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# Is the attribution of cultural differences to minorities an expression of racial prejudice?

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The social psychological literature considers two main perspectives on the study of perceived cultural differences between majorities and minorities: one proposes that perception of cultural differences is an antecedent of prejudice and another states that the attribution of cultural differences to minorities is already a hidden expression of racial prejudice. This paper offers further support to this latter perspective. One hundred and ninety-four participants answered a questionnaire measuring (1) general racist belief; (2) cultural differences attributed to Black people (hetero-ethnicization); (3) the asymmetric attribution of secondary and primary emotions to the in-group and to Black people (*infra-humanization*); (4) the asymmetric attribution of *natural* and *cultural* traits to in-group members and to Black people (*ontologization*); and (5) negative evaluation of this social category. The general racist belief scale was not anchored in a specific group and measured the belief in the inferiority of certain social groups or peoples based on biological or cultural factors. Relationships between the scales were analysed through a set of Structural Equation Models. According to the predictions, results showed that the attribution of cultural differences is a dimension of prejudice. Results also showed that attribution of cultural differences, negative evaluation of Black people, *ontologization*, and *infra-humanization* were different dimensions of a common latent factor that can be identified as racial prejudice; and that prejudice was predicted by general racist belief. Results are discussed in the light of the study of the impact of perceived cultural differences on intergroup relations and in the light of the “new racism” approaches.

Les écrits socio-psychologiques considèrent deux perspectives principales concernant l'étude de la perception des différences culturelles entre les majorités et les minorités: une avance que la perception des différences culturelles est un antécédent de préjugé et l'autre propose que l'attribution de différences culturelles aux minorités est déjà une expression cachée d'un préjugé racial. Cet article offre plus de soutien à cette dernière perspective. Cent quatre-vingt-quatorze participants ont répondu à un questionnaire mesurant (1) la croyance raciste générale; (2) des différences culturelles attribuées aux gens noirs (*hétéro-ethnicisation*); (3) l'attribution asymétrique d'émotions secondaires et primaires à l'endogroupe et aux gens noirs (*infra-humanisation*); (4) l'attribution asymétrique de traits *naturels* et *culturels* aux membres de l'endogroupe et aux gens noirs (*ontologisation*); et (5) une évaluation négative de cette catégorie sociale. L'échelle de la croyance raciste générale n'était pas ancrée au sein d'un groupe spécifique et elle a mesuré la croyance en l'infériorité de certains groupes sociaux ou de gens en se centrant des facteurs biologiques et culturels. Les liens entre les échelles ont été analysés à travers une série de Modèles d'équation structurelle. Selon les prédictions, les résultats ont indiqué que l'attribution des différences culturelles est une dimension de préjugé. Les résultats ont aussi montré que l'attribution des différences culturelles, une évaluation négative des gens noirs, *l'ontologisation* and *l'infra-humanisation* étaient des dimensions différentes d'un facteur latent commun qui peut être identifié comme un préjugé racial; et que le préjugé était prédit par une croyance raciste générale. Les résultats sont discutés à la lumière de l'étude de l'impact des différences culturelles perçues sur les relations intergroupes et à la lumière des approches du «nouveau racisme».

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L iteratura en el campo de la psicología social considera dos perspectivas centrales en el estudio de las diferencias culturales percibidas entre mayorías y minorías: una perspectiva propone que la percepción de diferencias culturales es un antecedente del prejuicio y la otra que las atribuciones de diferencias culturales respecto de las minorías son en realidad una expresión oculta de prejuicio racial. En el presente artículo se presentan argumentos que soportan más bien la última perspectiva. Ciento noventa y cuatro participantes contestaron un cuestionario que evaluaba (1) creencias racistas generales, (2) diferencias culturales atribuidas a gente de raza negra (heteroetnicización); (3) atribuciones asimétricas de emociones primarias y secundarias hacia el grupo de pertenencia y hacia gente de raza negra (infrahumanización); (4) atribución asimétrica de los rasgos naturales y culturales hacia los miembros del intragrupo y hacia personas de raza negra (ontologización) y (5) evaluación negativa de esta categoría social. La escala general de creencias racistas no estuvo centrada a un grupo específico y midió más bien la creencia en la inferioridad de ciertos grupos sociales o personas basándose en factores biológicos y culturales. Las relaciones entre las escalas fueron analizadas a través de un grupo de modelos de ecuación estructural. De acuerdo a las predicciones, los resultados mostraron que la atribución de diferencias culturales es una dimensión del prejuicio. Adicionalmente se pudo observar que la atribución de diferencias culturales, la evaluación negativa de gente de color negra, la ontologización e infrahumanización eran dimensiones diferentes de un factor común latente que puede ser identificado como prejuicio racial; y que el prejuicio racial puede ser predicho a través de la creencia racista general. Los resultados son discutidos en función del estudio del impacto de las diferencias culturales sobre las relaciones intergrupales y en función del enfoque del “nuevo racismo”.

