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A Shared Past and a Common Future: The Portuguese Colonial War and the Dynamics of Group-Based Guilt
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Available in: http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=17217456014
In the present study we examine feelings of group-based guilt among Portuguese people in relation to the Portuguese colonial war, and their consequences for social behaviour. Specifically, we focus on the way Portuguese university students identify with their national group and the outgroup and their feelings of group-based guilt regarding their group’s past misdeeds during the colonial period. The consequences of group-based guilt are also analyzed. 130 Portuguese university students answered a questionnaire and results show that students feel low levels of group-based guilt in relation to this period. Our results show that ingroup glorification is positively related with the use of cognitions to justify the ingroup’s behaviour, presumably to avoid responsibility for the harm committed by the ingroup. Outgroup identification correlates with compensatory behavioural intentions and openness to negative information about the colonial war. As expected, feelings of group-based guilt show a significant correlation with compensatory behavioural intentions. Links between political orientation, ingroup attachment and glorification, exonerating cognitions and group-based guilt are analyzed and their implications for intergroup relations are discussed.

Keywords: group-based guilt, modes of national identification, perceived importance of information, outgroup identification, compensation.
As many other nations with a past of colonization and domination throughout the world, Portugal has recently been confronted with a need to readdress the positive way in which this period of Portuguese history is portrayed, in way to deal with the more negative consequences of the colonization period.

Specially considering the Portuguese colonial war, which lasted, in total, for 13 years (1961 to 1974) in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, there is much still to discuss about the moral standing of Portugal in relation to its former colonies.

In the present study we attempt to begin unveiling the ways in which Portuguese people identify with their ingroup and the victimized outgroup (i.e. former colonies) and experience group-based guilt in relation to this period. Therefore, we focus on the role of ingroup identification, as well as identification with the victimized outgroup and their relationship with feelings of group-based guilt and its social consequences.

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) assumes that people’s self-image consists of an individual (personal self) and a group level (social self) and, therefore, a part of people’s self-image is based on their membership of different social groups. This connection with social groups (in this case, a national group) can generate emotional-affective reactions resulting from the ingroup’s behaviour (Branscombe & Doosje, 2004) and, in this line, feelings of group-based guilt might occur (Branscombe & Doosje, 2004; Iyer, Leach, & Crosby, 2003), particularly when people perceive the behaviour of their ingroup to be unjust or immoral (Branscombe, Sluysoski, & Kappen, 2004; Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998) and the categorization of the self according to that group membership cannot be denied (Wohl & Branscombe, 2004).

In this line, Branscombe, Doosje, and McGarty (2003) argue that there are two conditions for individuals to feel group-based guilt. One of these is that individuals can only feel group-based guilt if they recognize their belonging to a group (even if this identification is not strong) and the second condition is that individuals must held the ingroup accountable for a humanitarian violation. These feelings will be stronger the more advantages there are in the present for the dominant group (McGarty & Bluc, 2004).

Even individuals who did not play an active role in the harm perpetrated by the ingroup can feel group-based guilt, simply by their association with that group (Branscombe, 2004). Feelings of group-based guilt can thus emerge and reflect a conscious social affiliation, marked by a negative history (Rensmann, 2004).

Intergroup emotions theory (Smith, 1993) also provides insightful ideas about the way members of an ingroup perceive members of an outgroup, showing that people can experience emotions based on their identity as group members and their ingroup’s relation to outgroups. By studying these emotions, it is possible to understand the way people perceive and interact with each other, as well as their perceptions about events that implicate the ingroup and an outgroup (Mackie, Silver, & Smith, 2004). In this line, when analysing the dynamics among groups who share a historical past marked by negative events, it is possible that individuals feel group-based guilt, while showing a desire to compensate the victims or apologize for the harm committed (Branscombe, Doosje, & McGarty, 2003; Doosje et al., 1998; Mallett & Swim, 2004).

Roccas, Klar, and Livian (2006) propose a multidimensional model of ingroup identification and they describe two modes of identification, namely attachment to the ingroup, i.e. the cognitive and affective involvement with the group, and ingroup glorification, i.e. the level to which people consider their ingroup to be superior compared to other groups and the level of idealization they present when referring to the group. These two different modes of identification were proposed as a possible solution by Roccas and her collaborators for the paradoxal findings of ingroup identification in some studies (Branscombe et al., 2004; Doosje et al., 1998).

