



Irrational categorization, natural intolerance and reasonable discrimination: Lay representations of prejudice and racism

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This paper explores how the constructs of 'prejudice' and 'racism' were used and understood by respondents in an interview study concerning the settlement of Albanian refugees in Greece. Analysis indicated the existence of multiple, potentially contradictory, common sense understandings of prejudice and racism, analogous to some accounts of the prejudice construct in academic social psychology. However, notwithstanding the fact that respondents displayed multiple understandings of racism or prejudice in theory, these abstract formulations were rarely employed to account for actual instances of discrimination. Specific discriminatory acts against Albanian people were framed instead as matters of fear and risk. By virtue of being cast within a problematic of in/security rather than within the discursive frame of prejudice, particular hostile actions against the Albanian refugees could be glossed as reasonable and understandable.

The topic of racial or ethnic prejudice has represented a long-standing concern on the part of social psychologists. Samelson (1978) went so far as to argue that the adoption of the prejudice construct (in opposition to accounts of 'racial difference') contributed to the rise of social psychology as a distinct subdiscipline in the late 1920s. Over the course of the last century, social psychologists have built up a considerable body of literature detailing the nature, prevalence, and causes of prejudicial attitudes, stereotypes, and discriminatory behaviour (see Augoustinos & Reynolds, 2001; Brown, 1995; Jones, 1997; Plous, 2002, for recent reviews). However, comparatively little attention has been paid to everyday understandings of these same constructs. Rather, academic social psychologists have tended to treat ordinary social actors as unreflexive formulators of stereotyped views, bearers of prejudiced attitudes, or agents of discriminatory behaviour. The privilege to define prejudice and to recognize it as a problem, the capacity to theorize its existence and to speculate on possible solutions, has been restricted largely to the reified universe (Moscovici, 1984) of academic social psychology.

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Even amongst researchers who adopt a discourse analytic approach to prejudice, the question of its lay understanding fails to be a very popular one. While 'in theory' (Potter & Litton, 1985) the definition of racism and prejudice as a form of social (discursive) action constitutes an object of discourse analytic research (Wetherell, 2003), 'in practice' it tends not to attract much attention by researchers. A considerable number of discourse-analytic studies on prejudice and racism tend to rely on certain presuppositions about what sort of actions should be included in these categories. The categories of racism and prejudice function as a 'backdrop for analysis', (Verkuyten, 2003, p. 139), as analytic 'givens' which are not themselves problematized (eg. van Dijk, 1984, 1987; van Dijk, Ting-Toomey, Smitterman, & Troutman, 1997; Wodak, 1991a, 1991b; Wodak & Matouschek, 1993).

On the other hand, there is a rather smaller body of discourse analytic research which has been concerned to demonstrate how the construct of prejudice may represent a concern of ordinary social actors (cf. Edwards, 1997, 2003; Edwards & Potter, 1992) through analytic attention to the strategies that speakers use to deflect potential criticism. These studies explore in detail the rhetorical strategies that ordinary social actors use in order to 'distance themselves from the accusation of prejudice' (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 212). Less empirical attention, however, is paid to the question of what it is, precisely, people understand prejudice to be, and hence what precise accusations they are distancing themselves from (e.g. Augoustinos, Tuffin, & Rapley, 1999; van Dijk, 1992; Verkuyten, 1998; Verkuyten, De Jong & Masson, 1994; Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

To date, the most extensive account of prejudice as a concern of ordinary social actors may be found in Billig's attempt to trace the historical journey of the construct from the field of intellectual ideology to the realms of contemporary social psychology and everyday discourse (e.g. Billig, 1988; Billig *et al.*, 1988). Following Gadamer (1979), Billig traced the negative connotations associated with the construct of prejudice to the writings of the philosophers of the Enlightenment, in which the term was used to refer to a judgment based on information which was not gathered, or considered, through the use of reason. Originally used in the context of arguments valorizing rationality over traditional theology, by the 20th century the term tended to be deployed less in debates concerning religious faith, and more in the context of debates concerning racial or ethnic difference. Although social psychologists now apply the term to a range of phenomena, Billig has argued that, since the publication of Allport's (1954) seminal text, prejudice has tended to be defined in such a way as to suggest that 'the essence of the concept is to be found in racial and national attitudes' (Billig, 1988, p. 112).

Billig argued that, despite changes in the rhetorical contexts in which it has tended to be deployed, the term prejudice has nevertheless retained certain aspects of its original features including, in particular, its connotation of irrationality. Prejudice is, Billig argued, generally understood to constitute feelings of antipathy towards different national or ethnic groups that constitute the by-product of irrational categorical thinking.

Following Billig's attempts to trace a common genealogy behind the prejudice construct as used in academic social psychology texts and in everyday talk, Wetherell and Potter (1992) went somewhat further in their consideration of how the same interpretative resources might form the basis of both lay and social psychological accounts. Wetherell and Potter's account differed from Billig's insofar as the authors themselves explicitly rejected the prejudice construct, pointing to its ideological role in obscuring the significance of relations of power in the context of talk about racial and ethnic issues. Wetherell and Potter suggested that accounts which gloss racism as

a matter of prejudice are necessarily reductionist in that they focus on the actions of particular individuals (those who are especially inclined towards categorical thought, stereotyping, and irrational antipathy). Wetherell and Potter argued that these same assumptions might be identified both in social psychological texts and in everyday discourse on matters relating to race and ethnicity. In their own research (on Pakeha New Zealanders' talk about Maoris) they noted how their respondents tended to interpret questions concerning the existence of prejudice in New Zealand as a certain kind of accusation, and used standard discursive moves for coping with it. In particular, respondents treated prejudice as a matter of individual irrationality, and attempted to present themselves as reasonable and rational in distinction to other (prejudiced) individuals.

Notwithstanding the differences between Billig's, and Wetherell and Potter's approaches, the two perspectives nevertheless share a number of common features. Both assume that the problem of prejudice is not simply a matter for the academic social psychologist, and seek to demonstrate how an examination of everyday discourse on matters of race and ethnicity shows that ordinary social actors also treat prejudice as a matter of concern. They both impute, however, to ordinary social actors as well as to social psychologists a fairly straightforward and non-contradictory understanding of prejudice (assuming that the latter is being understood in terms of individual irrationality and ungrounded categorical beliefs).

A brief review of the literature is sufficient to question the assumption that there exists a canonical, universally accepted, understanding of prejudice within the discipline of academic social psychology. In fact the 'nature of prejudice' continues to represent the subject of considerable debate. Hence the assumption that the term necessarily pertains to irrational (categorical) beliefs about human groups, and/or to theories of individual differences, may be in danger of projecting an overly consensual, picture of academic social psychological approaches.

Certainly, an understanding of prejudice as a tendency on the part of particular individuals to generalize irrationally about members of out-groups may be identified as a key trope in many social psychology texts. However, this is by no means the only way in which the construct has been understood. In their original arguments against the premises of race psychology, theorists like Thomas (1904, 1907) and Royce (1908) did not use the term prejudice to refer to irrational generalization. What constituted prejudice as far as these authors were concerned was not a belief in the existence of race difference, but rather the attribution of these 'real' differences to essential and unchangeable biological factors rather than to social forces.¹ The equation of prejudice with categorical thinking² only became emphasized in the authoritarian personality approach (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950) and was later picked up in Allport's (1954) account of the nature of prejudice.

An appreciation of historical variability in the extent to which social psychologists have equated the prejudice construct with categorical thought should not be interpreted as a narrative of the gradual development of the construct over time. On the contrary,

¹ Similarly, Billig (1985) suggested that prejudiced and tolerant views may be distinguished not so much according to whether categorical images are used, but according to the ways in which categorical differences are explained.

