

# Experimental Ritual: Humanizing Immigrants or Utilitarian Prejudice in Europe?\*

Ritual experimental: ¿Humanizando a los inmigrantes o prejuicio utilitario en Europa?

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## ABSTRACT

Immigrants and refugees are constantly depicted in dehumanizing ways or as a function of economic gains for the hosting nation. These descriptions, added to the current socio-political European situation, could be dangerous due to infrahumanization levels among minorities who are target of prejudice. In this study, we attempted to reduce infrahumanization levels towards Maghrebian people through a ritualistic collective activity, manipulating the information participants had to use. Results indicate that participation was different among conditions and infrahumanization levels were reduced. Also, participants who used utilitarian information could humanize when an economic gain was perceived, while also increasing prejudice levels. The results are discussed in terms of collective rituals and the dualistic effect of utilitarian information.

## Keywords

infrahumanization; prejudice; collective rituals; immigration.

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## RESUMEN

A menudo los inmigrantes y refugiados son representados a través de formas deshumanizantes o como una ganancia económica para los países receptores. Este hecho, sumado a la situación sociopolítica europea actual, puede aumentar los niveles de infrahumanización que sufren las minorías objeto de prejuicio. En este estudio, se propuso reducir la infrahumanización hacia la población magrebí a través de una actividad ritualizada, manipulando la información que los participantes utilizaban. Los resultados indicaron que la participación fue diferente según las condiciones y que se redujo la infrahumanización. Además, los participantes que utilizaron información utilitarista humanizaban cuando percibían una ganancia económica, mientras que también aumentaban

sus niveles de prejuicio. Los resultados se discuten en términos de rituales colectivos y efectos duales de la información utilitarista.

**Palabras clave**

infrahumanización; prejuicio; rituales colectivos; inmigración.

Hundreds of thousands of different and shocking stories can be heard from those whom have been taken away from their houses due to armed conflicts (European Commission, 2016). Many of them come to Europe seeking a new opportunity to rebuild their lives (or what they have left) and at the same time, an increasing number of political parties which explicitly encourages anti-refugee campaigns (e.g., Golden Dawn in Greece, National Front in France, and Alternative Für Deutschland in Germany), proliferate. Although there are theoretical implications about what “far-right” means (see van Spanje, 2011), many of these have strongly supported anti-immigration policies. Now, the Euro-zone is described as a place where profound changes have taken place, such as the *Brexit* or the continuous militarization of its borders (McConnell et al., 2017). Unfortunately, the current scenario does not help to reduce the negative effects produced by the immigration-related humanitarian crises (e.g., Stevens et al., 2015; Zamani & Zarghami, 2016), specifically regarding much more subtle forms of discrimination and prejudice (see Dovidio, Hewestone, Glick, & Esses, 2016). Even though it cannot be said that prejudice has risen during the XXI century (Hjerm & Bohman, 2014), according to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights ([FRA], 2009), discrimination-related crimes occur in a daily basis in the European Union.

### **New forms of prejudice: infrahumanization**

Different elements have an influence on the way we hold thoughts and attitudes towards people of different social groups and with different relative weights (Bridges & Mateut, 2014). For instance, taking into account the current European situation, these elicitors interact in intricate

ways molding our thoughts and attitudes towards immigrants who try to make a living, and these attitudes can be theorized in new forms so as to explain in more detail the *how* of many aforementioned changes. Concretely, one of the new forms of prejudice that has been measured is what Leyens et al., 2000 (Leyens et al., 2001; Leyens, Demoulin, Vaes, Gaunt, & Paladino, 2007) proposed as infrahumanization, which is the tendency to attribute higher levels of humanity to the members of the ingroup, to the detriment of outgroup members. According to the authors, the attribution of higher or lesser degrees of humanity can be seen in terms of emotions or personality traits which can be associated to human beings (e.g., love and being open to new experiences, respectively) or the ones shared with other animal species (e.g., happiness and being emotionally stable). What is more, this “new form” of prejudice is not restricted to intergroup conflict settings, but it is widely extended in the general population (Demoulin et al., 2005).