According to Roccas and colleagues (2006), a high level of attachment to the ingroup will increase the levels of group-based guilt felt by the individual, as they feel more implicated in the past of the ingroup. On the contrary, a high level of glorification of the ingroup would be associated with the use of more exonerating cognitions to explain the negative ingroup’s behaviour. For example, when people glorify their past, they are less likely to accept negative information about their group’s behavior (Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 2004). It can also make people adhere more to external attributions that might explain the negative actions perpetrated by the ingroup (Likkel, Schmader, & Barquissau, 2004). These tendencies lead to less group-based guilt for the ingroup’s past behavior.

In the present study we conceptualize the ingroup favoring biases as exonerating cognitions, which are beliefs that can help the individual to exculpate or absolve the ingroup for the harm committed, by minimizing the negative actions or by blaming the victims. Through the use of these exonerating cognitions, individuals try to maintain a positive view of the ingroup (Roccas, Klar, & Livian, 2004).

In this line, when the ingroup cannot escape its responsibility for the perpetrated act against an outgroup, the experience of group-based guilt will be bigger. Still, when the responsibility for the acts can be diffuse, group-based guilt might not be felt. In a study conducted in Portugal (Marques, Paez, & Serra, 1997), the fact that many European nations acted in wrong terms against their colonies, allowed Portuguese people to feel low levels of guilt. Also, in the studies of Valentim (2003) about the perceptions of Portuguese and Africans, Portuguese participants do not support the idea that the Portuguese colonial past was a history of violence and barbarism. This diffusion of
responsibility among groups allows the members of these groups to perceive their ingroup as less responsible for the harm committed.

In this study we consider the two modes of identification (attachment and glorification) with the ingroup, and their possible implications on feelings of group-based guilt, as well as the way exonerating cognitions can affect the relations between these variables.

In a study conducted by Doosje et al. (1998), national identification was also related with political orientation, such that that a high level of identification was correlated with a right-wing political orientation (Doosje et al, 2004). Roccas et al. (2004) also found an association between political orientation, guilt and exonerating cognitions. Thus, individuals with a left-wing political orientation felt more group-based guilt and used less exonerating cognitions, when confronted with harmful actions committed by their ingroup. In the present study we also expect to find these relations between political orientation and group-based guilt.

We argue that another means by which an individual can feel group-based guilt is by perceiving a common bond with those harmed, i.e. identification with the outgroup. It has been shown that presenting individuals with a more inclusive common ingroup leads them to feel more group-based guilt, because the former outgroup has been included in the same ingroup as the individual and, therefore, the proximity between the perpetrator and the victim is stronger (Wohl, Branscombe, & Klar, 2006). Therefore, it is possible to argue that, if the individual feels a bond with the victimized outgroup, feelings of group-based guilt will be higher. In this line, a sense of identification with the outgroup can lead to a greater willingness of acknowledging the wrongdoings of the past and a bigger chance that individuals feel group-based guilt.

On the contrary, it is also possible that in the case of the Portuguese population, luso-tropicalism, which refers to a social representation of the Portuguese nation emphasizing the unique relationships Portugal had with its colonies influences the experience of collective guilt. The idea that the Portuguese dealt with people from different cultures in a special positive way and that they are not prejudiced may lead them to feel lower levels of collective guilt. Furthermore, these beliefs may make these individuals believe there were no negative consequences of the colonial period. We test these different predictions.

When analyzing group-based emotions elicited by specific events that connect the national group of an individual with an outgroup, it is important to address the implications these emotions have on the perceptions of members of the outgroup and the action intentions that can be elicited by specific group-based emotions on individuals of the ingroup.

By signaling that the relation between individuals or groups was damaged, group-based guilt might serve an important social function in the creation of better social conditions, after a past of violence and intergroup conflict, thus presenting several implications for the present and future relations between groups. This idea was confirmed in different studies (Doosje et al., 1998; Lickel et al., 2004), where it was concluded that feelings of group-based guilt predict the desire to make reparations due to the ingroup’s negative behavior. This willingness comes from the desire individuals have to reduce their feelings of guilt due to inequities and it has as a consequence behaviors such as apologies, compensation and redistribution of power in interpersonal relations or future acts that aim to avoid the same mistakes (Mallett & Swim, 2004). For these reasons, it is believed that an examination of the past and the mistakes committed can be the key to avoid repeating of the same mistakes (Branscombe & Doosje, 2004).