² The first social psychologists to treat categorical representation of out-groups as an indicator of prejudice were Katz and Braly (1935), the pioneers of stereotype research. Note, however, that Katz and Braly's argument only concerned claims to 'national' or 'racial' character, and it is not clear whether these authors intended that their objection to categorical accounting be extended to other domains.

arguments to the effect that categorical accounting may be equated with irrationality, and hence prejudice, have never constituted a form of disciplinary common-place, shared by all social psychologists working at a particular point in time. Rather, assertions to the effect that categorical accounting equals prejudice (and vice versa) have always been met with counter-claims asserting the factual status of group differences, and hence the rationality of representing the social world in categorical terms (e.g. Campbell, 1967; Oakes & Reynolds, 1997; Reynolds & Turner, 2001; Vinacke, 1949).

It is also worth noting that even when social psychological accounts agree that the construct of prejudice may be equated with irrational generalization, this does not mean that consensus necessarily prevails. For example, there exists no agreed-upon position whereby social psychologists necessarily view prejudice as a matter of individual differences. Adorno *et al.* (1950) attributed the tendency to categorize to particular individuals as a function of particular socialization practices. The first wave of social cognition researchers, however, treated social categorization as a product of the bounded rationality of human beings as a species rather than as a characteristic of particular individuals (see, for example, the contributions in Hamilton, 1981; see Billig, 1985 for a critique). Finally, other approaches have attempted to reconcile 'individual differences' with both 'universal human nature' and 'cultural' approaches (e.g. Allport, 1954; Devine, 1989, 1995).

Clearly, the fact that social psychology texts may reveal multiple (and possibly contradictory) orientations towards a particular construct, and the fact that the field is characterized by debate between, and attempts to reconcile, contrasting perspectives, is entirely consistent with general premises of rhetorical psychology and discourse analysis concerning the variable, contradictory ways in which objects may be constructed in talk and text (Billig, 1987; Billig *et al.*, 1988; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Similarly, from the perspective of rhetorical or discursive psychology, we might also expect to find some measure of variability in the ways in which ordinary social actors orient to issues as matters of prejudice.

Some evidence of potential variation in the common sense representations of prejudice has been provided by two discourse analytic studies (Rapley, 2001; Verkuyten, 1998) conducted in quite different cultural contexts which take on board many of the assumptions of Billig's (1988) as well as Wetherell and Potter's (1992) analyses.

Verkuyten (1998) explored the ways in which ethnic Dutch inhabitants of an inner-city quarter in Rotterdam accounted for their negative views about minority groups in conversation. Drawing upon Billig's (1988) analysis, Verkuyten also argued that a representation of prejudice in terms of irrationality is predominant in lay (as well as in social psychological) discourse. He maintained, however, that the irrationality of prejudice can be constructed in different ways which may entail different accounting practices. Specifically, he distinguished between accounts that approach prejudice as generalization based on faulty knowledge and accounts that focus on emotional reactions as the main cause of racism. Verkuyten drew attention to the ways in which his participants distinguished their own negative views about ethnic minorities from 'real' racism (understood as extreme, emotionally-driven behaviour). Alternatively, respondents provided socially acceptable and plausible reasons for their emotional responses towards minority groups.

Rapley (2001) studied constructions of racism and prejudice in political discourse in Australia. Rapley argued that constructions of racism are not merely subject to historical change (as 'modern racism' researchers have maintained), but they are also routinely

contested in everyday talk and they may vary even within the discourse of the same individual.

In the same vein as other discourse analytic work, the studies conducted by Verkuyten (1998) and Rapley (2001) focused mainly on the ways that speakers use various rhetorical strategies in order to avoid the stigma of prejudice. They also paid attention, however, to the ways prejudice may be defined in certain cultural contexts and cast light on some variation in the common sense understandings of the construct. The present study aims to extend these analyses by focusing on a different cultural context (that of immigration in contemporary Greece) and by taking variations in representations of the category of prejudice or racism as the main object of study.

Method

Research site and general background

The study was conducted in Thessaloniki, Greece. During the 1950s and 1960s Greece was amongst the Mediterranean countries with the highest rate of out-migration (Emke-Poulopoulou, 1986). The situation started to change in the mid-1970s, when signs of diminishing growth in the European economies resulted in a trend towards return migration (Collaros & Moussourou, 1978; Sakka, 1996). Population movement patterns subsequently changed dramatically as a consequence of the disintegration of the former USSR and political changes in Albania. As a result a sizable number of immigrants and refugees began emigrating to Greece.

Refugees from Albania started entering Greece at the end of 1990, a period during which Albania was in deepening economic and political chaos. The first wave of refugees, received as Greek origin Albanian nationals, were given a temporary permit to stay in Greece. However, the permits were not renewed, and the refugees were later forced to return to Albania. By August of 1995, more than 900,000 people had been forced to return back to Albania (Karidis, 1996). Many of these people have at some point managed to re-enter Greece through the paths of the Epirus Mountains. The exact number of refugees from Albania now in Greece can not be estimated officially, but according to the press, in the summer of 1997 it amounted to 200,000–300,000 (“Albanians: They prefer unofficial paths”, 1997).

Participants

The general aim of sample selection was to recruit a heterogeneous group of respondents in order to maximize the possibility of accessing a diverse range of available accounting devices and strategies (Bryman, 1994). A group of 32 people (9 men and 23 women), inhabitants of two neighbourhoods of Thessaloniki participated in the study. Participants' ages ranged from 19 to 50 years. The sample was composed of people of diverse occupational and economic backgrounds (middle-class professionals, white-collar workers, and factory or construction workers).

Procedure and interviews

The first stage of sampling involved approaching local societies and associations. The interviewer (Lia Figgou) explained that the study was concerned with the views of people on the recent settlement and reception of refugees in the area, and requested the contact numbers of those who wished to be interviewed. Interviews were then

conducted a few days later either in the participants' residence or workplace. Further interviewees were recruited via snowball sampling from the friends and relatives of the initial respondents. Except for two cases, in which people were interviewed in pairs, interviews were conducted in a one-to-one basis. All interviews were held during the period November 1998 to January 1999.

Interviews were semi-structured and organized around a number of themes concerning the reception of refugees by local people and the Greek state; the consequences of the refugees' entrance; the reasons why the refugees had settled in the particular area, and the existence of racism and prejudice against refugees from Albania. Although the interviewer had a list of topics to be covered which could be formulated into direct questions in many cases the issues were introduced by the respondents themselves. Interviews were tape-recorded and lasted from 45 to 80 minutes. All interviews were fully transcribed for content.

In the extracts of talk included in the analysis section all of the participants are presented by pseudonyms. The extracts have been translated from the Greek, and an effort was made the translated text to resemble as possible to the original data.

Management, selection and analysis of the data

The first stage of analysis involved identifying all exchanges that referred to the topics of racism, prejudice, and discrimination, and to identify all passages in which the respondents themselves used (or responded to the interviewer's use of) the terms 'racism' and 'prejudice' (ῤατσισμός and προκατάληψη in Greek). The second stage involved identifying regularities in the participants' accounts and indexing the material according to common lines of argument (Wetherell, 1998). Analysis indicated that in most cases respondents tended to use the terms racism and prejudice as functional synonyms, and there was no evidence to suggest that the form of accounting varied in a systematic way according to the particular term employed. Consequently, for purposes of presentation, we shall be collapsing the analyses pertaining to the two terms. Having identified the key understandings of prejudice/racism which respondents were drawing upon, analysis then focused on identifying any contradictory or dilemmatic aspects of these accounts (Billig, 1987; Billig *et al.*, 1988).