Within the theoretical description this construct has been given, there is wide agreement regarding the characteristics infrahumanization has: a) the attribution of higher degrees of humanity is in favor of the ingroup compared to the outgroup (Demoulin et al., 2005; Haslam & Loughnan, 2014; Leyens et al., 2001); b) it is not a phenomenon that can be explained through ingroup favoritism, due to the attribution of both positive and negative emotions (Martínez, Rodríguez-Bailón, & Moya, 2012); c) it is a matter of intergroup relationships and not interpersonal (Cortes, Demoulin, Rodriguez, Rodriguez, & Leyens, 2005); and d), even though infrahumanization has served as a necessary element in extreme intergroup violence (e.g., Bandura, 1973, 1991; Bar-Tal, 1989; Bernard et al., 1965 in DeLuca, 2009), the presence of intergroup conflict is not indispensable for it to happen (Demoulin et al., 2005).

Acknowledging what infrahumanization entails and the current sociopolitical situation (McKee, 2017), it is considered a matter of huge interest to address this new way of prejudice, and moreover, when infrahumanization can

even take place in an egalitarian environment (Pereira, Vala, & Leyens, 2009). In the same line, different authors have done deep analyses regarding the way immigrant and asylum seekers are portrayed in the media due to the wide range of biases that could be formed by dehumanizing discursive metaphors (e.g., Cisneros, 2008; Santa Ana, 1999). Specifically, migration processes are often presented in the media in order to analyze causes and factors, but the objectivity might not be ensured; through a reflexive analysis, Esses, Medianu, and Lawson (2013) postulate that the western media creates an uncertainty crisis where immigrants and refugees are presented as enemies, and together with the constant references of outgroups, different forms of prejudice (e.g., *infracommunication*) can unintentionally be fostered.

However, as subtle as this information might be, the negative effects that can subconsciously emerge are reported. Lawson (2009) found out that black immigrants (compared with the white) are more associated with disease-carrier related thoughts and as an adversary in competing for resources, producing more negative affect and attitudes, which can lead to *infracommunication*, especially if the person comes from a victimized group (See, 2014). From a different perspective, by elaborating a taxonomical analysis of the speech in political proposals, Santa Ana (2002 in Cisneros, 2008; see also Santa Ana 1999), found that a), when the nation is explained by means of body-related language (i.e., a body), immigrants are a burden or physical pain, and b), when the metaphor represents a house, immigrants are an invasion, theft, or even dangerous flooding. Finally, a large amount of side effects can be reported as well, such as a higher attribution of animalistic characteristics (Berti, Pivetti, & Di Battista, 2013), a stronger implicit face association to machines, a weaker face association to human traits (Bain, Park, Kwok, & Haslam, 2009), and a bigger perception of barbarian and valueless human beings in refugees (Esses, Veenvliet, Hodson, & Mihic, 2008).

### *Measuring infracommunication*

Different approaches have been used to empirically measure *infracommunication* among diverse social groups and many of them employ attributing characteristics to people of their own social group (e.g., community, nation, and race) and people who do not belong to it.

One line was developed by Leyens et al. (2000), who created a list of emotions previously described as uniquely human (positive and negative sentiments) and non-uniquely human (positive and negative emotions). The attribution pattern found was confirmed explicitly and through the manipulation of implicit attitudes (Paladino et al., 2002), showing that people tended to attribute more uniquely human emotions to ingroup members, rather than outgroup members.

Another approach was developed using the Stereotype Content Model ([SCM], Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002) which separates stereotypes in different groups, and thus forms a category of warmth (high or low) and another of competence (high or low). The resulting map creates four dimensions where information with a stereotype-related valence could be assigned, such as the high-competence-and-warm group (e.g., olympic athletes, black professionals) or the low-competence-and-warmth group (e.g., welfare recipients, drug addicts), and therefore, attributions of different degrees of humanity can be analyzed. Also, it is argued that the “lowest” groups (i.e., low warmth and low competence) elicit disgust-related states and fail to elicit mental states when compared to the other ones (Harris & Fiske, 2011). Furthermore, by using magnetic resonances, it has been shown a significantly lower activation of the medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC) when a person was in front of people of this cluster (Harris & Fiske, 2006), which is particularly important due to the association the mPFC (not solely, though) has with social cognition (e.g., Amodio & Frith, 2006; Denny, Kober, Wager, & Ochsner, 2012; Mitchell, Banaji, & Macrae, 2005; Ochsner et al., 2004).