Barkan (2000) suggests that, whatever form of compensation is used to correct for past injustices, compensation does allow the construction of a mechanism that helps to deal with the pain and recognize the harm inflicted to the outgroup and the responsibility of the ingroup, making the ingroup able to reconstruct their group identity in a more positive and healthy way, making better intergroup relations (Barkan, 2000). In other studies it has also been shown that institutional definitions of rights and law enforcement that try to prevent abuses (as well as their condemnation) were developed after extreme experiences of war (Spini, Elcheroth, & Fasel, 2008; Valentim & Doise, 2008) and, therefore, we argue that the compensation of victims, whether done through apologies or public recognition of the past misdeeds can be an institutional way of recognizing the victims suffering and of improving intergroup relations. In the present study we will analyze the relations between group-based guilt and compensation as a means to improve intergroup relations.

Another form of compensation can occur by means of a public discussion about the negative consequences of the actions perpetrated by the ingroup. By acknowledging the importance of discussing the wrongdoings of an ingroup, individuals are recognizing that there is a need to create better relations between the ingroup and the outgroup and are willing to address these negative actions. Though this is not a concrete way of eliminating the inequalities existent due to the intergroup relations in the past, it may help to

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1 These ideas first came to light by the hand of Gilberto Freyre, a Brazilian anthropologist, and were then assimilated and adapted to the political discourse of the government at the time of the colonial war, whereby they tried to defend Portugal’s unique right to have colonies spread around the world (for more details on the concept of luso-tropicalism see Vala, Lopes, & Lima, 2008 and Valentim, 2003).
restore psychological balance between the perpetrators and the victims, since the latter group can feel comprehended and listened to through these public discussions and have their identity as former victims acknowledged.

So far, and to our knowledge, only the studies by Valentim (2003) about the reciprocal perceptions of Portuguese and African individuals and the studies of Marques, Paez, and Serra (1997), which focus on the perceptions and emotions of Portuguese pupils about the colonial past have, focused on the perceptions and emotions about the Portuguese colonial past from a psychosocial perspective.

This study intends to open the path for understanding how the colonial past is perceived in Portuguese society by focusing on attachment and glorification modes of national identification and their relation to group-based guilt regarding this period of Portuguese history. Furthermore, we will also analyze the connections between outgroup identification and group-based guilt, since identifying with the outgroup, and thus its suffering, might increase feelings of group-based guilt and the desire to compensate the victims for the past misdeeds. The effects of group-based guilt as contributing to the compensation of the victimized outgroup as well as the perceived importance of public information regarding the colonial war, which we conceptualize as another way of compensating the victims and improving intergroup relations through the acknowledgment of transgressions that occurred in the past will also be considered.

Method

Participants

One-hundred thirty six Portuguese University students participated in this study, on a voluntary basis. Six subjects were excluded from analysis due to not having Portuguese nationality. The remaining 130 participants comprised 95 women and 35 men (age M = 21.45; range 18-42).

Procedure

The questionnaire used in the study was administered at the end of classes and during class breaks among students of Psychology, Archaeology and Civil Engineering in three faculties of the University of Coimbra. In the beginning of the questionnaire it was explained that the study aimed to examine the perceptions people have about the Portuguese colonial period and war. Anonymity and confidentiality of the answers given by the participants was assured.

Measures

Political orientation was accessed using an item ranging from extreme-left (1) to extreme-right (7). Participants were asked to indicate their level of national identification with the Portuguese, by means of a measure of sixteen items as used by Roccas et al. (2006). This measure makes a distinction between two different modes of identification, attachment to the ingroup (Cronbach’s α = .88), which is constituted by 9 items, and ingroup’s glorification (Cronbach’s α = .74), which has 7 items. Sample items for attachment are “It is important to me that everyone will see me as Portuguese” and “I am strongly committed to my nation”. Sample items for glorification of the ingroup are “In today’s world, the only way to know what to do is to rely on the leaders of our nation” and “In general, Portugal is better than other nations”. The distinction between items measuring the two modes of identification was verified by means of an exploratory factor analysis with Varimax rotation, where the same solution used by Roccas et al. (2006) occurred, except for one item (“Other nations can learn a lot from us”), which was supposed to load on the ingroup’s glorification factor, but loaded on the attachment to the ingroup factor.

Subsequently, there was a measure of identification with the outgroup comprised of one item (“I identify with Africans from the former Portuguese colonies”), which was adapted from Valentim (2003) and measured on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much).