**Keywords:** Ethnicization; Infra-humanization; Ontologization; Prejudice; Racism.

This research analyses the expression of racism through the attribution of cultural differences between the in-group and minority out-groups in societies that are formally anti-racist. Our basic assumption is that racism is a phenomenon in permanent transformation, a transformation that aims to preserve its functionality and to protect itself against legal and informal anti-racist social norms. In this vein, we propose that once the idea of race has become illegitimate, folk and scientific racial theories on the differences between human groups were replaced by folk and scientific theories on the cultural differences between groups. Cultural differences, like racial differences, classify, naturalize the attributed differences, and justify the inferiority attributed to some social groups. This shift from racial to cultural hierarchies was already previewed by Lévi-Strauss in the fifties. According to Lévi-Strauss (1958, p. 9), “we cannot therefore claim to have formulated a convincing denial of the inequality of the human ‘races’, so long as we fail to consider the problem of the inequality—or diversity—of human cultures”. From Jones’ (1972) perspective, “cultural racism” and “biological racism” combine to maintain the idea that some groups are “essentially” inferior to others and that superior groups or peoples should have a power differential in favour of themselves. If some research has already demonstrated that the explicit attribution of cultural inferiority is a facet of prejudice, the hypothesis that the mere attribution of cultural

differences might be an expression of prejudice remains controversial. This paper tests the hypothesis that the attribution of cultural differences to Black people is an expression of racial prejudice predicted by the endorsement of racist beliefs.

The psychosociological processes that accompany the transformation of the representations of differences between social groups based on biological factors to those based on cultural factors can be understood in the framework of the literature on the meaning and effects of perceived differences between groups. This literature can be organized into two main topics: one that considers the difference as an antecedent of prejudice; and another that considers that attribution of difference per se is prejudice.

### **Consequences of the perception of difference on racial prejudice**

In the more general context of cognitive balance assumption (Heider, 1958), Rokeach and colleagues (e.g., Rokeach, Smith, & Evans, 1960) introduced the hypothesis that cultural differences are an antecedent of prejudice. Those authors proposed that beliefs are more important in the genesis of prejudice than racial or ethnic belongings. Research by Rokeach and Mezei (1966) showed that when White theists were invited to evaluate a White atheist and a Black theist they evaluated the Black more positively (for a review, see Insko, Nacoste, & Moe, 1983).

Beyond the cognitive balance, social categorization processes may also sustain the relationship between difference and prejudice. Allport (1954) proposed that categorization may function as a powerful antecedent of prejudice. Following this perspective, it was assumed in most studies that differences generated by categorization are an antecedent of prejudice (for a discussion, see Park & Judd, 2005). Motivational factors underlie other theoretical positions on prejudice and cultural differences (e.g., Esses, Haddock, & Zanna, 1993; Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Several theories on the contemporary expressions of racism (e.g., Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay, 1986) in the USA also argue that once the anti-racism norm inhibits the public expression of Black inferiority, the anti-Black prejudice is then based on the belief that Black people's cultural differences constitute a threat to American core values like individualism, self-reliance, and Protestant work ethic (Sears & Henry, 2003). Struch and Schwartz (1989) demonstrated that the perception of differences between the in-group and the out-group values predicts aggression towards that out-group. However, contrary to the assumption that intergroup differences create prejudice, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) predicts that out-group similarity triggers derogation since it represents a threat to in-group distinctiveness. In this vein, a line of research carried out by Jetten, Spears, and Postmes (2004) showed that for people who are highly identified with a group, similarity leads to in-group bias, whereas for low identifiers it is difference, not similarity, that leads to in-group bias. Other studies show that the effects of similarity on prejudice are more probable: in competitive contexts (Brown & Abrams, 1986); when the out-group represents a threat (Henderson-King, Henderson-King, Zhermer, Posokhova, & Chiker, 1997); when similitude is very high (Roccas & Schwartz, 1993); or when the dimensions of comparison are very important (Moghaddam & Stringer, 1988). Supporting the hypothesis of Social Identity Theory (SIT), experimental research by Lima and Vala (2002) showed that participants evaluated Black people who resisted assimilation more positively than those who adopted the "dominant values" pattern. Although the research by Diehl (1988) has shown that difference raises disliking in interpersonal relations and similarity raises prejudice in intergroup relations, the effects of difference or similitude per se in intergroup contexts continue to be a puzzle (Jetten et al., 2004).

