Theoretical Study

Theories in Social Psychology: Intra-individual Explanations in the Racism Analysis in Brazil

Marcus Eugênio Oliveira Lima[1] [iD]

Abstract: This article analyses four classic intra-individual theories in social psychology: Authoritarian Personality, Closed Mind Hypothesis, Social Dominance, and Aversive Racism. The article aims to answer three questions: (1) how classical and modern theories of psychology have explained racism over the years; (2) to what extent such theories have been used to understand racism/racial prejudice in Brazil; and (3) what are the possibilities and limitations of their use? The methodology consisted of describing the postulates of the theories, searching CAPES-Periódicos for their frequency and type of use, and analysing their potential to 'fit' or 'not fit' for understanding racism in Brazil. The results found suggest that they are rarely used, could be employed to analyse Brazilian racism, and can make important contributions to broadening the debate and understanding of the phenomenon, with the necessary contextual adjustments. These findings are discussed based on the social psychology of racism.

Keywords: prejudice, racism, social psychology, Brazil

Teorias em Psicologia Social: Explicações Intraindividuais na Análise do Racismo no Brasil

Resumo: São analisadas quatro teorias intraindividuais clássicas da psicologia social: Personalidade Autoritária, Hipótese do Espírito Fechado, Dominância Social e Racismo Aversivo. O objetivo é responder a três questões: (1) como, ao longo dos anos, teorias clássicas e modernas da psicologia têm explicado o racismo; (2) em que medida tais teorias foram utilizadas para o entendimento do racismo/preconceito racial no Brasil e (3) quais são as potencialidades e as limitações na sua utilização. A metodologia consistiu em descrever os postulados das teorias; buscar nos Periódicos-Capes sua frequência e tipo de uso e analisar seus potenciais de "encaixe" ou "desencaixe" para o entendimento do racismo nacional. Os resultados indicaram que as teorias foram pouco aproveitadas, que possuem poder de leitura do racismo nacional e que, com as necessárias adaptações contextuais, podem trazer importantes contribuições para ampliar o debate e entendimento do fenômeno. Tais achados são discutidos à luz da psicologia social do racismo.

Palavras-chave: preconceito, racismo, psicologia social, Brasil

Teorías en Psicología Social: Explicaciones Intraindividuales en el Análisis del Racismo Brasileño

Resumen: En este artículo se analizan cuatro teorías intraindividuales clásicas de la psicología social: personalidad autoritaria, mente cerrada, dominancia social y racismo aversivo. Su propósito es responder a tres preguntas: (1) cómo, a lo largo de los años, las teorías clásicas y modernas de la psicología han explicado el racismo; (2) en qué medida se utilizaron tales teorías para comprender el racismo/prejuicio racial en Brasil; y (3) cuáles son las potencialidades y limitaciones de su uso. La metodología consistió en describir los postulados de las teorías; buscar en Periódicos Capes su frecuencia y tipo de uso; y analizar su potencial de "acoplamiento" y "desacoplamiento" para la comprensión del racismo brasileño. Los resultados indicaron que las teorías no fueron muy bien utilizadas, que tienen un potencial de lectura del racismo nacional y que, con las necesarias adaptaciones contextuales, pueden aportar importantes contribuciones para ampliar el debate y la comprensión del fenómeno. Estos hallazgos se discuten desde la psicología social del racismo.

Palabras clave: prejuicio, racismo, psicología social, Brasil

[1]*Universidade Federal de Sergipe, Aracaju-SE, Brazil*

Correspondence address: Marcus Eugênio Oliveira Lima. Universidade Federal de Sergipe. Rua Orlando Tavares Macedo, 800, Cond. San Diego Casa 10, Aracaju-SE, Brazil. CEP 49.100-000. Email: marcus@academico.ufs.br

Individual-level explanations for racism in social psychology

This article is part of a broader project that analyses the following aspects: (1) how classic and modern theories of social psychology have explained racism over the years,

adopting different levels of analysis; (2) to what extent these theories have been used to understand racism/racial prejudice in Brazil; and (3) what the possibilities and limitations are in their use. The proposal is both important and challenging; challenging because, to the best of our knowledge, this task has not yet been done. And it is important due to two prevailing behaviours in Brazil: one is highly critical, arguing that imported theories fail to facilitate an understanding of racism in Brazil and merely demonstrate the intellectual colonisation of the country; and the other tends to be uncritical, adopting theories and analytical models without adequately contextualising them to the Brazilian reality. Both positions end up not contributing as much as they could to the evolution of lines of research in Social Psychology on racism in Brazil (Lima, 2020). Before presenting the theories, two methodological premises need to be discussed. The first premise relates to the choice of theories to be analysed, which are defined as 'classical' and 'psychosocial'. The second one concerns the coloniality or decoloniality of the task of testing imported theories in our social reality.