Analysis

Perhaps not surprisingly, one common-place feature of accounts was identified: in whatever context they were used, the terms prejudice or racism were always treated as potentially hearable as accusations, implying a charge of intellectual or moral failure on the part either of individuals or of communities as a whole. Moreover, it was normally the case that the participants would attempt to distance themselves from charges of racism/prejudice. This is not to say, however, that speakers always used the categories of racism/prejudice to levy criticism or to cast blame in a straightforward way. On the contrary, they often provided explanations of racism/prejudice which functioned, at least in part, to exonerate the perpetrators from personal accountability for their thoughts or feelings (cf. van Dijk, 1984, 1987, 1992).

Notwithstanding the fact that all accounts treated prejudice/racism potentially as a moral and/or intellectual problem, there were marked differences in the ways in which the constructs could be used. Analyses identified four distinct ways in which an action or event could be framed as a matter of prejudice or racism, which in many respects parallel various formulations present in the 'reified universe' of social psychology texts:

- (1) Prejudice used to refer to an ungrounded belief in the existence of categorical differences between peoples. This includes both accounts which used the term prejudice to refer to a tendency to overlook individual difference, and those which used the term to refer to ungrounded beliefs in the existence of differences between 'them' and 'us'.
- (2) Prejudice used to refer to intolerance of existing differences between groups.
- (3) Prejudice used to refer to the attribution of out-group 'difference' to nature rather than to social forces.
- (4) Prejudice understood as feelings of antipathy towards members of low status groups on the part of the high status groups.

In addition to considering the various ways in which an issue could be treated as a matter of prejudice, we also sought to identify points of contrast: that is, what issues were *not* included within the rhetorical problematic of racism/prejudice. In this case, one regular feature of accounts became apparent. However speakers used the terms prejudice/racism, to refer to unwarranted categorical accounting, to refer to intolerance of differences, to refer to a belief that differences between in- and out-group were the result of nature rather than the outcome of social processes, these accounts were almost always presented as pertaining to thoughts and feelings rather than to specific acts, and were typically formulated in general, abstract terms. In instances in which respondents were engaged in the task of describing or explaining specific hostile or discriminatory acts, the same concepts and theories were not brought to bear. Actual occasions on which Greek people acted with hostility towards Albanian refugees were not in general framed as matters of racism/prejudice (with the moral overtones that this category conveys), but rather as matters of perceived risk and security.

The first four sections that follow will consider various ways in which respondents could frame an issue as a matter of prejudice or racism. The final section of the analysis will consider the substitution of the racism/prejudice problematic with a discourse of risk/security in accounts of actual instances of hostility and discrimination.

Prejudice as irrational categorical accounting

As noted in the Introduction, Billig's work has tended to focus on situations in which the construct of prejudice is understood in terms of irrational categorical generalization. Billig *et al.* (1988) pointed to the way in which the prejudice-as-categorization formulation may draw upon two (potentially contradictory) common-places. On the one hand, social categorization may be deemed a matter of irrational prejudice insofar as it overlooks the existence of individual differences. On the other hand, categorization may be viewed as irrational prejudice on the grounds that it overlooks the existence of a common human nature. Both sorts of formulation were present in the accounts considered here. In Extract 1 we see a typical case in which the term racism is used to refer to unwarranted generalization (specifically, in the form of negative out-group stereotyping) that is contrary to the universal fact of social diversity:

Extract 1: '...it can't be true that they are all bad'

- | | | |
|---|------------|---|
| 1 | Lia: | Do you think there is racism nowadays in Greece? |
| 2 | Elissavet: | I think there is (.) yes (.) unfortunately there is (.) there is racism |
| 3 | | against the Albanians (3) for most Greek people the Albanians are |

4 responsible for all the bad things happening (.) all the crimes are
 5 attributed to them (.) without second thought (.) Albanian means
 6 criminal (1.5) of course some really unpleasant incidents took
 7 place (3) crimes and the like (.) but it can't be true that they are all
 8 bad (.) I mean (.) It can't be possible that their country produces
 9 criminals (.) there is no possibility (.) let's say that two or three
 10 out of ten are criminal (.) they can't be all like that.

In Extract 1, Elissavet is working up an argument concerning the general existence of racism (a term originally introduced by the interviewer) in contemporary Greece, exemplified by the fact that 'most Greek people' (line 3) tend to regard Albanians as uniformly inclined towards criminality. The opening lines of this extract make it clear that Elissavet is treating generalized accounts of 'the Albanians' (specifically, those involving negative stereotypes) to exemplify the construct of racism, and to be based on an insufficient use of reason ('without a second thought', line 5). This extract also provides us with a classic example of a case in which a speaker attempts to distance herself from the charges of racism that she is levelling at the majority of her compatriots. Elissavet rhetorically distances herself from her report of most Greeks by glossing these categorical images of Albanian criminality as 'unfortunate' (line 2), by explicitly refuting them ('it can't be true', line 7, 'it can't be possible', line 8), and by the use of extreme case formulations to parody this form of categorical accounting: '. . .the Albanians are responsible for all the bad things happening (.) all the crimes are attributed to them' (lines 3–5; Edwards, 2000; cf. Pomerantz, 1986). However, in presenting herself as comparatively reasonable, Elissavet's account allows room for a 'kernel of truth'. There have been some 'really unpleasant incidents' (line 6); there are some Albanian criminals. By providing an estimate of the possible number of Albanians involved in criminal acts ('let's say that two or three out of ten are criminal', lines 9–10), Elissavet demonstrates her capacity for rational assessment of the facts of the case, in contrast to the racist tendency towards simplistic, thoughtless, categorical generalization.

Whilst the account in Extract 1 includes reference to widespread racism or prejudice within Greece, the respondent is not attempting to explain this state of affairs. However, respondents often did refer to the origins of irrational (prejudiced/racist) generalization, typically using formulations analogous to the contact hypothesis in social psychology. The tendency on the part of (some or all) Greek people to treat Albanians as an homogenous (Extract 1 above) and/or distinctive (Extract 2 below) category is attributed to ignorance, which is in turn attributed to a lack of personal experience with out-group members. An illustration is provided in Extract 2, taken from a turn in which Minos is arguing that Greece had not been prepared to receive large numbers of refugees, and that problems had occurred even in the case of the reception of refugees from the USSR which had been based on a relatively organized plan.

Extract 2: Prejudice as a function of ignorance due to lack of contact

1 Minos: The really serious problem for me is that there is no integration
 2 plan for the refugees from the Albania (.) there was such a plan for
 3 the refugees from the former USSR (.) and we still had problems
 4 (.) imagine how things are for the Albanians (.) the Albanians do
 5 not mix with the local population (.) they create their own ghettos
 6 (.) they remain isolated (.) marginalized (1.5) and of course the

7 local people remain prejudiced (.) because they can't get to know
8 them (.) they can't get to know each other (.) If they could things
9 would be different (.) they could realize that they have many
10 similarities (.) much more in common than differences.

In Extract 1 the respondent presents categorization as a problem insofar as it involves a failure to recognize the individuality of 'the Albanians'. In Extract 2, in contrast, the term prejudice is applied to the tendency to exaggerate differences between 'the Albanians' and the indigenous population. According to Minos, prejudice develops because the two populations cannot really 'get to know each other' (line 8), and as a consequence fail to realize that, 'they have many similarities (.) much more in common than differences' (lines 9–10). Once again, the speaker distances his own voice ('for me', line 1), as one who recognizes the existence of a 'really serious problem' (line 1), from the reactions of others who 'remain prejudiced' (line 6). Prejudice is, once again, equated with ignorance: a failure to realize (line 9) the facts of the case.

In this case, the specific way in which this respondent relates himself to the protagonists of his account is in part affected by his particular identity as a social worker in a welfare centre dealing both with refugees and with members of the host community. This affords Minos a particular kind of footing, in which he speaks 'up for' (but not 'as') both the targets and the perpetrators of the problematic prejudice. His use of the category 'the locals' ('the local population' [line 5], 'the local people', [line 7]) with its connotations of parochialism and lack of worldly experience serves to reinforce a contrast between Minos, who is aware of the similarities between the local population and the refugees, and the local people themselves, who are not in a position to 'realize' this (line 9).