A 5 item scale of exonerating cognitions (Cronbach’s α = .73) ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) was included to examine the extent to which participants held exonerating beliefs that could absolve the national group for the colonial war. Sample items of exonerating cognitions are “The Portuguese were victims of the colonial war” and “The descriptions of the colonial war are too negative in relation to the role of the Portuguese”.

Participants were then asked about the perceived importance of giving increased attention in the media and in the school curriculum towards the positive and the negative aspects of the colonial war, using 2 positive items and 2 negative items ranging from 1 (not important at all) to 7 (very important). Examples are “How important do you think it is for the media to give attention to the positive aspects of the colonial war in former Portuguese colonies in Africa?” and “How important do you think it is for the school curriculum to give attention to the negative aspects of the colonial war in former Portuguese colonies in Africa?”. Drawing from these scales, we computed a new variable, perceived importance of information, by subtracting the mean of the negative items from the mean of the positive items (Cronbach’s α = .77). Therefore, a positive value represents a tendency to give more importance to the discussion and presentation of the positive aspects of the colonial war and a negative value represents a willingness to address the more negative aspects of the colonial war.

Feelings of collective guilt were tapped using a 7 item measure, of which five items were derived from Branscombe, Slugoski, and Kappen (2004) and the other
two were made specifically for this study (Cronbach’s α = .94). Sample items are “I can easily feel guilty about the bad outcomes received by the people of the colonies that were brought about by the Portuguese” and “I feel guilty by the bad acts committed by the Portuguese during the colonial war”.

To capture compensatory behavioural intentions, 4 items derived from Doosje and colleagues (1998) were used (Cronbach’s α = .86), with a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Two of these items address efforts of the Portuguese government to compensate the people of the former colonies (e.g. “I think the Portuguese government owes something to the people they colonized and fought against”) and two of them were about individual compensatory behaviour (e.g. “I think I should make more efforts to improve the position of the people of the former Portuguese colonies because of the negative things Portuguese have done”).

### Results

Correlation coefficients were computed among the eight constructs. The results of the correlational analyses (see Table 1), show that 13 of the 28 correlations were statistically significant and were greater than or equal to .18.

Ingroup’s glorification correlates strongly with attachment to the ingroup (r = .42, p < .01). In addition, ingroup glorification correlates positively and significantly with political orientation (r = .32, p < .01), a measure in which a higher value indicates a right-wing political orientation, exonerating cognitions (r = .46, p < .01) and perceived importance of positive information about the colonial war (r = .38, p < .01).

The measure of political orientation is positively and significantly related with the use of exonerating cognitions (r = .31, p < .01) and perceived importance of positive information (r = .25, p < .01). This measure is negatively and significantly correlated with feelings of group-based guilt (r = -.18, p < .05).

Exonerating cognitions correlate positively with perceived importance of positive information about the colonial war (r = .40, p < .01).

Outgroup identification is negatively correlated with the use of exonerating cognitions (r = -.19, p < .05) and positively correlated with compensatory behavioural intentions (r = .34, p < .01).

Perceived importance of positive information about the colonial war correlates negatively and significantly with feelings of group-based guilt (r = -.27, p < .01) and compensatory behavioural intentions (r = -.22, p < .05).

As expected, we also found a significant positive relationship between feelings of group-based guilt and compensatory behavioural intentions (r = .31, p < .01).

### Discussion

The significant correlation between both modes of ingroup identification, i.e. attachment and glorification, suggests that individuals have a congruent pattern of identification with the national group (Roccas et al., 2006), such that individuals who are attached to the ingroup also glorify the ingroup, though there are individual differences in the level of endorsement of both ways of identifying with the group.

The endorsement of a high level of ingroup glorification among Portuguese participants is positively associated with the use of exonerating cognitions and positively associated with perceived importance of discussing the positive aspects of the colonial war.