Finally, and continuing with personality trait attributions, there is the approach used by Costello (2008 [second study]) who used 24 personality traits (based on Haslam, Bain, Douge, Lee, & Bastian, 2005) to describe different people from the person's own group and outgroup. This approach, elaborated from the Big Five personality model (McCrae & Allik, 2002), consists of the attribution of personality traits that are uniquely human (e.g., openness) and not (e.g., neuroticism), finding the same pattern previously described.

Although these evaluation approaches use different information as a method of measuring infrahumanization (i.e., primary and secondary emotions, uniquely human or non-uniquely human personality traits), they all share an attributive outlook because the object of attribution is always related towards outgroup members. We, therefore, consider that an interesting proposal for reducing infrahumanization should have (in positive terms) an outgroup member-oriented perspective.

#### *Participation in collective rituals and positive effects*

As an attempt to reduce infrahumanization towards an out-group, an interesting approach would be the framework of collective activities and rituals, due to its implications and beneficial outcomes both to inter- and intra-group reality, which to our knowledge, has not been tested in experimental efforts to do so. Specifically, it has been confirmed that participation in rituals, not only reinforces individual and collective emotions, but also facilitates social integration, and increases positive social beliefs and social cohesion (Beristain, Páez, & González, 2000; Gasparre, Bosco, & Bellelli, 2010; Kanyangara, Rimé, Philippot, & Yzerbyt, 2007; Páez, Javaloy, Włodarczyk, Espelt, & Rimé, 2013; Zumeta, Basabe, Włodarczyk, Bobowik, & Páez, 2016). Further, participation in collective activities has been related to an improvement of positive affect (Pargament, 1997), prosocial behavior (Rossano, 2012), and well-being (Hopkins &

Reicher, 2016), and these positive effects can also be found even though when group action is decoupled from affect and purpose (Valdesolo, Ouyang, & DeSteno, 2010; Wiltermuth & Heath, 2009). One of the paths through which collective participation boosts positive out-group outcomes, is the emotional one, due to different longitudinal studies that show how perceived emotional synchrony (PES) boosts social integration (Páez, Rimé, Basabe, Włodarczyk, & Zumeta, 2015 [study 1]) and how positive emotions and shared flow can mediate the increase of group identification and identity fusion with the outgroup on the one side, and positive transcendent emotions can increase empathy, which in turn rises prosocial behavior (Zumeta et al., 2016).

#### *Overview, Aims, and Hypotheses of the Study*

In the present study, we designed an experiment aimed to reduce infrahumanization towards Maghrebian immigrants (a group well settled down in the Basque society and a target of prejudice; Cea & Valles, 2014; Fuentes & Vicente, 2007), through a ritualistic collective activity, manipulating the information participants had to use in the ritual (i.e., information relative to different levels of humanity and also utilitarian information). Also, we were interested in exploring the effects this information would produce in the subjective perception of the collective experience.

Since our intention was to analyze the impact of information on infrahumanization in a collective and ritualistic setting, we included information directly related to the degree of humanity Maghrebian immigrants are attributed (i.e., uniquely human or non-uniquely human) and classical descriptions that can be used in mass media in different campaigns in favor of immigrations (i.e., utilitarian information).

We hypothesize that (H1) the quality of the participation in the ritual will be more different and the positive emotions, the perceived emotional synchrony (PES), and the shared flow will be more intense when people use the

most humanizing information (i.e., the most alike), compared to non- uniquely human and utilitarian information.

Also, we hypothesize that (H2) the higher reduction of infrahumanization will occur when people use uniquely human information (versus non-uniquely human, and versus utilitarian). This increase of humanity should activate more ingroup-alike beliefs and portrait Maghrebian immigrant as more human, and therefore, both infrahumanization and subtle prejudice measures should be reduced. Finally, (H3) in the particular case of working with the utilitarian condition, any increase in the degree of humanity or positive prejudice towards the Maghrebian should only occur when some gain is perceived.