Whilst in Extract 1 we saw the charge of prejudice or racism functioning as a critique of the Greeks, in this case the prejudice of the local people is presented as the responsibility of the bureaucrats who failed to establish an 'integration plan' (line 1), and of the Albanians who 'do not mix with the local population' (lines 4–5) and who 'create their own ghettos' (line 5). Consequently, although the prejudice of the local people is represented as a function of ignorance, this is not due to the kind of culpable thoughtlessness that is mooted in Extract 1. On the contrary, the local people are represented as the hapless victims, whose ignorant prejudice is a consequence of their lack of opportunities to learn about the 'other'.

Prejudice as intolerance of difference

Although Billig has tended to focus on the roots of the contemporary construct of prejudice in Enlightenment concerns over rationality, Condor (2000) has argued that current notions of prejudice may also draw upon another strand of Enlightenment thought: that concerned with a value of diversity and the tolerance of difference (cf. Billig *et al.*, 1988 p. 124). In our interviews, respondents often used the terms racism or prejudice to refer to intolerance of difference. In these cases, the charge of prejudice is rather different compared with when the construct is framed as a matter of irrational categorical accounting, and these two perspectives indeed tend to be treated differently by the respondents.

First, the formulation of prejudice as irrational generalization and the understanding of prejudice as intolerance of difference are to some extent logically incompatible. When prejudice is treated as a matter of categorical accounting, the assumption is that

similarities within and differences between in-group and out-group do not really exist. In contrast, the discourse of intolerance necessitates the prior acceptance of the existence of intergroup differences.

Second, the formulation of prejudice-as-intolerance is also associated with different styles of explanation. Whereas irrational categorization tended to be attributed to ignorance (possibly due to lack of contact), intolerance tended to be represented as an automatic emotional reaction to the existence of ethnic or cultural difference.

Third, and relatedly, the intolerance charge tended to be associated with a moral critique of the prejudiced: the claim is not so much that prejudiced percepts are empirically false (not 'true' or 'right') but rather that they contravene norms of equality, or etiquette (that they are not 'fair', or 'nice'). As the antithesis of prejudice, tolerance is, in part, a matter not only of private cognition and emotion, but also of proper public conduct.

An example of a typical case in which prejudice is formulated as intolerance of difference is presented in Extract 3, below:

Extract 3: *Intolerance as a function of difference*

- | | | |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | Lia: | How do Greek people face (.) experience (.) the fact that Greece has |
| 2 | | Recently attracted a number of refugees? |
| 3 | Simos: | With suspicion (.) with suspicion and prejudice (.) prejudice against the |
| 4 | | newcomers (1.5) but this is always the case (.) whenever people have to |
| 5 | | Face something new (.) when new people move into a country (.) the 6 |
| 6 | | people of this country will feel sort of threatened (.) the new people bring |
| 7 | | with them a different culture (.) different habits (.) it's not easy to tolerate |
| 8 | | (.) or rather to accept the difference (3) of course we all should face the |
| 9 | | situation with good will (1) to keep our temper. |

In this case, Lia offers Simos the category of 'Greek people' (line 1). Although Simos starts out by accepting this category, reporting their 'prejudice against the newcomers' (lines 3-4), he then turns to soften the implied charge by presenting this as a universal reaction to a particular set of circumstances, specifically to the 'feelings' of 'threat' (line 6) engendered by novelty. Once again, we can see how the respondent is constructing Greek people as prejudiced, but at the same time attempting to mitigate the potential pejorative significance of this charge by providing an explanation (cf. Buttny, 1993).

It is interesting to compare this account with the one presented in Extract 2, in which the term prejudice was used to refer to the perception of categorical differences between us and them. In Simos's account, categorical differences between us and them are taken for granted. Simos represents the 'newcomers' as essentially different from the (by implication) homogeneous Greeks ('the new people bring with them a different culture, different habits', lines 6-7). In Extract 3, prejudice is contrasted not with the ideal of rationality but with the ideal of tolerance. Tolerance is presented as a question not of deep psychology (of rationality or of sentiment) but of overt behaviour (manners) and self-control (lines 8-9).

It is also worth noting the different rhetorical context in which Simos invokes a notion of in-group out-group difference, to the one in Extract 2 in which Minos alludes to this sort of representation (cf. Potter & Litton, 1985). In Extract 2, the assumption of intergroup differences is presented as exemplifying the construct of prejudice. In Extract 3, in contrast, intergroup differences are invoked to explain the existence of prejudice.

Whereas in Extract 2 it is lack of contact between groups that accounts for the persistence of prejudice, according to the line of argument developed in Extract 3, it is the existence of contact that is seen to lead (almost inevitably) to the development of prejudice (cf. Hewstone & Brown, 1986).

Prejudice as internal attributions for negative social acts

In Extracts 2 and 3, Minos and Simos are discussing intergroup difference using generic formulations. Minos mentions the fact that the local people perceive the Albanians as different, but without reporting any specific stereotypes, and Simos presents a non-specific account of the different habits or behaviours of the Albanians which, he claims, explains the existence of suspicion and prejudice on the part of the host population. Although these sorts of formulations were common, speakers did on occasions mention specific stereotypes, the most common being the image of Albanian criminality. The stereotype of Albanian criminality was widely-recognized among the members of our sample, and speakers were quite capable of reflexively recognizing the status of this image as a cultural stereotype (cf. Devine, 1989). However, just as respondents could both ironize and use non-specific images of intergroup difference, respondents could both ironize and use specific images, such as the stereotype of Albanian criminality, in the pursuit of particular rhetorical projects.

Extract 4 differs from the examples that we have considered so far, in that Marina is presenting Albanian criminality as a fact (cf. Potter, 1996). Unlike Elissavet, in Extract 1, Marina does not attempt to soften her implied categorical account by numerical qualification, and does not treat categorical images of Albanian criminality as necessarily indicative of racist thoughts.

Extract 4: 'Racist thoughts' as internal attribution for negative out-group behaviour

- | | | |
|----|---------|--|
| 1 | Lia: | What do you think are the consequences (.) I mean any |
| 2 | | consequences of the fact that Greece is turning into a |
| 3 | | receiving country? |
| 4 | Marina: | Consequences (.) erm erm (.) immediate consequences? |
| 5 | | Okay I've been robbed [laughs] (.) my house has been robbed |
| 6 | | (.) isn't it what most people say (.) of course |
| 7 | | it was annoying (.) first of all they took some important |
| 8 | | documents (.) identification documents and the like (1.5) |
| 9 | | but I've tried to cope with the situation without (.) |
| 10 | | without ending up forming racist thoughts (.) |
| 11 | | 'oh these people have been born like that' |
| 12 | | and the like (1.5) but I look at it more as (.) as a social |
| 13 | | phenomenon (.) if you want (.) it's not the particular individual |
| 14 | | that has to be blamed (.) it is not the particular Albanian (.) |
| 15 | | it is a social phenomenon (.) I'm trying not to see it in a racist way (.) |
| 16 | Lia: | And when you say it's a social phenomenon? |
| 17 | Marina: | They live under extremely difficult conditions here in |
| 18 | | Greece (1.5) and most importantly they come from a country |
| 19 | | with very different conditions compared with the ones here (.) |
| 20 | | they have been oppressed (.) scared (.) they have been |
| 21 | | living without values (.) I know it sounds hard (.) but it's true |
| 22 | | that their conditions of living were really different. |

In this case, the racism construct is introduced by the respondent, and is occasioned by her own reference to Albanian criminality. Although Marina uses images of Albanian criminality, treating her own experience of being robbed as an exemplary instance of the general 'consequences' of the Albanian presence in Greece, at the same time she demonstrates awareness that this sort of account might be treated as problematic. Marina punctuates her report of having been robbed (by inference by an Albanian) with laughter, and she attempts to mitigate the force of her report by understatement ('it was annoying', line 7; cf. van Dijk, 1987, 1992). She then proceeds to distinguish her factual report of her experience of robbery from racist forms of accounting. According to this account, 'racist thoughts' (line 10) do not take the form of categorical generalizations nor of negative out-group imagery, but rather involve forms of attribution which cast out-group members as blameworthy rather than as victims of circumstances (or 'conditions').