Regarding the first premise — understanding classic psychosocial theories — it is important to emphasise that when the term 'Social Psychology' is used, it refers to an area of knowledge encompassing both research and intervention. This area is not solely constructed by Psychology but also incorporates other disciplines (Sá, 2013). The adjective 'classic' applies to theories grounded in empirical evidence, characterised by three qualifiers: they start from 'major questions', challenge established knowledge, and employ rigorous and innovative methodologies (Smith & Haslam, 2017).

For the second premise — referring to the coloniality or decoloniality of the task — we will follow the avant-garde decolonial perspective of Catherine Walsh, who embraces the concept of interrelation or interculturality. According to Walsh, the best approach to overcome intellectual colonisation is not indifference or denial of dominant theories and methodologies, but the interconnectedness among various forms of knowledge, which is only possible when one knows, appropriates, criticises, and transforms the matrices of colonial power: 'It is not only the interconnection of terms that interests us here, but how these interconnections provide the foundations for "critical border positioning", whose epistemic, political, and ethical character is oriented towards difference and the transformation of colonial power matrices' (Walsh, 2019, p. 28, free translation).

Due to space constraints, only classic psychosocial theories of intergroup conflict and racism will be presented and discussed, predominantly focusing on the intra-individual explanation. Doise (1980) acknowledges the inherent arbitrariness in any classification, as theories often exhibit hybrid characteristics, involving multiple levels of analysis. Note that the very levels of racism production/manifestation (individual, cultural, and structural) are also hybrid, with blurred or non-existent boundaries

between them. To minimise additional arbitrariness, the classification of psychosocial theories by Doise (1980) will be followed. For more recent or unmentioned theories, his classification criteria, such as the explanatory principle and the nature of the variables involved, will be adopted. Bearing in mind that theories undergo revisions, their original formulation will be considered in all cases. Another remarkable aspect is that three criteria were adopted when choosing which theories of racism to include in the analysis: (1) the theory must be formulated or developed within Social Psychology, (2) it must hold empirical support, and (3) theory impact, indicated by its presence in Social Psychology literature on the subject. The proposed classification also considered the scope of the theory: whether it was more general (about conflict) or more specific (about racism).

The intra-individual level of explanation

Doise (1980) considers explanations or theories that analyse how individuals organise their perceptions, evaluations, and behaviours to be at the intra-individual level. Following this logic, three psychosocial theories of conflict stand out as individual-level explanations, despite their differences: the Authoritarian Personality Theory by Adorno et al. (1950), which posits that adherence to authoritarianism and ethnocentrism is a consequence of a dysfunctional personality; Rokeach's Closed Mind Hypothesis (1948, 1951), which assumes a dogmatic cognitive style associated with intolerance; and the Social Dominance Theory (Pratto et al., 1994), which also assumes that individuals' invariant characteristics explain their search for hierarchies and social oppression. Firstly, a brief review of each of these general theories of racism will be delineated; then the paper will focus on a specific theory, also at the intra-individual level: the Theory of Aversive Racism.

The Authoritarian Personality Theory

In 1944, the American Jewish Committee invited researchers to an event on religion and racial prejudice, aiming to address antisemitism. From these gatherings, Theodor Adorno and three colleagues from the Frankfurt School formulated the Authoritarian Personality Theory (APT) six years later, drawing on extensive research conducted in California. At the time, the authors posited that three ideologies — fascism, ethnocentrism, and authoritarianism — were at the root of the socialisation of a personality inclined towards antisemitism.

The authoritarian personality is believed to be developed in childhood via the internalisation of values that emphasise uncritical obedience to parents and older adults, inhibition of spontaneity, and conformity to established values and traditions. According to the authors, "Conventionality,

rigidity, repressive denial, and the ensuing breakthrough of one's weakness, fear and dependency are but other aspects of the same fundamental personality pattern, and they can be observed in personal life as well as in attitudes towards religion and social issues" (Adorno et al., 1950, p. 971). Individuals with an authoritarian personality tend to seek ethnocentric solutions to conflicts between social groups, viewing their own group as pure and strong, and others as inferior, to be eliminated, subordinated, or segregated. APT suggests that those who strongly adhere to such ideology or conception often create an imaginary enemy, perceived as omnipotent and omnipresent, often wrapped in paranoid narratives of persecution (Adorno et al., 1950).

Despite the cultural and ideological mechanisms involved in the formation of the authoritarian personality, and despite APT being one of the first theories to articulate the relationship between personality and culture, the theory predominantly emphasises personality as the causal factor. Personality is conceived in psychodynamic terms stemming from psychoanalysis as an abnormal and pathological structure underlying adherence to anti-Semitism. It is in this sense that the theory aligns with Doise's (1980) classification of the intrapsychological level.

Indeed, by adopting the intrapsychic mechanisms of denial and projection, APT suggests that individuals with higher authoritarianism scores tend to project their unconscious and morally forbidden desires onto members of social minorities, and to use the Freudian notion of denial to hide their unsocialised sexual drives. Despite criticisms for potentially exhibiting a confirmatory bias and being perceived more as a 'politicised psychology' than a true political psychology (Martin, 2001), APT has made it possible to analyse phenomena related to antisemitism, including moral conservatism, right-wing authoritarianism, fascism, and racism. Furthermore, it led to the emergence of another explanation for prejudice at the intra-individual level: Milton Rokeach's Closed Mind Hypothesis.