## Method

### *Participants*

The sample was composed of 82 students of the University of the Basque Country (63 female, 76.8%) with ages ranged from 19 to 29 years ( $M = 20.37$ ;  $SD = 1.96$ ).

### *Procedure*

Participants were recruited among voluntary university students and received information about the research project and signed an informed consent form. The data collected were alphanumerically coded, thereby ensuring both anonymity and compliance with the Personal Data Protection Act passed by the University Research Ethics Committee.

Participants were invited to participate in a manifestation (fictional) to support Maghrebian immigrants, in which they had to design different slogans so as to create a group poster which would be used in the manifestation. Each participant was randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions (controlling for sex) based on the information they had to use in the creation of slogans: human condition ( $n = 29$ , hereafter, HC), non-uniquely human

condition ( $n = 29$ , hereafter, NUHC) and utilitarian condition ( $n = 24$ , hereafter, UC). The information they had to use was different among the conditions, where (based on Costello, 2008) the HC could only use information which differentiated immigrants from other animal species (i.e., “*Maghrebian immigrants are open to new experiences, creative and responsible*”); the NUHC had to work with information which does not differentiate humans with other animal species (i.e., “*Maghrebian immigrants are relaxed and calm people; also nice and cooperative*”); and finally, the UC, designed the slogans with information that puts emphasis on the economic gain immigration produces (i.e., “*Maghrebian immigration increases the economic growth and they take the jobs which local people don’t want*”, which served as a control group).

In each condition, and after completing the first moment of evaluation (pre), participants had to work in groups (4-6 people) to design the slogans (about 15 min), and finally, on the creation of a single poster altogether (about 30 min). Having finished the group poster made up with the slogans, participants presented each slogan and its purpose, while standing and holding the poster (about 15 min). Immediately after, they fulfilled the during-evaluation measure, and after one week, the post-evaluation.

### *Materials*

#### *Pre- and post-evaluation*

Utilitarian beliefs. 4 items ad-hoc were used (e.g., they take the jobs which aren’t wanted by other people, they help to solve the problem of aging and guarantee young workforce for the future which will contribute paying our pensions). The evaluation was measured in a Likert scale (1 = totally disagree; 7 = totally agree) and Cronbach’s alphas were 0.723 and 0.766 for pre- and post-evaluation.

*Infrahumanization.* Two different measures were used were participants had to make

(towards Maghrebian immigrants) different attributions of:

- a) Warmth and Competence Stereotypes ([SCM], Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008). Through a Likert scale (1 = *not at all*; 10 = *very much*) in a dimension of warmth (e.g., *cold, nice*) and competence (e.g., *skilled, competent*). Pre-evaluations' Cronbach's alphas were 0.703 and 0.777 (for warmth and competence, respectively) and post-evaluation ones were 0.673 and 0.828 (for warmth and competence, respectively).
- b) Uniquely and non-uniquely human personality traits (Costello, 2008 in Haslam et al., 2005). Through a Likert scale (i.e., aimed towards Maghrebian immigrants; 1 = *Nothing*; 7 = *Very much*), in a dimension of uniquely human traits (e.g., *trustworthy and self-disciplined*) and non-uniquely human (e.g., *extrovert and enthusiast*). Cronbach's alpha of pre- and post- evaluations were 0.717 and 0.679 (for the uniquely human dimension), and 0.517 and 0.609 (for the non-uniquely human dimension).

*Subtle Prejudice* (Navas et al., 2004). Positive and negative feelings towards immigrants were applied (e.g., *admiration, insecurity*) in a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *never*; 5 = *many times*). Cronbach's alpha of pre- and post- evaluations were .784 and .815.