### **Racial prejudice and the attribution of cultural differences**

Another theoretical perspective considers that the attribution of difference per se is an expression of prejudice. This perspective is different from the previous one in methodological and theoretical aspects. Theoretically, this perspective considers that difference is not an antecedent but an expression of prejudice. This proposition lies in the assumption that, psychologically, difference is an attributed feature, a meaning attributed to reality and not a reflection of a "given reality." Methodologically, whereas from the previous perspective participants are confronted with a "real" difference of an out-group in relation to an in-group, from this new perspective, participants are invited to judge the degree of difference between the in-group and the out-group. This analytical paradigm was introduced by Pettigrew and Meertens (1995) and Pettigrew et al. (1998) in the data analysis of a survey carried out in five European countries. They showed that the simple affirmation of cultural differences between an in-group (the nation) and an out-group (non-European immigrants) are part of a set of beliefs named "subtle prejudice," a hidden expression of prejudice. Moreover, what the results of Pettigrew and Meertens (1995) showed is that when a difference, either real or imagined, is attributed to a minority out-group this difference is associated with a pattern of negative representations of that out-group (see also Pettigrew et al., 1998).

Antecedents of this analytical perspective of cultural differences can be found in the pioneering work of LaPiere (1936), who demonstrated that the negative traits attributed to Armenians were not an antecedent but a consequence of the antipathy against this group. Additionally, studies carried out after the Second World War compared the categorization that anti-Semites and non anti-Semites made of portraits of Jews and non-Jewish people. Results showed that anti-Semites made more errors of exclusion than of inclusion in the in-group. That is, they included more non-Jews in the category of Jews than in the category of non-Jews (Tajfel, 1969). Transporting these results to our problem, they suggest that prejudiced people are more prone than nonprejudiced people to notice differences, even when they do not exist, between the in-group and the out-group.

Consistent with that perspective, other theoretical contributions on prejudice have also included attributed differences, now in the field of emotions, as an expression of prejudice. Leyens and colleagues (Leyens et al., 2000, 2003) showed that

the attributed differences between the in-group and the out-group in the ability to feel secondary emotions (e.g., love and hope, as opposed to primary emotions like pleasure and anger) is a particular and indirect form of prejudice that these authors named “*infra-humanization*.” In the same vein, Moscovici and Pérez (1997; see also Pérez, Moscovici, & Chulvi, 2007) distinguished between “cultural traits” (e.g. civilized, honest) and “natural traits” (e.g. obedient, spontaneous) and proposed that the attribution of more natural traits than of cultural traits independently of valence is an expression of “*ontologization*,” i.e., a particular form of prejudice in the field of personality traits, applied to extremely devalued or excluded social groups. From our point of view, both *infra-humanization* and *ontologization* are not antecedents of prejudice; rather, they are processes of representation of differences between human groups that express particular forms of prejudice.

However, the distinction established by Pettigrew and Meertens (1995) between blatant and subtle prejudice and the inclusion of the perception of cultural differences as a dimension of subtle prejudice (the other dimensions were the explicit devaluation of minorities’ culture and the negation of positive emotions) have been the object of controversy. In fact, Coenders, Scheepers, Sniderman, and Verberk (2001) analysed the dataset of Pettigrew and Meertens and sustain that the inclusion of the subscale “perceived differences” in the scale on “subtle prejudice” is based on methodological ambiguities. Specifically, Coenders et al. argue that the subscale of “perceptions of cultural differences” of Pettigrew and colleagues (1998) does not measure prejudice but instead “perceptions of social reality” (see the comment of Pettigrew & Meertens, 2001). Despite using different arguments, Leach, Peng, and Volkens (2000) also questioned the hypothesis of Pettigrew and colleagues. Leach and colleagues analysed part of the referred dataset and concluded that “new racism” or “cultural racism” was present in only two of the seven samples studied. However, partially in favour of our argument, these same analyses show that blatant prejudice and perceptions of cultural differences are correlated in five of the seven samples.