The Closed Mind Hypothesis

At the late 1940s, even before the publication of the book on the authoritarian personality, Milton Rokeach wrote an article proposing an explanation somewhat similar to that of the APT. The article attributed the cause of ethnocentrism not to unconscious motivations, but to factors of individual cognition, which do not differentiate between left-wing and right-wing extremists in politics. This is the Closed Mind Hypothesis (CMH). For Rokeach (1951), one of the fundamental characteristics of ethnocentrism was rigidity and inflexibility in thinking. Such rigidity did not only refer to the evaluation of social phenomena or the perception of social groups, as proposed by APT, but was broader, as it manifested itself in the resolution of any cognitive problem. Under the influence of gestalt theory, CMH defines rigidity as an inability to restructure the perceptual field, even if

more efficient alternative solutions to a problem can be found. This cognitive style categorises individuals into two groups: the more ethnocentric, who tend to think in a concrete and rigid manner, and the less ethnocentric, who tend to think in an abstract and flexible manner.

Rokeach (1948) carried out a number of studies to test this hypothesis. In the first of these, he found that the more adults were capable of finding flexible solutions to mathematical problems related to the conservation of liquids, the less ethnocentric they were. Subsequently, he found that individuals' cognitive organisation and handling of religious and other political-economic topics also follow a cognitive *continuum* that ranges from comprehensive/inclusive to narrow/closed (Rokeach, 1951). The author concludes by asserting the immanence of the 'closed mind', stating that there should be no distinction between more or less prejudiced individuals, as everyone harbours prejudices: "Some people learn to be "prejudiced" toward Jews and Blacks, others toward labor, yet others toward communists, and still others toward capitalists and fascists. The objects of these "prejudices" may be different but all are nevertheless fundamentally the same — they are all 'prejudices'". (Rokeach, 1951, p. 235).

The Closed Mind Hypothesis provided a significant complement to the Authoritarian Personality Theory, by positioning authoritarianism as a more general phenomenon, a type of dogmatism present in both right-wing and left-wing individuals. Rokeach's Dogmatism Scale (DS) conceptualised authoritarianism as: (a) a relatively closed cognitive organisation of beliefs about reality, (b) structured around a central set of beliefs about an absolute authority and (c) providing the basis for intolerance towards others (Rokeach, 1951). However, the Closed Mind Hypothesis, as an assumption and a universal individual cognitive structure, has been challenged by numerous studies that find differences in the levels of dogmatism, as measured by the DS, between men and women, individuals from different social classes, and among groups in diverse cultural contexts. A new theory then emerged in the 1990s, also emphasising intra-individual aspects, to explain the desire for dominance and control over others: the Social Dominance Theory.

The Social Dominance Theory

The Social Dominance Theory (SDT) is based on the premise that hierarchies and systems of oppression based on belonging to different social groups are universal. It identifies three main systems of oppression: the 'age system', where adults hold more power compared to the youthful; the 'patriarchal system', where men enjoy more power than women; and the 'arbitrary system', which involves more specific forms of oppression, such as ethnic-racial, emerging due to historical and contextual factors in group relations (Sidanius et al., 2018). The pursuit of supremacy or domination by one individual or group over

another is seen as the root of prejudices and all other forms of domination (Pratto et al., 1994).

SDT proposes that societies, in order to minimise conflicts between groups, establish consensus on ideologies that promote the belief in the superiority of some groups over others. Such ideologies can be categorised into two types: those that legitimise inequalities between groups and those that advocate against such hierarchies. These ideologies form 'legitimising myths' that serve to naturalise or legitimise social stratification. Social Darwinism and meritocracy are examples of legitimising myths, while the advocacy for human rights and the promotion of justice by *noblesse oblige* represent efforts to mitigate hierarchies (Sidanius et al., 2018). Despite SDT focus on explaining broad phenomena such as legitimising ideologies and intergroup conflict, and its consideration of both structural and individual factors in group oppression, the explanatory or causal factor it adopts is at the intra-individual level.

The Social Dominance Theory postulates that the decisive aspect in the acceptance or rejection of legitimising ideologies is an intra-psychological variable called Social Dominance Orientation (SDO). SDO is the desire an individual has for their group to dominate the other group (Pratto et al., 1994). According to these authors, individuals with a high SDO personality exhibit two main tendencies: they are more likely to support legitimising myths that promote oppression and domination, and actively seek out institutions and social roles that help maintain these hierarchies, such as careers in law, administration, and the military. Therefore, individual differences in SDO are seen as key in explaining phenomena related to group prejudice and oppression.