For Marina, racist thoughts are exemplified by the assumption that Albanians 'have been born like that' (line 11), and individual blame, a form of accounting practice from which Marina distances herself through an inflection of quotation. The alternative to racist thoughts is not individualized judgment, nor the recognition of the essential similarities between Albanians and Greeks. Rather, non-racism is characterized by sympathetic understanding of the motives behind their actions, recognizing their basis in genuine need and genuine fear: 'they have been oppressed (.) scared' (line 20).

Although Marina is treating racism as a cognitive matter, an issue of 'thought' and of 'seeing' things in a particular way, these cognitions are treated as controlled rather than automatic (cf. Hasher & Zacks, 1979), and in this respect her account has more in common with the discourse of tolerance than the discourse of irrationality. Whereas Minos in Extract 2 treated prejudice as an automatic response to difference, Marina presents herself as responsible for her own thoughts. Like Simos in Extract 3, Marina is presenting non-racism as a matter of will: of ethical self-management and self-control ('I've tried to cope', line 9; 'I'm trying not to. . .', line 15).

Prejudice as antipathy towards lower status groups

When social psychological research on intergroup processes has considered the question of status differences, this has been typically treated as an analysts' concern, and more specifically, as an 'independent variable' which may exert an influence over intergroup behaviour, social identity, and social representation (Condor, 2003). Consequently, intergroup researchers, including those whose primary concern is to theorize prejudice and discrimination, have generally neglected to consider how notions of in-group-out-group status differences may also constitute a resource that ordinary social actors may draw upon when constructing particular forms of account.

In the accounts discussed so far in which prejudice is equated with intolerance of difference, the relative status of the groups concerned has not been treated as a significant issue. Intolerance of difference has been represented as a universal phenomenon and the implication has been that coexistence between any different groups may generate prejudiced reactions. There is another shared theme, however, within our corpus of data, according to which prejudice or racism is represented as a joint function of co-presence and pre-existing status differences.

Extract 5: Racism characterized by hostility towards inferior groups

- | | | |
|---|-----------|--|
| 1 | Lia: | So do you think that there is racism in Greece? |
| 2 | Evridiki: | There is (.) but towards certain people (.) Greeks |

- 3 are racist towards the Albanians (.) I don't think
 4 that they are racist towards European people for example
 5 Lia: And why do you think is that? Why are Greek people
 6 racist towards the Albanians but not towards other
 7 European people?
 8 Evridiki: Because Europeans look (3) they look sort of superior
 9 in comparison to us (.) and they really are (.) most other European
 10 countries have much more (.) strong economies than we have (.)
 11 they are more developed economically (.) I don't think that we
 12 would have been racist to them if they had decided to come to our country.

Extract 5 starts at a point at which Lia presents Evridiki with a direct question, 'so do you think there is racism in Greece?' In response, Evridiki employs a 'yes-but' formulation (Holtgraves, 1997) in which an initial statement of agreement ('There is', line 2) is subsequently qualified ('but'), with an assertion that 'Greeks' are (only) racist 'towards certain people' (line 2). Evridiki illustrates this claim by contrasting the fact ('they are', line 4) of Greek racism 'towards the Albanians', with a circumspect ('I don't think', lines 3–4) claim concerning 'our' likely reaction 'towards European people for example' (line 4).

After Lia requests an explanation, Evridiki presents an account to the effect that racism is a function of the relative status of the groups concerned. Note the footing shift that takes place at this point. In her first reported turn, Evridiki uses the third person, projecting racism away from herself ('Greeks are racist', line 2), and Lia subsequently echoes this ('why are Greek people racist. . .', line 5). However, in response Evridiki adopts the first person plural: 'us' (line 9), 'we' (line 10), 'our country' (line 12). Although it is not clear exactly why this shift occurs, it is possible that it was occasioned by the fact that at this stage, the explicit focus of Evridiki's account is on the relationship between Greek people and Europeans.³ This contrast is used to position the in-group, (us) as a minority, with its associated feature of underdog status and moral capital (cf. Herzfeld, 1992). This has the effect of temporarily transforming the position of (us) Greeks from that of superior perpetrators of racism, to victims of economic underdevelopment.

In view of the tendency on the part of social psychologists to treat intergroup status distinctions as objective, pre-given determinants of social perception and action, it is instructive to consider how Evridiki actively constructs an intergroup status hierarchy to perform her local rhetorical business. In the first place, we may note how Evridiki represents a hierarchy of superiority in a manner that is broadly similar to the ways in which social psychologists treat status as an independent variable. In this case, the (implied) inferiority of the Albanians is treated as an *a priori* given, the prior condition for the subsequent development of racism. There is no mention of the possibility that these (perceived or actual) differences in superiority might, themselves, be understood as a product of some form of social activity.

³ The way in which the category 'European' is negotiated in the present extract may be understood through recourse to the historically-produced binary opposition between Europe and the Balkans (Skopetea, 1988). While the category European in Greece is commonly associated with economic development and progress, the category 'Balkan' connotes backwardness and underdevelopment. Greeks, as other commentators maintained (Bozatzi, 1999), consider themselves to be in the middle (more European than other Balkanians and less European than other European peoples) combining both oriental and occidental features.

Note also that although the existence of status differences is presented as a statement of fact, it is not one that stands without need of justification. Rather, the premise that European people are superior to Greek people (or us) is progressively positively modalized (Latour & Woolgar, 1986; cf. Edwards & Potter, 1992) until it acquires a factual status ('Europeans look. . . look sort of. . . they really are. . .', lines 8–9). The superiority of (other) European people is sustained by forging equivalence (Fairclough, 2000) between superiority and economic development. However, although the premise that European people are superior to us is made explicit, the assumption concerning the relative inferiority of the Albanians remains implicit. The Albanians are not openly compared to Europeans or to us. Nevertheless, if we are unlikely to demonstrate racist actions towards Europeans due to their 'sort of superior' status, but we are indeed racist towards the Albanians, then the inferiority of the Albanians may be inferred.

The construction of a hierarchy (European, Greek [us], Albanian) in which the Albanians are granted the lowest position is also achieved through a negotiation of the boundaries of the category European between the interviewer and the respondent. In Elissavet's first turn, the categories Greek, European, and Albanian are treated as mutually exclusive ('Greeks are racist towards the Albanians. . . I don't think that they are racist towards European people. . .', lines 3–4). Lia's question that follows constructs the category European in such a way as to allow room for the inclusion of the Albanians, and prompts a comparison between the Albanians and other-than-Albanian-European-people ('Why are Greek people racist towards the Albanians but not towards other European people?', lines 5–7). In Evridiki's second turn, however, it is 'us' (line 9) and 'we' (line 10; the Greeks) who are constructed as 'other Europeans'. The Albanians remain outside both of the category us/we and of the category European.

In addition to situations in which a respondent explicitly mentioned status differences, an assumption that racism or prejudice is normally characterized by superior groups demonstrating an antipathy towards their inferiors was often tacitly assumed. One relatively common rhetorical device involved the use of exemplary tales concerning (by implication extraordinary) instances in which low status group members display prejudice towards each other. In all of these cases, the snobbish or prejudiced behaviour of minority group members was treated as a narrative complication, or a counter-normative (strange) occurrence.