Contrary to these criticisms, using a Portuguese sample, Vala, Brito, and Lopes (1999) showed that the attribution of cultural differences between the in-group (Portuguese) and Black immigrants is positively correlated with the scale of “blatant prejudice” (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995) against Black people and with different measures of

discrimination and restrictive immigration policies. In the same vein, Vala, Lopes, and Lima (in press) showed that young Black people’s metaperception that they are seen as culturally different was correlated with a feeling of discrimination. These results allowed the authors to define the attribution of cultural differences to minority out-groups as a process of *hetero-ethnicization*; a process through which an inferior culture is implicitly attributed to those groups, the in-group being considered a “universal” and not a “particular ethnos”. Cultural differences attributed to out-groups are then differences that are negatively evaluated in an implicit way. This phenomenon should be understood in the framework of the transformation of expressions of racism in democratic societies; namely into the transformation of biological racism into cultural racism, the covert expression of cultural inferiority being manifested nowadays through the simple attribution of cultural differences between minority and majority groups. Consequently, the perception of cultural differences might be a dimension of racial prejudice predicted by racism.

## Overview and hypotheses

In the present research, we intend to go further into the empirical argument that the attribution of cultural differences to minority groups might be an expression of prejudice. The psychological status of the attribution of cultural differences to Black people (*hetero-ethnicization*) was compared (1) with the status of *ontologization* (Moscovici & Pérez, 1997), or the attribution to Black people of more natural than cultural traits, a dimension of prejudice in the domain of personality traits; and (2) with the status of *infra-humanization* (Leyens et al., 2000, 2003), or denying Black people the capacity of expressing secondary emotions, a dimension of prejudice in the domain of emotions. A measure of negative evaluation of Black people and a racism scale were also introduced in this research. The racism scale measured the general belief that human groups are biologically or culturally deeply different and that some groups are superior to others. This racist belief is focused on a generalized belief without a specific reference to in-groups or out-groups.

Two hypotheses were tested. The first one predicts that hetero-ethnicization, ontologization, *infra-humanization*, and negative general evaluation of Black people are dimensions of a second-order latent factor that can be called racial prejudice. The second hypothesis states that racism

is a predictor of that second-order latent factor. In order to test these hypotheses, a set of Structural Equation Models was set up.

## METHOD

### Participants and procedure

The sample used in this study was a convenience sample of 194 inhabitants (62% female) from Lisbon (ages varying from 16 to 72 years old,  $M = 30.4$ ,  $SD = 14.0$ ; 77% having 9 or more years of education). Participants were personally contacted to answer a questionnaire on social problems. They were recruited by a “snowball” process. They answered the questionnaire individually, generally at home.

### Measures

*Racist belief (RB).* Participants responded to a scale on general (non-targeted) racial beliefs. The scale included four items that considered (1) the biologically based beliefs on human differences (RB-Item 1 = “The human species is divided into racial groups that are very different from each other”; RB-Item 2 = “The human species is divided into very similar cultural ethnic groups,” reversed); and (2) the hierarchical organization of human groups (RB-Item 3 = “The mixture of different human groups may weaken the biological evolution of the human species”; RB-Item 4 = “Some human groups are culturally more civilized than others”). Participants indicated the degree of agreement with those statements on 7-point answer scales (1 = *total disagreement*; 7 = *total agreement*).

*Hetero-ethnicization (HE).* The scale of attributed cultural differences measured the differences between White Portuguese people and Black Africans (“How different or similar do you think Black people living here are in relation to other Portuguese people like you?”) The 7-point answer scale had four items corresponding to different aspects of life (HE-Item 1 = “... in the values that they teach to children”; HE-Item 2 = “... in their religious beliefs and practices”; HE-Item 3 = “... in their sexual values or sexual behaviors”; HE-Item 4 = “... in the concern with their family’s welfare”).