Despite the substantial body of empirical evidence regarding the relationship between Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) and various forms of social oppression, three main lines of criticism can be highlighted about this theory: (1) SDO as a Cause or Consequence, advocating that the theory's proposal of SDO as a powerful individual variable to explain why certain ideologies are accepted may be misguided. They suggest that SDO could be a consequence rather than a cause of attitudes towards a particular group in a salient intergroup context. (2) Gender Differences in SDO, the criticism suggests that the theory's assertion of invariant universal structures explaining the differences between men and women in SDO levels overlooks the cultural construction of gender roles. (3) Immanence of the Desire for Control, critics also point out an inconsistency in the theory regarding the assumption of the immanence of the desire for control over others. They argue that this assumption fails to explain social changes promoted by movements for equality and justice (Sidanius et al., 2018).

The Aversive Racism Theory

In the 1970s, Joel Kovel, an American psychoanalyst, sought to explain the 'irrational power of racism' in formally democratic societies. He proposed that a specific form of racism was central to bourgeois society in the northern United States: aversive racism. In psychodynamic terms, aversion is the ego's defence mechanism for dealing with conflicting desires. In the 1980s, Samuel Gaertner and John Dovidio expanded on this concept and conducted a series of studies to illustrate how this form of racism was processed in psychosocial terms. They argued that ambivalence between negative feelings and egalitarian values characterises racial attitudes. The aetiology of aversive racism results from: (1) assimilation of an egalitarian value system; (2) feelings and beliefs influenced by the racist context; and (3) impressions derived from cognitive mechanisms contributing to the development of stereotypes and prejudice (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986).

In interactions with Black individuals, 'aversive individuals' do not feel hostility nor hatred, but rather discomfort, nervousness, disgust, and fear. Such emotions are more likely to motivate avoidance of contact than overtly violent intentional behaviour. Hence, the term 'aversive racist' is appropriate to define this set of ambivalent feelings and values. In contrast to more blatant racists, aversive racists are more subtle, as they generally believe that they are not racist. Their racism is only expressed in contexts where they can justify it based on some factor not associated with race, or in contexts where the anti-racist norm is not prominent.

The empirical support for the thesis of aversive racism relies on the paradigm of helping behaviour. In one study, it was found that in situations where a victim, whether White or Black, asked for help from participants who believed they were alone or accompanied, Black females were helped more than White ones when the participant believed they were being watched, but less than White females in the situation where the helper thought they were alone (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998). In another study, when Black and White job applicants were described as highly, moderately, or poorly qualified, participants tended to discriminate against Black applicant compared to White ones only in the most ambiguous condition, namely medium qualification, because the anti-racist normative structure is less well-defined there, and such ambiguity would rationalise discrimination.

Despite its links with social norms and its research potential, the Aversive Racism Theory (ART) holds some remarkable limitations. The first is more general and common to all intrapsychic approaches: it is the lack of emphasis these theories place on the power dynamics of racism. The foremost consequence of such aspect is the naturalisation of social categorisation and stereotyping processes, assuming an inherent and immanent nature that ignores the more ideological and historical aspects involved in group relations (Condor, 1988). Another possible criticism — regarding the methodology — arises from the analysis of racial discrimination in real labour settings in the United States. Using a broad sample of studies on discrimination in labour market, Quillian (2006) observes

that companies hire 2.43 times more White candidates than Black candidates in face-to-face interviews, even when the candidates have high qualifications; and hire 1.5 times more White individuals in non-face-to-face analyses of CVs. In other words, the actual hiring practices for Black and White workers do not always align with the subtlety and concern for the egalitarian standard posited by the TAR.

As mentioned, the purpose of this article is to understand how the explanations that social psychology has provided for conflict between groups and racism over the years are used to analyse racism in Brazil. To achieve this goal, we will first survey Brazilian literature on the subject and then analyse the potential for these theories to fit or not fit our reality.

The most individual-focused theories in the psychology of racism in Brazil

In a search conducted on 13 April 2021, within CAPES-Periódicos, the terms '*personalidade autoritária e racismo* [authoritarian personality and racism]' were used to search for references in the subject or title of publications, with inclusion criteria limited to works focusing on the Brazilian context and excluding duplicates. No specific time frame was set, allowing for the inclusion of publications from any period up to the date of the search. A total of 28 records were retrieved, consisting of 20 articles and eight books. Most of these publications were found in the fields of History or Sociology, with none located in Psychology. Upon analysing the abstracts, it was found that no publication focused on analysing the relationship between the authoritarian personality and racism in Brazil. In a subsequent search, the terms were broadened to '*personalidade autoritária e preconceito* [authoritarian personality and prejudice]', considering the preference for the term '*preconceito* [prejudice]' in social psychology for its more individualising connotation. This search yielded 36 records, including 22 articles and 14 books, primarily from Sociology, but with two papers from Social Psychology. However, no empirical studies were found that related scores on the Authoritarianism Scale (F) to racism or racial prejudice in Brazil. The study by Da Silva and Bittencourt (2019) was found to theoretically discuss the relationship between authoritarian personality, bullying, and prejudice in schools based on APT. However, as the authors did not specify the type of prejudice being discussed, the study was excluded from further consideration as it did not focus specifically on racial prejudice.