*Inter-group-anxiety* (adapted from Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Six items were applied to assess the feelings participants held when interacting with Maghrebian immigrants, in a scale from 1 (*Not [the word of interest] at all*) to 7 (*Completely [the word of interest]*). The scale had a positive (e.g., *comfortable, relaxed*) and negative dimension (e.g., *tense, anxious*). Pre- and post-reliability indexes (Cronbach's alpha) were 0.862 and 0.818 (for the positive dimension), and 0.618 and 0.860 (for the negative one).

### *During-evaluation*

*Participation* (Páez et al., 2015). 4 items assessed the degree of implication (e.g., "*to which extent was your participation satisfactory?*") in a 7 point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*). Cronbach's alpha reliability index was 0.896.

*Positive emotions* (Fredrickson, 2009). 10 items were used in a Likert scale (0 = *nothing*; 4 = *very much*), to assess different positive emotions induced by the participation (e.g., "*what was the most joyful, glad or happy you felt?*"). The Cronbach's alpha reliability index found was 0.878.

*Perceived emotional synchrony* ([PES], Páez et al., 2015). Through 18 items, participants had to indicate their perception of emotional synchrony with the rest (e.g., "*we have all acted as a single person, we have all felt and shared a moment of unity*") in a Likert scale (1 = *never*; 7 = *always*). Cronbach's alpha reliability index was 0.969.

*Shared flow* (reformulated by Zumeta et al., 2016). Participants were asked their experiences of flow during the activity (e.g., "*we felt we were competent enough to meet the high demands of the situation*") using 27 items in a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *never*; 7 = *always*). The Cronbach's alpha reliability index was 0.944.

### *Statistical analysis*

In order to test the mean differences, in-participation psychological variables between experimental conditions ANOVAs were estimated and effect size indexes were calculated ( $\eta^2$ ). Pre- and post- means were evaluated for the three experimental conditions and their effect sizes (Cohen's *d*). Mediational analyses were carried out to check the beliefs' indirect effect and direct effects on criterion variables (Infrahumanization, Subtle prejudice, Inter-group-anxiety). The 4<sup>th</sup> model estimation procedure was applied (see macro process for SPSS; Hayes, 2013) following the criteria proposed by Hayes and Preacher (2014), and controlling for pre-evaluation measures. Standard errors and confidence intervals based

on a bootstrap sampling distribution were calculated for each parameter or statistics. If the values of the estimated effect within the confidence interval include zero, this indicates a non-significant effect. In mediational analysis all the coefficients represented by continuous arrows in the graphs are statistically significant, while the dashed lines indicate effects that are not statistically significant for  $p < 0.05$ .

## Results

### Participation

First of all, different levels of implication were found among the conditions (table 1); namely, both UHC and NUHC participants showed higher levels of participation ( $F(2, 79) = 7.99; p < 0.001; \eta^2 = 0.17$ ), positive emotions ( $F(2, 79) = 6.22; p = 0.003; \eta^2 = 0.14$ ), PES ( $F(2, 79) = 4.76; p = 0.011; \eta^2 = 0.11$ ), and shared flow ( $F(2, 79) = 3.76; p = 0.028; \eta^2 = 0.09$ ) than the UC, being UHC the one which showed the highest means.

**TABLE 1**

*In-participation psychological variables among the conditions*

In-participation psychological variables	Uniquely human (UC)	Non-uniquely human (NUH)	Utilitarian (U)	<i>F</i> (2, 79)	$\eta^2$
	N = 29	N = 29	N = 24		
	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)		
Participation	5.67(0.89) <sup>b</sup>	5.38(0.59) <sup>b</sup>	4.78(0.94) <sup>a</sup>	7.99***	0.17
Positive emotions	2.91(0.53) <sup>b</sup>	2.76(0.32) <sup>b</sup>	2.40(0.69) <sup>a</sup>	6.22**	0.14
PES	4.62(1.13) <sup>b</sup>	4.29(1.05) <sup>ab</sup>	3.67(1.21) <sup>a</sup>	4.76*	0.11
Shared Flow	5.46(0.70) <sup>b</sup>	5.25(0.61) <sup>b</sup>	4.87(1.02) <sup>a</sup>	3.76*	0.09

Notes: Mean (Standard Deviation). PES (Perceived Emotional Synchrony). a,b indicate multiple comparisons across conditions with  $p < 0.05$  of significance.