Extract 6: *There is racism even between the refugees.*

- | | | |
|----|----------|--|
| 1 | Andreas: | I think that racism is something that you can find in every group |
| 2 | | of people (1.5) there is racism even between the refugees |
| 3 | Lia: | Do you have any specific examples in mind? |
| 4 | Andreas: | You have to hear to my Pontian ^a neighbours talking about the |
| 5 | | Albanians (.) the Pontian woman living next to us (.) she comes |
| 6 | | from time to time to have a cup of coffee with my wife (.) |
| 7 | | she was telling my wife that she has seen many Albanian young |
| 8 | | men hanging around in the neighbourhood (.) and she is very |
| 9 | | concerned (1.5) very concerned about her daughter [laughter] |
| 10 | | she would not like her to have an affair with an Albanian (1.5) |
| 11 | | they treat the Albanians very (.) very snobbishly (.) and I find it so |
| 12 | | (.) hmm (.) so (.) so strange (.) you know (3) these people are refugees |
| 13 | | themselves (.) they have faced prejudice (.) and they still do (.) |

14 I don't think that many people in the neighbourhood really like them
15 living here

^a Pontians are refugees from the former USSR who started entering Greece in the mid-1980s (a few years before the massive entrance of Albanians). They are considered to be descendants of ancient Greek settlers along the Black Sea Coast and they have been received by the Greek state as repatriated Greeks.

The talk reported in Extract 6 followed from an exchange in which (in response to a direct question), Andreas had asserted that racism existed in Greece, as exemplified by a widespread dislike of the Albanians ('I don't know many Greek people who like the Albanians') and by a generally disparaging attitude towards them ('they tend to look down on the Albanians'). In Extract 6, we see Andreas attempting to soften this strong contention, by casting racism as a universal phenomenon: 'racism is something that you can find in every group of people' (lines 1-2). This explicit claim concerning the universalism of racism, however, exists in potential tension with the implicit assumption, indicated by the use of the word 'even' (line 2), that some groups are not really expected to display racism.

After Lia prompts Andreas for 'specific examples' (line 3), he proceeds to present an account of a (first-hand-by-proxy) experience in which a Pontian neighbour demonstrated a prejudiced, snobbish attitude towards the Albanians (specifically, that she expressed a concern that her daughter should not have an affair with an Albanian). Towards the end of the reported extract, Andreas provides an explicit evaluative gloss ('I find it...so strange', line 12). However, a number of features of his account also serve to mark the reported behaviour of the Pontian woman as contrary to normative expectations, for example, repetition and exaggeration ('very concerned, very concerned about her daughter', line 9; 'very, very snobbishly', line 11; van Dijk, 1987), as well as the laughter that accompanies this narration. The premise that the display of prejudice on the part of Pontian refugees is so strange due to their own inferior status is also represented as shared knowledge (Edwards, 1997; 'you know these people are refugees themselves', lines 12-13). Moreover, a strong causal relation, indicated by the lack of conjunction (Fairclough, 1992), is assumed between their refugee status and the racism that the Pontians have faced on the part of the majority ('these people are refugees themselves, they have faced prejudice', lines 12-13). Hence, while the snobbish attitude on the part of minority group members is considered to be remarkable and strange, the antipathy on the part of the majority towards the minority is represented as natural and only to be expected.

Accounting for overt hostile/discriminatory actions

In spite of their evident variability, the accounts considered up to this point tended to be confined to the domain of subjective experience (cognition and affect), or to private (backstage) expressions of this experience. Accounts of the conative aspects of prejudice or racism tended to be framed as matters of controlling one's overt responses in particular situations.

This is not to say that overt hostile or discriminatory behaviour was not mentioned in the interviews. On the contrary, respondents (often prompted by the interviewer) provided accounts of actual instances of hostility towards Albanian refugees. It was notable, however, that the constructs of racism or prejudice, as represented in theory (Potter & Litton, 1985), were seldom used as descriptive or explanatory devices in these discussions. Specific hostile or discriminatory actions were not explained with reference to a generic (Greek) tendency to form irrational generalizations, nor were they

treated as a consequence of lack of integration. Organizations opposing 'the Albanians' were not attributed to a failure on the part of Greek people to understand the (culturally determined) reasons for the 'the Albanians' objectionable behaviour, nor were they discussed with reference to the relatively superior status of the indigenous Greek population *vis-à-vis* the newcomers. Overwhelmingly, when describing actual examples of hostility towards Albanian refugees respondents would exempt these instances from the general frame of racism or prejudice. The problem would not be presented as a matter of irrational generalization, nor of intolerance of cultural difference. Rather, the discussion would be framed instead in terms of a different set of psychological categories: of (perceived) risk and insecurity.

Two extracts have been selected to exemplify this rhetorical move. The first is from the interview with Minos, whom we have already seen in Extract 2 displaying sympathy towards the local people, and expressing the view that their prejudice is a consequence of ignorance due to lack of contact. Prior to the exchange quoted in Extract 7, Lia had asked Minos whether he believed that there is racism in Greece. His response involved a balanced 'on the one hand-on the other hand' formulation (van Dijk, 1984): there is racism in Greece, but it is less extreme than the sorts of racism apparent elsewhere. At the start of Extract 7, Lia picks this up:

Extract 7: 'The problem is that fear governs'

Extract 7a:

- | | | |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | Lia: | So you think that we are less racist than other people? |
| 2 | Minos: | I think so (.) there is no LePen ^a in the Greek parliament (.) |
| 3 | | In other countries (.) a situation like the one in Greece at the |
| 4 | | moment (.) I mean the number of illegal immigrants (.) would |
| 5 | | have led the Gold Dawn ^b people in parliament (.) prejudice (.) |
| 6 | | racism are still in people's minds (1.5) in practice nothing |
| 7 | | really happens |

^a Leader of French fascist party

^b Greek fascist party

In this initial sequence, Lia presents Minos with a speaker-inclusive category (we). However, Minos does not accept this self-category, and his response is formulated using demonstratives of distance, referring to 'the Greek parliament' (line 2) and 'people's minds' (line 6). Minos builds upon an initial token agreement to the proposition that 'we are less racist than other people' with an extreme contrast (Essed, 1991; van Dijk, 1984, 1992). He then proceeds to distinguish Greece from generic 'other countries' (line 3) in which, he suggests, the presence of an equivalent number of 'illegal immigrants' would have provoked the development of racist political parties, alluding to the fact that, in Greece, there are no fascist politicians in the House of Democracy. It is, of course, instructive to contrast this accounting strategy with Minos' earlier in theory account in which prejudice was presented as a consequence of ignorance due to lack of integration. By way of conclusion, Minos forges a distinction between the psychological and the behavioural aspects of prejudice and racism: contrasting the (mere) existence of prejudice 'in people's minds' (line 6) with situations in which something 'really happens' (line 7). In response, Lia challenges Minos' gloss to the effect that 'in practice nothing really happens', by referring to some local organizations that had attempted to impose a curfew on Albanian refugees:

Extract 7b:

- 8 Lia: What about these associations of people who have been robbed
 9 or this president of the village council in Pieria^a and things like
 10 that we have witnessed recently
- 11 Minos: Look (.) I think that the problem is that fear governs (.) let's
 12 take the case of the head of this village (.) some people in a
 13 remote village of Northern Greece (.) most of them old (.)
 14 because no young people live in these villages anymore (.) see
 15 the foreigners settling in their village (.) and becoming the majority (.)
 16 the Albanians are most probably the majority in places like that (.) and
 17 the old people hear that a few robberies have taken place by Albanians (.)
 18 which may not be true (.) or anything serious (.) but the old people
 19 become afraid that they will lose control (.) they feel threatened (.) they
 20 feel that they have to do something

^aIn the previous month of March the president of the council of a village in the county of Pieria prohibited Albanians from walking in the streets of the village after the sunset 'in order to protect the villagers from Albanian criminality' (Eleftherotopia, 26 March 1998 under the title 'The Lepen of Pieria').