Regarding the Closed Mind Hypothesis, a new search conducted on the same day in the same database, using the same criteria, did not yield any results linking prejudice or racism to the '*espírito fechado* [closed mind]' concept in works published on the Brazilian reality. Regarding Social Dominance Theory, a search using the same criteria returned 30 papers for the term '*dominância social* [social dominance],' with the majority (17) published in Psychology journals. However, only two of these papers connected

social dominance with prejudice or racism in the Brazilian context. In one study, Fernandes et al. (2007) analysed the relationship between prejudice, viewed as a counterpart to social dominance orientation (SDO), and psychosocial values. They investigate the extent to which adherence to value systems explains SDO. Similarly, the second article found in the research within CAPES-Periódicos, by Fernandes (2009), also considers SDO and prejudice to be homologous phenomena, and therefore, does not test the relationship between racial prejudice and SDO.

The search within CAPES-Periódicos for the Aversive Racism Theory (ART) was conducted on 15 April 2021, following the same inclusion criteria. In total, 14 records were found for the term '*racismo aversivo* [aversive racism]', but only three articles referred to analyses carried out in Brazil. Lima and Vala (2004) present ART in a theoretical article, discussing the main theories of racism constructed in Europe and the United States. Similarly, Torres and Faria (2008) indirectly focus on ART as a possible explanation for the relationship between Belief in a Just World and homophobia. Dahia (2008), analysing the relationship between racism and humour, cites aversive racism, along with modern and subtle racism, as covert manifestations of racism. Although our search established Brazilian publications as an inclusion criterion, we found one article published in English that applies the theoretical and methodological principles of ART to understand racism in Brazilian children. The authors demonstrate that children aged five to seven show different patterns of racial discrimination from those found in children aged eight to 10. Older children discriminate against Blacks in reward distribution tasks only when the interviewer (a Black researcher) is absent, and the task seems 'hidden' to them. For younger children, the expression of racism was not affected by the presence or absence of the interviewer (França & Monteiro, 2013).

'Fits' and 'not-fits' of individual-level explanations in Brazil

Research into the use of four of the most important intra-individual social psychology theories by Brazilian researchers reveals, firstly, that statements such as 'these European and North American models do not fit the reality of racism in Brazil' are inaccurate, to say the least. In practice, these more individuating models have not even been tested or, at best, have been tested in an erratic way. Despite this underutilisation by Brazilian psychosocial literature, the theories of Authoritarian Personality, Social Dominance, Aversive Racism, and the Closed Mind Hypothesis do have potential for analysing racism in Brazil when we consider that the hallmarks of our cultural formation are elitism—typical of social dominance—conservatism, fear of change, ethnocentrism, and the 'do you know who you're talking to?' logic, emblematic of authoritarian personalities and

closed minds. Why, then, have such theories been used so little to understand Brazilian racism?

Albeit general, a first response stems from the lack of theoretical development regarding racism in Brazilian Psychology. Racism only began to be analysed by Social Science in Brazil after 1945 (Lima, 2020). In Psychology, interest is much more recent, as by 2014, only 77 articles had been published on racial prejudice, with almost none before the year 2000 (Sacco et al., 2016). However, the lack of scientific production cannot be understood as a cause but as a consequence of something deeper: the denial of racism in Brazil. This phenomenon was well expressed in Gilberto Freyre's myth of racial democracy in the 1930s and is still evident in the theses of reactionary conservatism emerging in Brazil today, which assert that racism is merely 'whining [*mimimi*]' or a victimising narrative of minorities.

Despite their underutilisation, the described theories hold significant potential for understanding racism in Brazil. In this country, classism intersects with racism, a phenomenon related to the myths that legitimise the widening of inequalities, as outlined in Social Dominance Theory (SDT). Classism or elitism is evident in the discourses and practices of the economic elites and is propagated by the media, which often associates poverty with intellectual and moral inferiority, portraying the poor as incapable of embracing the work ethic and efficiency (Souza, 2010). Elitism is thus manifested in another legitimising myth proposed by SDT: that of meritocracy.

On the one hand, examining current Brazilian racism through the lens of the Closed Mind Hypothesis can partly explain the rise and resilience of reactionary conservatism in recent years. The prevalence of concrete, black-and-white forms of reasoning, cognitive rigidity that hinders acceptance of change, and a sense of 'collective nostalgia' for past relationships and 'things', coupled with a reluctance to engage with fuzzy or hybrid categories (such as gender categories, often manifested in the fear of unisex toilets), underpins various expressions of racism in Brazil and shapes far-right narratives.