\*  $p < 0.05$

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

All  $p$  values are bilateral.

Source: own work.

### Infracommunication and prejudice

#### Direct pre- and post changes

Secondly, as expected, it was found an interaction effect in the levels of utilitarian beliefs ( $F(2,79) = 8.33; p < .001; \eta^2 = 0.17$ ), where the utilitarian condition showed the highest increase (table 2), and therefore, it was concluded that a differentiating pattern was produced among the conditions.

Regarding infracommunication measures, we found a significant increase of the attribution of warmth related stereotypes in the NUHC ( $p = 0.006, d = 0.56$ ), and of competence related stereotypes in the UHC ( $p = 0.031, d = 0.42$ ); furthermore, a trend towards a significant value (i.e., an increase) was found in the competence stereotypes in the NUHC ( $p = 0.097, d = 0.32$ ). As for the attribution of uniquely-human personality traits, there were no significant changes in any condition ( $ps > 0.05$ ), but the UHC showed a significant increase in the attribution of non-uniquely-human personality traits ( $p = 0.009, d = 0.52$ ).

In the case of prejudice measures, there was an increase in the subtle prejudice in the NUHC ( $p = 0.001, d = 0.66$ ), and even though there were no significant changes in intergroup anxiety ( $ps > 0.10$ ), the UHC showed a trend towards a significant value in the positive (e.g., comfortable, relaxed) dimension of intergroup anxiety ( $p = 0.098, d = 0.32$ ).

**TABLE 2**

*Pre- and post- evaluations for interest variables in every condition.*

Variables		Uniquely human (UHC)				Non-uniquely human (NUHC)				Utilitarian (UC)			
		Pre		Post		Pre		Post		Pre		Post	
		M (SD)	M (SD)	<i>t</i> (28)	<i>d</i>	M (SD)	M (SD)	<i>t</i> (28)	<i>d</i>	M (SD)	M (SD)	<i>t</i> (23)	<i>d</i>
Manipulation control	Utilitarian speech	4.43 (1.09)	4.60 (1.32)	-0.83	0.15	4.23 (0.97)	4.61 (0.98)	-2.38*	0.44	3.84 (1.34)	5.06 (1.21)	-5.99***	1.22
	Stereotypes	5.93 (1.15)	6.25 (1.00)	-1.52	0.28	6.01 (1.09)	6.46 (1.09)	-2.99**	0.56	6.67 (1.40)	6.26 (1.11)	1.58	0.32
	Warmth	6.31 (1.13)	6.73 (1.16)	-2.28*	0.42	6.42 (1.06)	6.66 (1.06)	-1.72	0.32	6.89 (1.33)	6.71 (1.35)	0.66	0.13
	Competence	6.31 (1.13)	6.73 (1.16)	-2.28*	0.42	6.42 (1.06)	6.66 (1.06)	-1.72	0.32	6.89 (1.33)	6.71 (1.35)	0.66	0.13
Infracommunication	Personality traits	4.08 (0.90)	4.29 (0.89)	-1.51	0.28	4.29 (0.90)	4.40 (0.84)	-0.83	0.15	4.38 (0.95)	4.26 (0.99)	0.15	0.03
	Uniquely human	3.81 (0.71)	4.09 (0.56)	-2.80***	0.52	4.01 (0.57)	4.18 (0.73)	-1.66	0.31	4.21 (0.62)	4.21 (0.45)	<0.01	<0.01
	Non-uniquely human	3.19 (0.71)	3.23 (0.56)	-0.54	0.10	3.19 (0.59)	3.42 (0.47)	-3.58**	0.66	3.40 (0.59)	3.38 (0.48)	0.25	0.05
	Subtle prejudice	4.75 (0.50)	4.98 (0.45)	-1.71*	0.32	4.95 (0.50)	4.94 (0.47)	-0.83	0.15	5.25 (0.59)	5.16 (0.48)	0.29	0.04
Prejudice	Intergroup anxiety	4.05 (0.75)	4.58 (0.80)	-1.71*	0.32	4.05 (0.50)	4.94 (0.73)	-0.83	0.15	5.25 (1.04)	5.16 (0.99)	0.29	0.04
	Positive	4.05 (1.03)	4.86 (1.06)	-0.35	0.06	4.75 (1.18)	4.59 (1.12)	0.98	0.18	5.09 (0.99)	4.77 (1.21)	1.00	0.20
	Negative	4.05 (1.03)	4.86 (1.06)	-0.35	0.06	4.75 (1.18)	4.59 (1.12)	0.98	0.18	5.09 (0.99)	4.77 (1.21)	1.00	0.20

