly correlated, we used them as indicators of urban disorder sensitivity. For the same reason, we used classical and modern prejudices as indicators of prejudice toward immigrants. We tested the model fit using different indexes to diminish the impact of their limits (Hu and Bentler, 1998). We used  $\chi^2$ , the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The model was acceptable but the parameter linking the identification with the inhabitants of the city and one of the scale items was not significant. After eliminating this variable and testing the new model (see Fig. 1), we found it to be acceptable:  $\chi^2(49) = 107.75, p = .01, CFI = .96, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .069$ . The  $\chi^2/df$  ratio was good (2.20).

The bootstrap analyses (200 resamples) allowed us to estimate direct and indirect effects. Identification with the inhabitants of the city had significant total effects on UDSS ( $\beta = .32$ ; 95% confidence interval (CI) .19 to .44; *SE*.07;  $p = .01$ ), and prejudice toward immigrants ( $\beta = .27$ ; 95% CI .16 to .40; *SE*.07;  $p = .01$ ). When we decomposed the effects, we noted that identification with the inhabitants was directly related to autochthony ( $\beta = .19$ ; 95% CI .05 to .33; *SE*.08;  $p < .01$ ), UDSS ( $\beta = .23$ ; 95% CI .12 to .33; *SE*.06;  $p < .01$ ), and prejudice toward immigrants ( $\beta = .15$ ; 95% CI .04 to .26; *SE*.07;  $p = .02$ ) and had indirect effects on UDSS ( $\beta = .09$ ; 95% CI .03 to .15; *SE*.04;  $p = .02$ ), and prejudice toward immigrants ( $\beta = .11$ ; 95% CI .04 to .20; *SE*.05;  $p = .02$ ).

Autochthony was associated with both prejudice toward immigrants ( $\beta = .61$ ; 95% CI .49 to .71; *SE*.07;  $p = .01$ ) and UDSS ( $\beta = .48$ ; 95% CI .38 to .58; *SE*.06;  $p = .01$ ). The model explained 42% of the variance in prejudice toward immigrants, 32% of the variance in UDSS, and 4% of the variance in autochthony. The patterns of the model were the same when we controlled for the effect of gender and age.

## Discussion

Here, we investigated the relationship between local identification and ideology of autochthony. To do this, we focused on how the strength of this ideology can encourage exclusionary reactions towards immigrants, as highlighted by previous research, and higher levels of sensitivity to urban disorder caused by domestic deviant outgroups (Jaskiewicz & Besta, 2017; Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2013). We situated our study within the community-diversity debate that originated more 20 years ago when Wiesenfeld (1996) criticized the constant tendency to emphasize the concept of similarity as the assumption for the development of identity and community belonging and the simultaneous tendency to disregard the internal dynamics of differences within communities.

Our results bear out nearly all the expected relationships. Consistent with our hypotheses, local identification was positively associated with both autochthony and sensitivity to urban disorder. Moreover, it was directly associated with prejudice and indirectly through autochthony as mediator. As hypothesized, autochthony was directly connected to both urban disorder sensitivity caused by deviant domestic outgroups and prejudice toward immigrants. As Martinovic and Verkuyten have highlighted (2013), the latter underscores the idea that “we were the first to arrive” promotes the emergence of a sense of ownership, which may have a negative impact on newcomer migrant groups. The former indicates that autochthony fosters the perception of any outgroup, also domestic outgroups, as intruders and a source of disorder. Moreover, strong local identification was directly related to prejudice toward immigrants. This finding suggests that higher city identifiers, i.e., those who feel that their environment is a key dimension in defining their identity have a more hostile perception of immigrants that make up outgroups based on ethnic identity. Strong local identification seems to make an individual feel more exposed to the identity threat caused by the presence of foreigners and so more likely to reject outgroup members (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2007).

Overall, our study highlights the negative effect of autochthony on intergroup relations. In addition, it shows how this ideology, which attributes ownership and entitlements to the first occupants of a country, mediates the relationship between local identification and prejudice toward immigrant groups. Our findings underline that autochthony is a powerful ideology that can trigger exclusionary responses to a greater extent than what we would expect based on existing evidence (Geschiere, 2010; Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2013). Our data also show that this ideology may have negative consequences for local identification. Such identification is a major psychological dimension that plays a key role in promoting well-being (Gattino et al., 2013), reducing the feeling of insecurity (Tartaglia & Rossi, 2015) and building people’s identity and their self-concept (Bonaiuto et al., 1996; Proshansky et al., 1983). Taken together, the present findings add to current

knowledge about a very cogent topic. Indeed, as used in divisive political rhetoric by political parties and leading politicians in Europe and North America (e.g., Trump's slogan "America first"), autochthony can have a negative impact on intergroup relationships.

These strengths notwithstanding, our study has several limitations. First, snowball sampling does not allow for generalization. Second, the cross-sectional design does not support causal claims about mediating paths, so our data require caution in their interpretation. Further longitudinal research with more representative groups of participants could provide a deeper understanding of the effects of specific variables. Finally, the measure of autochthony was not adjusted to the local level. Future research should assess this ideology at the local level to strengthen these preliminary results. The current literature has shown positive associations between attachment at different territorial levels (Gustafson, 2009), as well as a relationship between national identity and autochthony (Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2013). Controlling for national identification would allow investigation into how the national and the local level impact on autochthony.