On the other hand, examining current Brazilian racism through the lens of Social Dominance Theory (SDT) would enable us to understand the impact of the recent rise of the lower strata of the population to certain consumption spheres. This phenomenon intensified from 2002 to 2010, triggering racist and elitist reactions of contempt from those in positions of power, who perceived a threat to their dominance. The following passage expresses this very well:

> With the 'democratisation' of a set of consumer practices, such as the use of air transport, travelling abroad, shopping malls, car ownership, among others, which until then had been considered the exclusive prerogative of the elite and a privilege restricted to the wealthy classes, there was a sharp and violent reaction — in the form of symbolic violence —

from the dominant groups. (Voigt & Pagani, 2019, p. 230, free translation)

From an anthropological standpoint, Roberto DaMatta adeptly integrates the need for hierarchisation with another distinctive aspect of social relations in Brazil: informality. According to the author, alongside rituals of inclusion like carnival, samba, and football, there exists an exclusionary rite known as 'do you know who you're talking to?'. This rite exemplifies the explanatory power of Social Dominance Theory in understanding Brazilian racism. It reflects a sociology of defined spaces and manifests in phrases like 'Who do you think you are?', 'Where do you think you are?', 'Retreat to your insignificance!', 'Look at yourself!', and 'Don't you know your place?' (DaMatta, 1997, p. 203).

However, this hierarchical marker is expressed in an embarrassed manner, as it refers to something undesirable in national culture: conflictive situations, situations in which the 'Brazilian society seems averse to conflict' (DaMatta, 1997, p. 189, free translation). It is as if in Brazil the pursuit of social dominance operated at a different level than in societies that developed the theory. Here, the orientation towards social dominance would be more veiled, manifesting only in 'street situations', when the 'Brazilian workaround' [*jeitinho brasileiro*] and cordiality fail and it becomes imperative to establish, demarcate, or re-establish hierarchies of social position. Thus, the underutilisation by Brazilian Psychology of the potential of SDT to 'fit' for understanding racism in Brazil can be explained, in part, by the hidden character that SDT assumes in a society marked by informality and cordiality.

Although these theories have certain 'fits', they also have 'not fits', derived from the specificities of our reality of racialised relations. Both the Authoritarian Personality Theory (APT) and the Closed Mind Hypothesis (CMH) are based on the assumption that people are categorised into groups and the ethnocentrism associated with this action. However, the system of racial categorisation in Brazil differs from that in the United States (the context of these theories) in three interconnected aspects: (1) being White or Black in Brazil does not imply belonging to a caste-like group, without mobility, as in the US; (2) racial classifications are based on descent in the US; and (3) the perception of colour phenotypes in Brazil is dynamic, forming a type of pigmentocracy that associates skin colour with socioeconomic status. These aspects, intertwined with whitening and miscegenation, make the task of defining whether an individual is White or Black more complex in Brazil. According to Schwarcz (1998, p. 184, free translation):

> In the case of Brazil, mestizaje and the commitment to whitening the population have generated a Brazilian-style racism, which perceives colour rather than race. This form of racism admits

discrimination only in the private sphere and spreads the universality of laws, imposing inequality in living conditions but adopting an assimilationist approach towards culture.

Social cognition offers a concept that helps us grasp why the APT and the CMH may not fully fit in understanding Brazilian racism. This concept is entitativity, introduced by Donald Campbell in the 1950s to describe the strategies used in social perception to determine whether a group of individuals is a cohesive entity or a mere collection of persons. When a social group is perceived as having uniqueness, consistency, coherence, and organization, it is considered as entitative. According to the theory, groups and categories vary in their degree of entitativity, from highly entitative groups like families to less cohesive ones like the social category 'human beings'. More entitative groups create more uniform and organised social impressions of their members, equating entitativity with 'groupness' (Hamilton & Sherman, 1996).

In Brazil, unlike in the United States, Black people were never categorised by the one-drop rule, but rather by groups of colour. As Schwarcz (1998) points out, whitening significantly influenced Brazilian racism, leading to racial categorizations that are ephemeral, fleeting, and volatile. In such a context, with the minority category lacking relative entitativity, ethnocentric logics likely followed more complex paths, integrating race, colour, status, and social class into a single 'combo'. This approach introduced the logic of understanding social categories as continuous rather than discrete, inclusive of Blacks even when they are on the symbolic and material peripheries, rather than being mutually exclusive. This phenomenon is evident in colourism, which associates skin tones with status in a broad sense (Francisco, 2018), and in 'pigmentocracy', which integrates skin tones with socioeconomic status.

As exposed in this study, the three most general theories of racism can be a 'fit' but also a 'not fit' for the analysis of racialised relations in Brazil, and are significantly underutilised, as they have rarely been applied in Brazilian Psychology studies. So what can we say about the specific Aversive Racism Theory (ART): does it facilitate the understanding of racism in Brazil, or does its American context not correspond to our peculiarities? The study cited by França and Monteiro (2013) indicates the possibility of analysing Brazilian racism through the TAR. In Brazil, much earlier than in the United States, a 'racism without racists' emerged:

> What is most evident in Brazilian attitudes towards colour prejudice is the tendency to see it as something outrageous (for those who suffer it) and degrading (for those who practice it). Therefore, what remains at the centre of concerns, apprehensions, and even obsessions is the 'prejudice of having prejudice' (Fernandes, 1966, p. 33, free translation).