Notes: Mean (Standard deviation)

$t$  (df) :  $p < 0.10$ ; \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

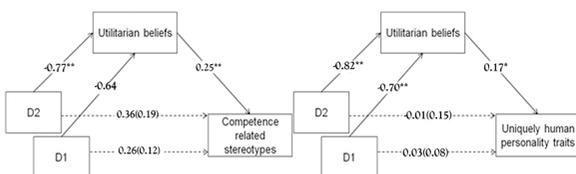
All  $p$  values are bilateral.

Source: own work.

*Infrachumanization: indirect pre- and post changes*

Following the criteria proposed by Hayes and Preacher (2014), different meditational analyses were performed in order to check the indirect effect in the infrachumanization measures and the prejudice measures, mediated by the perceived gain in economic terms (i.e., utilitarian beliefs; Figure 1 and 2, respectively). When infrachumanization measures were used as the dependent variable (Figure 1), the results showed significant indirect effects in the attribution of competence-related stereotypes ( $B = -0.143$ ,  $SE = 0.090$  [-.370, -0.008], and  $B = -0.171$ ,  $SE = 0.110$  [-.451, -0.008], for D1 and D2, respectively), and in the attribution of uniquely-human traits ( $B = -0.117$ ,  $SE = 0.056$  [-0.269, -0.034], and  $B = -0.138$ ,  $SE = 0.067$  [-0.316, -0.039], for D1 and D2, respectively). Furthermore, in the last mediation analysis, Omnibus test showed that the indirect effect was significantly bigger in D2 than D1 ( $B = 0.012$ ,  $SE = 0.009$  [0.001, 0.038]).

**Figure 1.** Mediation effects of utilitarian beliefs in infrachumanization measures: competence-related stereotypes (left), and uniquely human personality traits (right). variables.



In each model, pre-evaluation scores were controlled for the mediator and dependent variables.

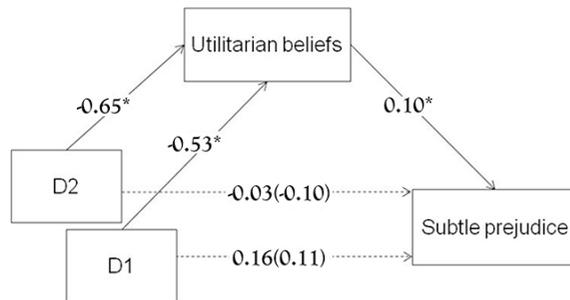
D1: dummy coded variable (UH = 0; NUHC = 1; UC = 0)  
 D2: dummy coded variable (UH = 1; NUHC = 0; UC = 0)  
 \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$   
 Total effects in parenthesis.

Source: own work.

*Prejudice: indirect pre- and post changes.*

In the case of prejudice measures (Figure 2), meditation analyses showed a significant indirect effect of the experimental condition on subtle prejudice, mediated by utilitarian beliefs ( $B = -0.055$ ,  $SE = 0.032$  [-0.145, -0.009], and  $B = -0.068$ ,  $SE = 0.042$  [-0.187, -0.010], for D1 and D2, respectively), but no effects on intergroup anxiety, neither positive, nor negative (confidence intervals included the value 0).

**Figure 2.** Mediation effects of utilitarian beliefs in subtle prejudice. Pre-evaluation scores were controlled for the mediator and the dependent variable.