These results are consistent with the ones found by Roccas and colleagues (2004) and advance our knowledge about the willingness that individuals have to discuss the negative aspects of the colonial war. Therefore, we argue that individuals who glorify and defend the ingroup through

### Table 1

**Means, standard deviations, and correlations among the constructs**

<table>
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<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Political orientation</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.21</td>
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<td>2. Ingroup attachment</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>.81</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Ingroup glorification</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Outgroup identification</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Exonerating cognitions</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>-.19*</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Perceived importance of positive information</td>
<td>-.42</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Group-based guilt</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>-.18*</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.27**</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Compensatory behavioural intentions</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.22*</td>
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*p < .05; ** p < .01
the use of exonerating cognitions are not so open to negative information about their ingroups' history and, therefore, do not want to discuss these negative aspects of the past. This result may be due to luso-tropicalism, since individuals who endorse this representation of Portuguese society believe that the Portuguese colonial period was not so violent when compared to other countries and, therefore, individuals do not recognize the need to discuss the negative aspects of the colonial past and war.

The pattern of correlations found in this study is also consistent with the one found by Roccas and colleagues (2004) in relation to the links between political orientation, exonerating cognitions and group-based guilt. It can be argued that a right wing political orientation is associated with more defensive reactions to the ingroups' past history and a lower willingness to accept the misdeeds of their national group's past, while feeling proud about their group past history. Individuals who glorify the ingroup and have a right-wing political orientation also perceive a greater need of discussing the positive aspects of the colonial war, thus diminishing or under-valuating the negative aspects of the colonial war. A right-wing political orientation seems to prevent individuals from feeling group-based guilt, making them feel less responsible for the ingroup's past actions, such as it was found in a study by Doosje et al. (1998).

Even though we could not find, as expected, a direct link between exonerating cognitions and group-based guilt in the present study, we could show that exonerating cognitions are associated with the tendency to minimize the negative consequences of the group’s wrongdoings, making individuals give more importance to the positive aspects of the colonial war. This kind of moral disengagement from the ingroup’s wrongdoings might be damaging for the present day relationships between groups, since the outgroup does not feel validated in their suffering and the lack of information about the negative consequences of the war does not allow both groups to recreate a more egalitarian relationship.

According to Baumeister, Stillwell and Heatherton (1994) we should expected outgroup identification to be connected with feelings of group-based guilt, but this was not the case, since no significant relation was found between outgroup identification and feelings of group-based guilt. We argue that in the case of our Portuguese sample this result could be mediated by luso-tropicalism, but it could also be due to a more general mechanism. According to this general explanation, the reason why individuals identifying with the outgroup do not feel group-based guilt might be because they distance themselves from the ingroup when identifying with the outgroup, therefore undermining the experience of group-based guilt for the ingroup’s past misdeeds.

In this line, and since we found a significant association between outgroup identification and compensatory behavioural intentions, we suggest that outgroup identification can, per se, serve a relationship enhancing function, since the proximity the individual feels with the outgroup can work as a mechanism to alleviate imbalances and reach a more egalitarian relationship among the groups, fostering a desire to compensate the outgroup (Wohl & Branscombe, 2004). Therefore, a high level of outgroup identification can help to enforce norms that prescribe the positive treatment of the outgroup, in the absence of a connection between outgroup identification and group-based guilt, while at the same time a high level of identification with the outgroup decreases the probability of individuals using exonerating cognitions, since there is a perceived bond between the individual and the outgroup and the minimizing or exculpating biases might be damaging to the relationship between the individual and the valued outgroup.

Perceived importance of information about the colonial war has a mean value of -.42. This result is informative about the importance young Portuguese university students attach to the discussion of the negative consequences of the colonial war. Until nowadays there has not been much public discussion about the colonial war in Portuguese society and it is still not a relevant topic in the school curriculum. 34 years have passed since the war ended and, though things are changing at the moment, so far, public opinion has been far away from the discussion about the colonial war and its perceived moral stand. Present day Portuguese students seem to show greater concerns about their negative past history and this tendency may lead to greater attention to this negative period of Portuguese history and give way to reconcile with the past. This acknowledgment of the past wrongdoings of the Portuguese nation, might help to improve intergroup relations and create a more balanced relationship between the ingroup and the outgroup (Doosje et al., 1998; Lickel et al., 2004). Therefore, we suggest that perceived importance of discussing the negative aspects of the colonial war can serve as a form of compensation, whereby perpetrators and victims acknowledge that the past relationships between the groups were negative, while allowing them to create a better understanding of each others side and a new basis to create better relations in the present.

We found a congruent pattern between group-based guilt, behavioural intentions and importance of positive information. Low levels of group-based guilt are associated with a tendency not to acknowledge the negative ingroup’s past, by not paying attention to the suffering of the victims and to attach importance to the more positive aspects of the colonial war while, at the same time, not showing a wish to compensate or provide a restitution of equality in the relationship between the ingroup and the outgroup.