Perhaps one possible discrepancy between the ART in Brazil is the way in which the notion of equality, central to the theory, is conceived here and in the United States. There, a more closed and segregationist system of race relations prevails, based on the principle of 'equal but separate'. Here, the logic of 'together but unequal' predominates, imposing inequality in living conditions and integration on a cultural level (Schwarcz, 1998). However, the differences between the two types of racism, Brazilian and American, have become increasingly blurred, especially after the implementation of Affirmative Action Policies in Brazil and the expansion of ultraconservative movements. This amplifies the ART's efficacy in analysing Brazilian racism, despite its limitations.

Conclusion

This article aimed to analyse the explanatory power that classic and modern theories of social psychology have for understanding racism in Brazil. Four intra-individual theories were considered, three of which are broader — the Authoritarian Personality Theory, the Closed Mind Hypothesis and the Social Dominance Theory — and one that is more specific to racism — the Aversive Racism Theory. The first two general explanations date from the 1950s and 1960s. The Social Dominance Theory was formulated in the 1990s and Aversive Racism in the 1980s. Despite the long existence of these theories, ranging from 30 to 70 years old, and the fact that some of them are among the most important psychosocial theories, none have been adapted for empirical analysis of racism in Brazil, according to our search of papers available within CAPES-Periódicos. Except for the work by França and Monteiro (2013), which did use ART in the country.

However, as we have argued, these theories have a potential for analysing Brazilian racism that should not be ignored. The patriarchy that marks our cultural formation and the paternalism impregnated in the roots of our cordiality, important postulates of some of these theories, largely define the expressions of racism in Brazil. We have seen that the dimension of ethnocentrism, a necessary condition for the expression of racism in the Authoritarian Personality Theory and the Closed Mind Hypothesis, is less prevalent in Brazilian racism. Brazilian racism is not as ethnocentric as that of Europeans and Americans. Black individuals in Brazil are not an exogenous group in strict sense; their otherness is not the logic of the external, but an otherness imposed from within.

The main conclusion, therefore, is that we cannot assert that the more individual-level psychosocial theories imported are incapable of 'reading' racism in Brazil, as they have not been tested yet. Testing them and confronting them with the peculiarities of our racist reality would be a way to combat decoloniality through interconnection, and to avoid combating one epistemicide with another.

Nonetheless, limitations in the analysis conducted should also be acknowledged. Firstly, the search was limited to a single database, CAPES-Periódicos. While this database is the most important scientific repository in Brazil, relying solely on it may have limited the numbers found. That said, the goal was not to conduct systematic reviews of the literature but rather to indicate its use by Brazilian psychology in a reliable manner. Another limitation relates to the potential arbitrariness in classifying theories at the intra-individual level, which could lead to errors or inaccuracies. However, similar to Doise, our primary focus was not on the precise classification of theories into a predominant level of analysis. As Doise stated, "Obviously, a certain arbitrariness is thus introduced in the classification, but it is of little consequence for the sorting out and relating of levels which is the purpose of the study" (Doise, 1980, p. 217). Finally, it is worth noting that other classic intra-individual level theories, such as Stereotype Threat Theory, were not included in our analysis. This limitation was mainly due to space constraints. Therefore, future works could expand the list of analytical possibilities for understanding Brazilian racism, potentially leading to a greater understanding of the phenomenon and a more effective approach to combating racism.

References

Adorno, T. W., Frenkel-Brunswick, E., Levinson, D. J. & Sanford, R. N. (1950). *The authoritarian personality.* Harper.

Condor, S. (1988). Race stereotypes and racist discourse. *Text 8,* 69-89. doi:

Dahia, S. L. de M. (2008). A mediação do riso na expressão e consolidação do racismo no Brasil [The mediation of laughter for the expression and consolidation of racism in Brazil]. *Sociedade e Estado, Brasília, 23*, 697-720. doi:

DaMatta, R. (1997). *Carnaval, malandros e heróis: Para uma sociologia do dilema brasileiro [Carnival, rascals and heroes: For a sociology of the Brazilian dilema].* Rocco.

Da Silva, A. T. T. & Bittencourt, C. A. de C. (2019). Os traços fascistas por trás do preconceito, violência e bullying na escola. *Revista Devir Educação*, *3*(1), 116-126. https://doi.org/10.30905/ded.v3i1.122

Doise, W. (1980). Levels of explanation in the European Journal of Social Psychology. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 10*(3), 213-231. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2420100302

Dovidio, F. F., & Gaertner, S. L. (1998). On the nature of contemporary prejudice: The causes, consequences, and challenges of aversive racism. In J. L. Eberhardt, & S.T. Fiske (Eds.), *Confronting racism: The problem and the responses* (pp. 3-32). Sage.

Fernandes, F. (1966). *O negro no mundo dos brancos* [The black in the world of whites]. Difusão Européia do Livro.

Fernandes, S. C. S. (2009). Sentimentos em relação à política à luz dos valores e do preconceito social [Feelings towards politics in the light of values and social prejudices]. *Opinião Pública, 15*(1), 224-246. https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-62762009000100009

Fernandes, S., Da Costa, J., Camino, L., & Mendoza, R. (2007). Valores psicossociais e orientação à dominância social: Um estudo acerca do preconceito [Psychosocial values and social dominance orientation: A study of prejudice]. *Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica, 20*(3), 490-498. https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-79722007000300017

França, D. X., & Monteiro, M. B. (2013). Social norms and the expression of prejudice: The development of aversive racism in children. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 43*(4), 263-271. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.1965

Francisco, M. S. (2018). Discursos sobre colorismo: Educação étnico-racial na contemporaneidade [Discourses on colourism: Ethnic-racial education in contemporary times]. *Ensaios Filosóficos*, *18*, 97-109.