*Infra-humanization.* Infra-humanization was measured by the attribution to Black African people and to Portuguese people of the ability to

feel (1 = *not at all probable*; 7 = *very probable*) two secondary positive (compassion and hope) and two secondary negative (bitterness and sorrow) emotions, as well as two primary positive (contentment and excitement) and two primary negative emotions (anger and irritation). An index of infra-humanization of Black people was computed: [(Primary emotions of Black people – Primary emotions of Portuguese people) – (Secondary emotions of Black people – Secondary emotions of Portuguese people)]. The higher the scores, the greater the infra-humanization of Black people. The computed index considered the suggestion of Castano and Giner-Sorolla (2006), according to which infra-humanization exists only when differences between the in-group and the out-group occur not only at the level of sentiments, but also at the level of emotions. Results showed that Black people are more infra-humanized than Portuguese people, and the difference of scores between Black and Portuguese people was greater than zero ( $M = 0.70$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ),  $t(193) = 8.09$ ,  $p < .001$ .

*Ontologization.* Ontologization was measured by asking people to evaluate to what extent four positive cultural traits (creative, intelligent, civilized, and honest) and four positive natural traits (docile, intuitive, spontaneous, and simple) were typical of Portuguese and of Black African people. The scale varied between 1 (*nothing typical*) and 7 (*very typical*). An index of ontologization of Black people was computed: [(Nature traits attributed to Black people – Nature traits attributed to Portuguese people) – (Culture traits attributed to Black people – Culture traits attributed to Portuguese people)]. The higher the scores, the greater the ontologization of Black people. Therefore, Black people were more ontologized than Portuguese people. In fact, the difference of scores between Black people and Portuguese people was greater than zero ( $M = 0.36$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ),  $t(193) = 5.46$ ,  $p < .001$ , meaning that Black people were more ontologized than Portuguese people.

*Negative evaluation of Black people.* Black people were evaluated on a scale ranging from 1 (*very positive general impression*) to 7 (*very negative general impression*) ( $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 1.53$ ).

## RESULTS

Our first hypothesis states that the attribution of cultural differences (hetero-ethnicization) as well as ontologization, infra-humanization, and the general

evaluation of Black people are expressions of racial prejudice. To test this hypothesis, we analysed the fit of a model according to which hetero-ethnicization, ontologization, infra-humanization, and general evaluation of Black people were specified as four latent variables loading by a common second-order factor. The goodness of fit of this solution was good,  $\chi^2(13, N = 194) = 24.77, p = .03, CFI = .96, GFI = .97, AGFI = .93, RMSEA = .07, AIC = 54.77$ . Moreover, the goodness of fit of this model was compared with the fit of an alternative model in which the four variables were specified as uncorrelated. The goodness of fit of this alternative model was not acceptable,  $\chi^2(17, N = 194) = 111.45, p < .001, CFI = .65, GFI = .87, AGFI = .78, RMSEA = .17, AIC = 133.45$ . In fact, the fit of the first model was significantly better than the second one,  $\Delta\chi^2_4 = 108.68, p < .001$ . Our first hypothesis was thus supported, indicating that the four variables analysed, and specifically the perception of cultural differences, represent dimensions of a same latent variable: racial prejudice.

Our second hypothesis proposes that general racist belief predicts racial prejudice. In order to test this hypothesis, we tested a model in which racial prejudice was specified as predicted by racism (see Figure 1)<sup>1</sup>. Prejudice was a second-order latent variable with four first-order factors (hetero-ethnicization, infra-humanization, ontologization and negative evaluation of Black people). Racism was a latent variable measured by four items on racial beliefs. The test of this model showed an acceptable goodness of fit,  $\chi^2(42, N = 194) = 71.07, p < .01, CFI = .92, GFI = .94, AGFI = .91, RMSEA = .06, AIC = 119.07$ . An alternative model was also estimated in which it was specified that all indicators were loaded by the same factor. That is, in this alternative model, the hypothesis tested was that the 11 items together (4 items of the racist belief scale, 4 items of the hetero-ethnicization scale, the negative evaluation score, the infra-humanization score, and the ontologization score) measure the same dependent latent variable, which we can call diffuse prejudice.