Minos' response in this second section of Extract 7 involves recasting these organizations, which Lia presented as emblematic examples of organized racism in Greece, as atypical: the actions of (only) 'some people in a remote village' (lines 12–13). In addition, he explicitly recasts 'the problem' as one of 'fear' (line 11) as opposed to one of 'racism' or 'prejudice' (lines 5–6). The fear trope was often used in the interviews to account for actual incidents of discrimination, and could be employed as a rhetorical trump-card to effectively override the normal requirement for rationality or tolerance in social life. In Extract 4 we saw Marina playing the fear card to exonerate the Albanians from blame for their criminal acts. In Extract 7b, we may in addition note Minos' use of nominalization ('the problem is that fear governs'; Fairclough, 1992) to attribute agency to the fear itself.

This fear to which causal agency is granted, and the feelings of threat from which it derives, are not treated as rational, but neither are they treated as matters of irrational prejudice. Minos does not personally endorse accounts of Albanian criminality: he presents these as second-hand hearsay ('the old people hear that a few robberies have taken place by Albanians', line 17) and provides an open-minded gloss of his own ('which may not be true (.) or anything serious', line 18). Lia subsequently asks Minos directly whether he thinks these 'reactions' were 'justified', whereupon he explicitly disavows this position:

Extract 7c:

- 21 Lia: So do you think that the reactions are justified?
- 22 Minos: No (.) I'm not saying that (.) I'm not saying that the reactions are
 23 justified because these people are in real danger (.) I'm not saying
 24 'well done' (.) I'm just trying to see how these people think (.)
 25 and I think that I can understand their way of thinking (.) I can
 26 understand their reactions.

Whereas the reactions of 'these people' (line 23) are not rational, neither are they unreasonable. Rather, they are glossed as being understandable in terms of the vulnerability and minority status of the actors concerned. In Extract 4, Marina argued for

the need to understand Albanian criminality as a function of their living 'under extremely difficult conditions' and their psychological state of being scared. Minos, similarly, attempts to absolve the members of the anti-Albanian associations from personal responsibility and accountability by emphasizing not only their psychological state of fear, but by rooting this in genuinely difficult conditions of life.

Minos works up his account of the minority status of the members of the anti-Albanian associations by importing a range of categorization devices: initially spatiality ('remote village in Northern Greece', line 13), and age. Minos first suggests that 'most of them are old' (line 13) and then proceeds to elide the members of the anti-Albanian associations with the category 'the old people' (lines 17–18). Together the images of old age and physical isolation help Minos to construct an image of the anti-Albanian association members as vulnerable, abandoned, passive victims of history, an assessment which is emphasized through the use of an extreme case formulation: 'because no young people live in these villages any more' (line 14). Minos then grants these already isolated, abandoned, and vulnerable elderly people numerical minority status, and suggests that their space ('their village') has been overtaken by people who have a lesser claim ('foreigners'). At this point it is instructive to note the way in which Minos' account of the relationship between people and places has changed. In Extract 2 the problem is presented as one of lack of contact and integration of indigenous population and the newcomers. In Extract 7, in contrast, the problem is expressed with reference to people being out of their rightful place, 'illegal immigrants' (line 4), and 'foreigners' (line 15).

In spite of the differences between Minos' account of the reasons behind the anti-Albanian associations in Extract 7, and his explanations for anti-Albanian percepts and attitudes in Extract 2, it might nevertheless be argued that Minos is maintaining a fairly consistent position; in both cases he displaying understanding of the behaviour of the indigenous population with references to their conditions of life. It may be that these forms of accounts are especially available to Minos by virtue of his position as a social worker. In order to illustrate the generality of these forms of accounting devices, we shall consider a second, closely analogous, instance in which another respondent (Ilektra) also explains the existence of anti-Albanian organizations with recourse to the discourse of threat and fear.

Extract 8: *'I don't know what I would do if I had to live under these conditions'*

- | | | |
|----|----------|---|
| 1 | Ilektra: | I have the feeling however that our racism is less organized [<i>compared to that in Germany</i>] (.) I have in mind for example the racist organizations |
| 2 | | against the Turks (.) against the foreigners in Germany (.) still things are |
| 3 | | different here |
| 4 | | |
| 5 | Lia: | I see (.) hmm (.) during the last year however (.) I'm not sure if this is the |
| 6 | | case (1.5) I heard for example about this association of people who have |
| 7 | | been robbed by Albanians (.) I think they were on the telly last week |
| 8 | Ilektra: | Yes (.) they have elected a president [<i>laughs</i>] I heard about it (.) It's quite |
| 9 | | extreme (.) indeed (.) you know what I'm thinking though (1.5) some |
| 10 | | people in remote villages may feel threatened (.) they may have to live |
| 11 | | with this feeling of lack of safety that you and I don't have to face (.) I'm |
| 12 | | not sure (.) but I feel that I don't know what I would do if I had to live |
| 13 | | under these conditions |
| 14 | Lia: | So you say that some people are reacting because they are in danger? They |
| 15 | | live under conditions of lack of safety? |
| 16 | Ilektra: | Not necessarily (.) I mean they may just think that they are in danger (.) |
| 17 | | they may just be afraid that they are in danger (.) I'm sure it is not true (.) |
| 18 | | not in all cases. |

The exchange reported in Extract 8 immediately followed an exchange in which Ilektra had been reporting the existence of 'strong racism' in Greece. In the talk running up to this particular exchange Ilektra had been working up her argument by suggesting that, 'we accused the Germans of being racist towards foreign workers at a time when there were no foreigners in Greece' but that 'when foreigners started to come here racism started to develop'. However, immediately after drawing this analogy Ilektra turned to soften her assessment by suggesting that racism in Greece is nevertheless still less 'organized' than its counterpart in Germany. Again, Lia mentions the anti-Albanian organizations as a counter to Ilektra's account. In response, Ilektra employs a 'yes-but' formulation. She does not deny the existence of these organizations, but mitigates their significance through implied ridicule (signalled by the accompanying laughter) and understatement ('It's quite extreme' lines 8-9; cf. van Dijk, 1984). Ilektra then proceeds to justify the behaviour of the organization members by using the risk/fear manoeuvre.

Once again, there is a notable difference between the way in which Ilektra explains the actions of the members of the anti-Albanian organizations compared with the ways in which she accounted for racism and prejudice in theory. In earlier parts of her interview Ilektra had represented racism both as a matter of perceived out-group inferiority ('we are racist against those who are considered to be inferior'), and in terms of negative out-group stereotyping ('for most Greek people Albanian means criminal and tattered'). Specifically, the stereotypic association of 'Albanian' with criminality was seen by Ilektra to be indicator of exceptional racism on the part of the Greeks ('I would say that there is a fierce racism against Albanians, a very strong one'). In Extract 8, however, we see Ilektra exchange all of these in-principle lines of argument for one which attributes organized discrimination to the reasonable fears of those who (honestly, if not rationally) believe themselves to be in danger.