Gaertner, S. L., & Dovidio, J. F. (1986). The aversive form of racism. In J. F. Dovidio, & S. L. Gaertner (Eds.), *Prejudice, discrimination, and racism: Theory and research* (61-89). Academic Press.

Hamilton, D. L., & Sherman, S. J. (1996). Perceiving persons and groups. *Psychological Review, 103*(2), 336-355. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0033-295X.103.2.336

Lima, M. E. O., & Vala, J. (2004). As novas formas de expressão do preconceito e do racismo. [The new forms of expressions of prejudice and racism] *Estudos de Psicologia, 9*(3), 401-411. 10.1590/S1413-294X2004000300002

Lima, M. E. O. (2020). *Psicologia social do preconceito e do racismo* [The social psychology of prejudice and racism]. Blucher.

Martin, J. L. (2001). The authoritarian personality, 50 years later: What lessons are there for political psychology? *Political Psychology, 22*(1), 1-26. 10.1111/0162-895X.00223

Pratto, F., Sidanius, J., Stallworth, L. M., & Malle, B. F. (1994). Social dominance orientation: A personality variable predicting social and political attitudes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 67*(4), 741-763. 10.1037/0022-3514.67.4.741

Quillian, L. (2006). New approaches to understand racial prejudice and discrimination. *Annual Review of Sociology, 32*, 299-328. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.32.061604.123132

Rokeach, M. (1948). Generalized mental rigidity as a factor in ethnocentrism. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 43*(3), 259-278. 10.1037/h0056134

Rokeach, M. (1951). Narrow-mindedness and personality. *Journal of Personality, 20*(2), 234-251. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1951.tb01524.x

Sá, C. P. (2013). On the routes of social psychology in Brazil. *Estudos de Psicologia, 18*(1), 93-98. http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S1413-294X2013000100015

Sacco, A. M., Paula Couto, M. C. P., & Koller, S. H. (2016). Revisão sistemática de estudos da psicologia brasileira sobre preconceito racial [Systematic review of brazilian psychology studies on racial prejudice]. *Temas em Psicologia, 24*(1), 233-250. http://dx.doi.org/10.9788/TP2016.1-16.

Schwarcz, L. M. (1998). Nem preto nem branco, muito pelo contrário: Cor e raça na intimidade [Neither black nor white, quite the opposite: Color and race in intimacy]. In F. A. Novais, & L. M. Schwarcz (Coords.), *História da vida privada no Brasil / Contrastes da intimidade contemporânea* [History of private life in Brazil / Contrasts of contemporary intimacy] (pp. 173-244). Cia das Letras.

Sidanius, J., Cotterill, S., Sheehy-Skeffington, J., Kteily, N., & Carvacho, H. (2018). Social dominance theory: Exploration in the psychology of oppression. In F. K. Barlow, & C. G. Sibley (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of the psychology of prejudice* (pp. 100-143). Cambridge University Press.

Smith, J. R., & Haslam, S. A. (2017). *Social psychology: Revisiting the classic studies* (2nd ed). SAGE.

Souza, J. (2010). *Os batalhadores brasileiros: Nova classe média ou nova classe trabalhadora?* [Brazilian workers: New middle class or new working class?]. Editora UFMG.

Torres, A. R. R., & Faria, M. R. G. V. (2008). Creencia en un mundo justo y prejuicios: El caso de los homosexuales con VIH/SIDA. *Interamerican Journal of Psychology, 42*(3), 570-579. http://pepsic.bvsalud.org/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0034-96902008000300017

Voigt, L., & Pagani, V. L., Jr. (2019). O "racismo de classe": Representações elitistas sobre os pobres e a pobreza no Brasil ["Class racism": Elitist representations of the poor and poverty in Brazil]. *Mediações, 24*(2), 227-249. 10.5433/2176-6665.2019v24n2p227

Walsh, C. (2019). Interculturalidade e decolonialidade do poder: Um pensamento e posicionamento "outro" a partir da diferença colonial [Interculturality and decoloniality of power: An "other" thought and positioning based on the colonial difference]. *Revista Eletrônica da Faculdade de Direito da Universidade Federal de Pelotas, 5*(1), 6-39. https://periodicos.ufpel.edu.br/index.php/revistadireito/article/view/15002

Marcus Eugênio Oliveira Lima is a Professor at the Universidade Federal de Sergipe, Aracaju-SE, Brazil.

Authors' Contribution:
The author made substantial contributions to the conception and design of this study, to data analysis and interpretation, and to the manuscript revision and approval of the final version. The author assume public responsibility for content of the manuscript.

Associate editor:
Luciana Mourão