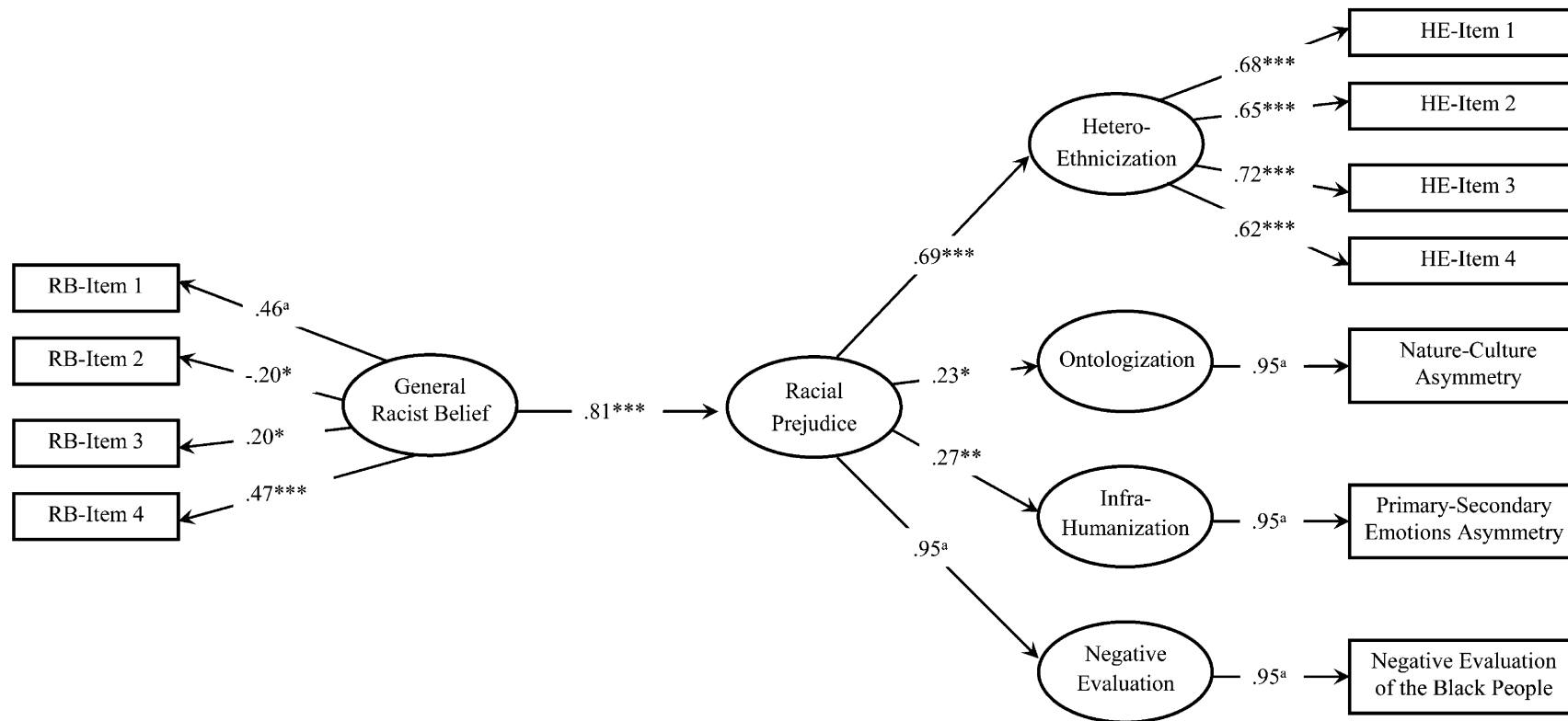
<sup>1</sup>In order to guarantee the statistical identification of the models, the factorial loadings of one of the indicators of racism and one of the indicators of hetero-ethnicization were constrained at 1.00. Moreover, as recommended for statistical identification of the latent variables with a single indicator (see Anderson & Gerbing, 1988), the factor loadings of the indicators of infra-humanization, ontologization, and negative evaluation of Black people latent variables were constrained at 0.95, and the correspondent error variances were fixed at 0.10 times the observed variance for these indicators (see also Kline, 1998).

The goodness of fit of this model was not good,  $\chi^2(44, N = 194) = 94.39, p < .001, CFI = .85, GFI = .92, AGFI = .87, RMSEA = .08, AIC = 138.39$ . More important to our argument, the goodness of fit of our model was better than the fit of the alternative model,  $\Delta\chi^2_2 = 23.32, p < .001$ .