D1: dummy coded variable (UH = 0; NUHC = 1; UC = 0)  
 D2: dummy coded variable (UH = 1; NUHC = 0; UC = 0)  
 \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$   
 Total effects in parenthesis.  
 Source: own work.

**Discussion**

Through this study, we have been able to experimentally reduce infrachumanization levels towards Maghrebian people, by means of participating in a ritualistic-alike collective activity. Not only different levels of participation were found according to our expectative, but also different effects of utilitarian information on Maghrebian immigrants were demonstrated.

Firstly (H1), it was shown that humanizing information (compared to utilitarian information) has an impact on the way people portray a group of people who have been a constant victim of prejudice. Concretely, the highest levels of participation (i.e., involvement,

positive emotions, emotional synchrony, and shared flow) were found in the most humanizing condition. Since this effect was smaller in the rest of the conditions (and significantly smaller in the case of working with utilitarian information), one can infer that not only the activity but also that the content played a major role in the psychological experience, as previous research suggested (Páez et al., 2015; Zumeta et al., 2016). In this regard, and as the flow literature goes (e.g., see Delle Fave, Massimini, & Bassi, 2011), the psychological immersion people felt in the most humanizing condition could have been boosted given that the content was more intrinsically motivating (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990) or it was more in line with self-oriented purposes (Engeser, 2012). In other words, when the more humanizing the information was (compared to utilitarianism), participants felt more connected (both cognitively and emotionally) with the actions they were carrying out.

Secondly (H2), it is possible to reduce infrahumanization through a ritualistic activity. The results confirmed an increase of competence and warmth (in a direct way), and also an increase of competence and uniquely human personality traits when participants had to use utilitarian information to work in favor of immigrants (in an indirect way, through the perception of gain). Conversely, there were not any direct and indirect effects in the reported scores of intergroup anxiety, which if taken as an emotional measure of prejudice (Stephan & Stephan, 1985), could lead to the assumption that the intervention did not have a profound effect at an emotional level, but rather a cognitive one. Thus, observable changes were the ones related to the improvement in the attribution of stereotypes and personality traits.

When analyzing at a deeper level, it is possible to infer that a) participants using the most humanizing information (i.e., UHC) were the only ones who improved their perception on Maghrebian immigrants without needing something in exchange (i.e., utilitarian beliefs; H3), and b) warmth-related information may have produced a recoil effect to a certain extent, related to subtle prejudice. In the first case,

the indirect increase of humanization due to a sense of gain (see mediations) is congruent with previous research (e.g., on interacting with dehumanized outgroup members, see Martínez, Rodríguez-Bailón, Moya, & Vaes, 2015), but even though utilitarian beliefs can indeed increase the perception of humanity, it also makes subtle prejudice scores rise. In the second case, the unwanted effect in the use of warmth-related information (i.e., NUHC) is seen in the increase of utilitarian beliefs and subtle prejudice for this condition, which might imply that warmth-related perceptions of Maghrebian immigrants is not humanizing enough and creates some undesirable effects.

It has to be remarked that the use of utilitarian information, which is highly extended in western media addressing immigration, is non-humanizing information due to its most basic characteristic: it always implies something in change and in this particular case, it needs a gain to provide a higher degree of humanity. Although huge misconceptions are constantly made when referring to immigrants (e.g., Tonry, 1997; Mears, 2001), the most humanizing information (e.g., information that depicts outgroup members as owners of high-level-positive stereotypes and personality traits) would be able to produce a better portrayal of immigrants without unwanted side effects, and this acquires a greater significance in the current state of important changes about immigration-related information and the hegemonic speech in Europe (Buonfino, 2004).

To our knowledge, there is no other study which has addressed ritualistic participation in order to reduce infrahumanization towards a specific group of immigrants in an experimental way; however, this study presents a limitation that has to be mentioned: the sample was composed of university students. Also, the sample size is a limitation for the statistic power. Future lines should address experiments with a more diverse sample, even though this effect is expected to be stronger among general population. It is stated that people are less likely to behave in a racist way the more educated they are (e.g., Wodtke, 2016), so it would be of

great interest performing replications with non-university students, specifically when undesirable effects are present.

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## Notes

\* Research article.