The use of a discourse of perceived risk to justify and legitimate practical measures aimed at social exclusion has been identified in other contexts (Barker, 1981; Hughes, 1998; Mackey, 1999). What is significant about its use in this particular context is the way in which reference to reasonable (if not necessarily realistic) fears is used rhetorically to displace the racism/prejudice problematic. Whereas racism and prejudice are to be condemned in principle, behaviour based on 'risk consciousness' (cf. Beck, 1992; see also Bozatzis, 2003; Douglas, 1992; Giddens, 1990) may be viewed as the reasonable actions of a responsible, if ill-informed citizenry.⁴

Conclusions

The present study concentrated on documenting the ways in which the constructs of prejudice and racism were employed as rhetorical resources in a particular social context (interview accounts of the reception of Albanian refugees in Greece). Our analysis has to some extent replicated findings concerning common sense orientations to prejudice and racism from other discourse analytic studies in New Zealand (Wetherell & Potter, 1992), The Netherlands (van Dijk, 1984, 1987; Verkuyten, 1998; Verkuyten *et al.*, 1994), the UK (Condor, 2000) and Australia (Augoustinos *et al.*, 1999). In the same vein as in the studies mentioned above the constructs of prejudice and racism were framed in all of our interviews as problems. According to our analysis, however, the precise nature of the prejudice problematic could vary within and between accounts (cf. Rapley, 2001).

⁴ The social accountability and intelligibility of the discourse of fear in this particular context may to an extent be provided by the widely held cultural stereotype of disorganized and ineffective Greek Institutions (cf. Bozatzis, 1999).

On the one hand, prejudice could be presented as a problem of rationality: variously a tendency to overestimate the degree of intergroup difference, an inappropriate application of negative stereotypes to individuals on the basis of their category membership, or a fundamental attribution error. The repertoire of prejudice as irrationality tended to be used in association with explanatory schemes that attributed the existence of racism or prejudice to ignorance due to lack of contact between in-group and out-group. Alternatively, prejudice could be glossed as a problem of intolerance: of unwarranted negative emotional reaction to intergroup differences and of a failure to exercise appropriate self control when reacting to out-group members. The repertoire of intolerance tended to be associated with a different type of explanatory scheme. In this case, paradoxically, the existence of intergroup differences and contact was usually treated as a necessary prior condition for the development of racism or prejudice.

It was possible to identify evident parallels between these lay representations of prejudice and racism and the kinds of theories present in the academic social psychological literature (cf. Wetherell & Potter, 1992). As noted in the introduction, social psychologists have also conceptualized prejudice both as irrational (categorical) perception as well as ethnocentrism and natural reaction to (real) difference; they have also considered the attribution of difference as a distinguishing criterion between prejudiced and non-prejudiced beliefs. Despite their resemblance with some of the core assumptions of social psychological theories, however, we may also note some fairly obvious absences from our participants' accounts. On the one hand, the forms of 'psychological imagination' evident in their responses was fairly limited. Our data do not provide much evidence of speakers adopting a personality theory frame or making use of individual difference or pathology.⁵ More generally, these accounts tend to omit the kinds of 'deep' psychological constructs often employed within the reified universe of academic social psychology: speakers do not, for example, allude to motivational factors, nor to non-conscious cognitive processes.

Moreover, although respondents often attributed racism or prejudice to contextual factors, they did not generally demonstrate a fully-fledged 'sociological imagination'. There was no evidence of respondents using a lay equivalent of the construct of institutional racism (Jones, 1997; Williams, 1985), nor was the term racism used to refer to, or to explain the existence of, systematic structural inequalities between the groups concerned. Insofar as respondents mentioned issues pertaining to structural inequality, this was normally presented as a question of differences between Greece and Albania, rather than a matter of inequalities between the indigenous and refugee populations within Greece. Furthermore, there was little evidence of respondents mobilizing repertoires of oppression. Insofar as matters of agency were considered, it was normally the Albanian refugees who were implicitly attributed with responsibility for bringing about the problematic circumstances to which the indigenous population subsequently reacted with regrettable demonstrations of prejudice or racism.

It is common for social psychological work to adopt the conceit that widespread knowledge of the processes associated with racism or prejudice will necessarily lead to

⁵ Although it is not clear why so few 'character' accounts of racism or prejudice were apparent in these interviews, this may reflect the particular interviewing strategy employed, in which respondents were generally asked questions about 'Greece' in general, rather than being asked directly to report their own personal attitudes. Further, following van Dijk's (1992) observation that the act of charging others with racism may itself be treated as an accountable matter, it may be that in this particular interview context, the respondents were concerned to avoid being heard to levy charges of racism or prejudice against particular individuals.

their solution. For example, in the preface to his seminal text 'The Nature of Prejudice', Allport presented his work as a response to popular demand driven by pragmatic considerations: 'Men are saying, . . . Let us . . . seek out the roots of prejudice and find concrete means for implementing men's affiliative values' (1954: p. xiv). Education is often presented as the vehicle by which problems of racism and prejudice may be countered by providing social actors with facts, rational arguments (cf. Goldberg, 1990), and by increasing their 'cognitive sophistication' (Duckitt, 2001).

On the basis of the present study we might question the assumption that social problems associated with racism or prejudice may be resolved simply by 'giving away' more 'sophisticated' understandings of the phenomena (cf. Miller, 1969). Firstly, it might be argued that the kinds of understandings evidenced by respondents in the present study were already reasonably sophisticated. Secondly, they drew upon the same dilemmas regarding the limits of (individual or group) difference and (human) uniformity, the need to respect cultural uniqueness and to recognize universal moral principles as those that form the basis of social scientific accounts of prejudice. No amount of education would help resolve the contradictions between perspectives that focus on prejudice as irrational-perception-of-difference, and those that focus on prejudice as intolerant-reactions-to-difference, since precisely the same dilemma may be identified in the reified universe of academic social science itself.

Thirdly, and most importantly, our findings indicate that there is a significant difference between defining racism and prejudice in general abstract terms and explaining particular discriminatory actions in practice. Hence, it is not clear at all that an effort to supplement common sense understandings of the racism/prejudice problematic by 'educating the general public' (Miller, 1969, p. 1,067) would necessarily have any practical benefits. Anti-racist activity in Greece has often focused on attempting to educate the public against the stereotype of Albanian criminality (e.g. Karidis, 1996; Mavreas, 1998). The majority of our respondents did not in principle object to arguments like these, and many echoed them in their own accounts. Not only did respondents typically question the legitimacy of stereotypes of Albanian criminality, but they often treated these stereotypes as exemplary instances of prejudice or racism. However, this knowledge did not necessarily lead respondents to condemn forms of action based on these inaccurate and overgeneralized images. Rather, the stereotype of Albanian criminality effectively served the social function of justifying discriminatory action (Tajfel, 1981) in a rather more subtle way. Specifically, the factual accuracy or otherwise of the stereotype of Albanian criminality could be treated as irrelevant to the question of the justifiability of anti-Albanian activity. The mere fact that some people might genuinely believe the stereotype, and hence genuinely believe themselves to be in danger, was seen as justification enough for their discriminatory actions.

To sum up, the present study documented the ways in which the constructs of racism and prejudice were employed as rhetorical resources in a particular cultural context. It extended discourse analytic work on prejudice as a lay concern by casting light on the multiple, but also potentially contradictory common sense understandings of the construct. It also contributed to the existing discourse analytic study of prejudice by indicating that social actors' potential orientation to issues as matters of prejudice may be affected by the level of abstractness at which these issues are talked about. As our analysis indicated, there is a significant difference between representing racism and prejudice in theory and constructing explanations of particular actions in practice.

It is, of course, important to recognize that the findings reported above may have been, at least in part, contingent upon characteristics of the particular research setting in which they were collected. It is an open question whether exactly the same discursive resources would be found in other types of intergroup or discursive context. Nevertheless, these findings do indicate the potential utility of widening the extant empirical remit to consider not only the question of which forms of action are, in theory, understood to be included within the problematic of racism or prejudice, but also the question of the ways and circumstances in which particular actions undertaken by particular individuals, in particular circumstances may be included in, or excluded from, the generic categories of racism or prejudice.

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