## DISCUSSION

Together, the results of this research showed that hetero-ethnicization is a dimension of racial prejudice and that it is predicted by racist belief. In other words, the attribution of cultural differences to Black people was positively associated with a negative evaluation of Black people and with the belief that human groups are biologically or culturally hierarchically organized, and that, consequently, some groups are superior to others. Results also showed that hetero-ethnicization, ontologization, and infra-humanization are processes of minorities' devaluation that express different dimensions of racial prejudice.

When the Portuguese arrived in Japan in the mid 16th century, they were surprised by the differences between European and Japanese customs. A Portuguese Jesuit (Frois, 1585/2003) identified and described around 500 everyday life differences between European and Japanese people. Sometimes these differences are presented "just as differences" ("our common food is bread, their common food is rice cooked without salt"; "our churches are long and narrow; Japanese temples are wide and shallow"), and sometimes as ethnocentric evaluations ("our air is beautiful, Japanese air is clearly inferior"; "between us treason is rare and it is punished; in Japan it is so common that it does not surprise anybody"). As stated by Lévi-Straus (1998) in the preface to the French edition of Frois' book: "when a traveller realises that habits completely opposed to his own—and that he would therefore be tempted to reject with disgust—are actually similar, viewed in a reversed way, he's giving himself the ability of mastering their strangeness, of rendering them familiar" (p. 8). That is, the descriptions of Frois, even if they are ethnocentric, represent the costumes of "others" as identical to ours seen in a reversed way. In fact, Frois described differences between "equals." However, the difference may also play a role in the processes of domination and exclusion, when its attribution occurs in the context of social relations between "unequals." From this perspective, the present research questions whether the attribution of a different culture



**Figure 1.** Standardized maximum likelihood coefficients for the structural equation model of effects of racial beliefs on racial prejudice. *Note.* To simplify, we do not show the paths from error to manifest and latent variables.<sup>a</sup> Denotes parameter constrained.  $*p < .05$ ;  $**p < .01$ ;  $***p < .001$ .



to Black people is a hidden expression of racism or not.

Contrary to the popular belief that racism is declining, this study proposes that racism is a phenomenon in transformation that has been surviving the anti-racist norm through its expression in apparently legitimate ways, such as the attribution of cultural differences to groups that previously were the object of open racism. This hypothesis was formulated in the context of the research paradigm proposed by Pettigrew and Meertens (1995), according to which the accentuation of cultural difference is already an expression of prejudice. This research goes further, showing that the attribution of cultural differences might be an expression of racism. The scale through which racist beliefs were assessed considers the fundamental racist beliefs, namely the belief in the essential inferiority of some peoples or social groups derived from biological or cultural factors. Moreover, this scale was not oriented to measure the racism against one group; instead it measured racist beliefs in general. Consequently, the association between racism, prejudice, and the attribution of cultural differences to Black Africans is particularly meaningful: The expression of cultural difference represents, in most circumstances, a hidden expression of the belief in the radical inferiority of the "other." Social sciences separated culture from race and heredity, but our results suggest that common sense continues to associate these concepts. Previous research considered the hypothesis that cultural differences are an antecedent of racial prejudice. Our results show that it is also worth considering that the attribution of difference is already an expression of racial prejudice.

Finally, the results of this research may contribute to the discussion on "new racism" in psychology (Augoustinos & Reynolds, 2001; Leach et al., 2000; Reicher, 2001; Walker, 2001), in sociology (Barker, 1981; Wieviorka, 1991, 1998), and in history (Fredrickson, 2002). In fact, in the ongoing debate on the meaning of the expressions of racism in contemporary western societies, some analyses tend to show that the belief in the inferiority of some peoples or groups has been replaced just by feelings of antipathy towards minorities or by the belief in the incompatibility of different ways of life of majorities and minorities. For instance, the concept of modern racism emphasises the idea of cultural threat (Sears & Henry, 2003) and not the belief in a "natural hierarchy" of human groups and the legitimacy of domination. The results presented in this research show, however, that core racist beliefs

are expressed in a covert way nowadays. These results may indicate that the anti-racist norm is still not internalized (in the sense of Kelman, 1961) and that the images of the "savage" (Jahoda, 1999), like enduring superstitions, continue to feed on the differences between human groups. At the same time, the fact that racism is not expressed in an overt way means that the anti-racism norm is currently pervasive and that there have been positive changes.

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