That said, the present results support the notion that place identification is connected with the ideology of autochthony. We argue that the specific geographical level may not be so relevant. As reported previously (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996), place identification expresses membership of a group of people who are defined by their location. Therefore, local identification of a group of residents is a legitimate addition to the existing range of identifications and applies specifically to the elements of identity and of self-categorization based on membership to a locally defined group (Rollero & De Piccoli, 2010). We speculate that some people may be more disposed to define themselves by their membership in a locally-defined group, regardless of the geographical level. Ingroup-outgroup processes, applied to either the city or the country, appear to be particularly powerful in explaining both urban disorder sensitivity and prejudice against immigrants as well.

These findings may provide a starting point for further studies. One line of development could be investigating contextual factors and whether communities differing by social and ethnic

composition show the same relationships for the variables we analyzed here. Finally, because place characteristics such as size, number of inhabitants, rural and urban areas (Peterson, Tsai, Petterson, & Litaker, 2009; Wallace, DeVoe, Bennett, Roskos, & Fryer, 2008), and length of residency (Tartaglia, 2006) all play a key role in people's perception of context, it would be useful to investigate whether differences can be seen in relation to these aspects.

Identification with the local community has positive outcomes for both individual and social life, which is why community psychology considers it useful to promote the development of a sense of community. Based on the results of the present study, we believe that it would be better if social interventions aimed to foster community development on shared common values and practices already present there, rather than on supposed common roots and traditions or, in general, on a common past that may underlie the exclusion of newcomers and group conflicts justified by autochthony. With this in mind, we agree with Anne Brodsky (2017) when she states that community psychology can play a key role in “helping communities and society identify and work together towards resolution of the higher level shared values that respect and sustain micro and macro community belonging and thus create a diverse community of us all” (p. 271). As Stivala (2017) has underlined in reference to the diversity-community dialectic, community psychologists should focus both on bridging and bonding social capital, as they should consider more inclusive links between groups, and not only exclusive links that bond members within a community. This is an epoch-making challenge: research into psychosocial processes that promote or inhibit these processes can guide interventions and policies at the local and national levels

### **Conflict of interest statement**

The authors have no conflict of interest pertaining to this article.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.istat.it/it/files/2015/04/UrBes\\_2015.pdf](http://www.istat.it/it/files/2015/04/UrBes_2015.pdf)

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**The relationship between local identification, urban disorder sensitivity, and prejudice toward immigrants: The role of autochthony**

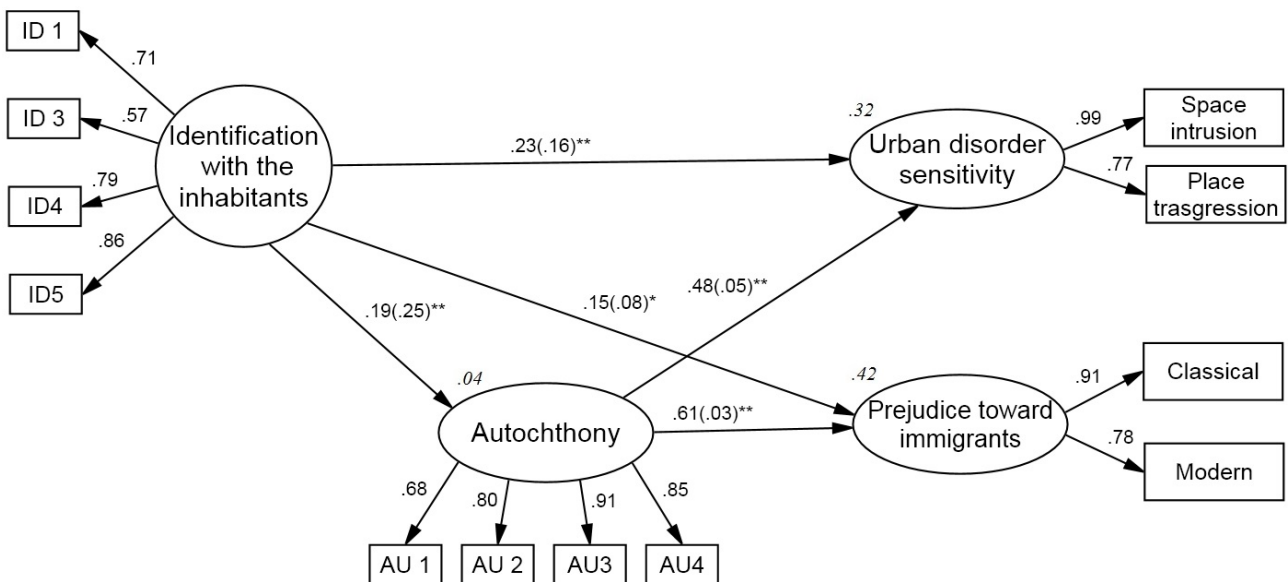
TABLE AND FIGURE

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics and correlation among scales.

	Mean	SD	Correlations				
			1	2	3	4	5
1. Identification with the inhabitants	2.56	.72					
2. Autochthony	3.48	1.87	.17**				
<i>UDSS</i>							
3. Space intrusion	2.84	1.36	.27**	.47**			
4. Place transgression	3.27	1.62	.21**	.36**	.76**		
<i>Prejudice towards immigrants</i>							
5. Classical	2.48	.75	.28**	.52**	.43**	.33**	
6. Modern	2.94	.86	.14*	.47**	.36**	.23**	.71**

\*\* p < .01; \* p < .05

**Fig. 1.** The model tested: Standardized regression weights with standard errors in brackets and explained variances in italic.



\*\* p < .01; \* p < .05