The association between group-based guilt and compensatory behavioral intentions provides more
evidence that, in fact, guilt serves a social function, through the acknowledgment that something wrong happened and that equality has to be reached in way to improve intergroup relations (Barkan, 2004).

In relation to feelings of collective guilt, the data show that, in general, people do not feel much group-based guilt about the Portuguese colonial war, $M = 2.95$ on a 7 point scale; $t(0) = -10.43$, $p < .001$. This result might be due to the mean age of the subjects or to the fact that we did not include summary of the history in the questionnaire which could induce guilt on the subjects, since we wanted to explore the levels of guilt on a neutral stand, i.e., without giving any information which could influence the answers of the participants. Still, this result is not so odd, since “acceptance of collective guilt (…) has typically been below the mid-point of the scale in a variety of studies” (Doosje et al., 2004, p. 98).

Though the tendencies shown in the correlations between ingroup glorification, exonerating cognitions and group-based guilt are compatible with the literature existent on this topic (Roccas et al. 2006), the fact that, in this study there were no significant relations is unexpected. Even we tried to analyze exonerating cognitions as a potential mediator of the relation between ingroup glorification and group-based guilt, we were not able to find any significant relations. Perhaps we can assume that Portuguese participants have different ways of addressing their feelings of group-based guilt and it seems ingroup identification is not the main root through which their levels of group-based guilt are intensified or diminished. Further research should look into the dynamics of group-based guilt and its antecedents regarding the Portuguese colonial war.

McGarty and Bluc (2004) report a study where they could not find an association between ingroup identification and group-based guilt, a result they attribute to the insufficiency of a national identification measure to capture the subtleties of the collective processes that lead to group-based emotions.

In a different line, Vala, Lopes, and Lima (2008) have presented data showing that, unlike other European nations, in the Portuguese case there is not an association between national identification and prejudice. They argue their results are due to luso-tropicalism. According to Vala and colleagues (2008), luso-tropicalism, as an element of Portuguese national identity, cancels out the association between ingroup identification and prejudice. However, using other measures, Valentim (2003) found an association between nationalism and prejudice, results that are in accordance with the ones found in other European countries (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). We should then retain the interpretation of these authors (McGarty & Bluc, 2004; Vala, Brito, & Lopes, 1999; Valentim, 2003) about the importance of taking in consideration the different dimensions of national identity on this topic. Though we cannot have any certainties about why we could not find a significant relation between ingroup attachment and glorification and feelings of group-based guilt, further studies should address the different aspects of national identification and the potential effects luso-tropicalism might have for intergroup relations, as well as the emotions derived from the processing of the past wrongdoings committed by the Portuguese.

In addition, a better understanding about the dynamics relating outgroup identification, group-based guilt and perceived importance of information, is needed and further studies should address these variables, since they have not been consistently analyzed.

Conclusion

This study was a first attempt to study the phenomenon of group-based guilt amongst the Portuguese population in relation to the colonial war. The authors are aware that some limitations exist in relation to the present article: the study here reported has a correlational design and, therefore, we cannot assume the direction of the relations between the variables. In addition, the concept of outgroup identification is still very recent and further research is needed to fully understand its role on the experience of group-based guilt. Still, we believe this first step is very valuable since it gives us some insights about the experience of group-based guilt among the Portuguese population, regarding its past colonial history. Further studies should also include other measures of ingroup identification, such as the one developed by Leach et al., (2008), in way to better comprehend the relations between different modes of ingroup identification and collective guilt.

The present study represents a first step to better understand the emotional reactions of Portuguese people to their colonial past. We have found that people who identify strongly with their group (in terms of glorification), were most likely to point to other causes for their ingroup’s misbehavior, and were more likely to support positive information about the colonial past. In addition, right-wing people were more likely to find excuses for ingroup’s negative past, and were also more likely to be in favor of positive information about their group, and right-wing political people felt less guilty than left-wing people. Supporting earlier studies, group-based guilt is associated with making reparations to the harmed group. It is interesting to note outgroup identification has clear relations: to the extent that people identify with the outgroup, they are less likely to point to exonerating factors, and they are more willing to support outgroup reparation. Finding ways to address the role of outgroup identification in the improvement of intergroup relations could be an important avenue for future research in this area.
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Received January 11, 2010
Revision received July 05, 2010
Accepted September 8, 2010