Article

The Persistence of Racial Constructs in Spain: Bringing Race and Colorblindness into the Debate on Interculturalism

Dan Rodríguez-García

INMIX-UAB, Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Autonomous University of Barcelona, 08193 Barcelona, Spain; dan.rodriguez@uab.cat

Abstract: In this article, I argue that persisting racial constructs in Spain affect conceptions of national belonging and continue to shape and permeate contemporary discriminations. I begin by describing several recent political events that demonstrate the urgent need for a discussion about "race" and racialization in the country. Second, some conceptual foundations are provided concerning constructs of race and the corollary processes of racism and racialization. Third, I present data from various public surveys and also from ethnographic research conducted in Spain on mixedness and multiraciality to demonstrate that social constructs of race remain a significant boundary driving stigmatization and discrimination in Spain, where skin color and other perceived physical traits continue to be important markers for social interaction, perceived social belonging, and differential social treatment. Finally, I bring race into the debate on managing diversity, arguing that a post-racial approach—that is, race-neutral discourse and the adoption of colorblind public policies, both of which are characteristic of the interculturalist perspectives currently preferred by Spain as well as elsewhere in Europe—fails to confront the enduring effects of colonialism and the ongoing realities of structural racism. I conclude by emphasizing the importance of bringing race into national and regional policy discussions on how best to approach issues of diversity, equality, anti-discrimination, and social cohesion.

Keywords: race; racism; racialization; discrimination; colorblindness; diversity; multiracial; interculturalism; diversity management; Spain

1. Introduction

In February 2018, on a first official visit to Spain, the United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent concluded that an alarming "lack of representation of people of African descent was endemic at State, regional and municipality levels, as well as in all three branches of power" in Spain (United Nations General Assembly 2018, p. 8). This fact must be considered with the knowledge that the African-descent population in Spain has now reached approximately two million people (representing 2.2 percent of the country's total population), according to various estimates reported by civil society organizations (United Nations General Assembly 2018).

Later, in March 2019, the European Parliament issued a statement about protecting the fundamental rights of African-descent populations in Europe, specifically noting that "people of African descent are overwhelmingly underrepresented in political and lawmaking institutions, at European, national and local levels in the European Union"; Member States were called on "to develop national anti-racism strategies that address the comparative situation of people of African descent in areas such as education, housing, health, employment, policing, social services, the justice system and political participation and representation, and to encourage the participation of people of African descent in television programmes and other media, in order to adequately address their lack of representation, as well as the lack of role models for children of African descent" (European Parliament 2019).

A year later, in January 2020, upon the formation of the new coalition government of Spain, Alba González Sanz, the person who had originally been selected by the party

Podemos to head the Directorate of Equal Treatment and Ethnic-Racial Diversity, resigned from the post; she was replaced by Rita Bosaho Cori, originally from Equatorial Guinea, who became the first-ever Black deputy in the history of Spanish Congress. In her explanation of why she had resigned, González Sanz said, "If we know something in feminism, it is that representation and symbolic actions matter. We have reorganized the team of this Ministry so that there is a visible presence of women belonging to racialized groups" (see Sánchez and Gutiérrez 2020). The Ministry itself also emphasized that such a change was long overdue given the absence of representation of immigrant-origin and racialized persons in government institutions and leadership positions. This situation generated great controversy in the Spanish political domain and in the media around the use of the term "racialized".

The above examples regarding the serious underrepresentation of Black people in positions of political power in Spain, as well as the recent Spanish political controversy around specifically mentioning "race" and acknowledging structural racism in the country, give purpose to this article. Using the case of Spain—which tends to think of itself as a "post-racial" society and is inclined to overlook the sociocultural repercussions of its colonialist past—I wish to show that the social construct of "race" is a significant boundary driving present-day stigmatization and discrimination, and I therefore argue for the need to bring race into the interculturalism policy debate. First, I will lay some theoretical foundations and arguments concerning the concepts of race, racism, and racialization, defending the use of these terms as an anti-racism tool. I contend that the idea of race, generated by the interpretation of phenotype and other physical features, plays a central role in social dynamics and processes of discrimination, having a real impact on the lives of racialized groups. Simply put, racism cannot exist without the constructed idea of race, so we need to consider these topics together (Golash-Boza 2016). Second, I will look at historical and recent manifestations of racism in Spain while also reflecting on the broader European context. Third, I will discuss how the "colorblind" or post-racial universalist approach adopted by current European practices of interculturalism might be falling short in the fight against discrimination. I concur with Bonilla-Silva (1999, 2013), Lentin (2008, 2020), Simon (2017, 2019), Song (2018), and Wise (2010), among other scholars, that such an approach, by eschewing discussions of specifically race-related themes and social realities, has the effect of making it more difficult to challenge societal prejudices and structural racism, thereby actually increasing the likelihood of ethnoracial discrimination.

Spain is a unique case study within Europe because it has experienced a massive and sudden increase in its international immigration in recent years. In just 10 years, between 2000 and 2010, Spain's foreign-born population more than quadrupled, rising from under 1.5 million to over 6.5 million—that is, from less than 4 percent to almost 14 percent of the total population. To put this in perspective, during this time, Spain's annual net inflow of foreign-born individuals was the highest among all OECD countries, second only to the United States (Arango 2013). This unique contemporary migration experience, together with the country's history of colonialism, has made Spain an exceptional laboratory for studying ethnic and race relations.

2. Conceptualizing Race, Racism, and Racialization

"Race", as a concept to divide humans into different taxonomies or into essential types of individuals based on perceived traits, does not have biological meaning, although it began as a so-called "scientific" practice in the 18th century. From a modern scientific point of view, we know that "races" do not exist (Ackermann et al. 2016; Cavalli-Sforza 2000; Lewontin et al. 1984; Ruffié 1976; see also Lévi-Strauss 1952). Humanity belongs to a single species (*Homo Sapiens*), and the belief that there are different capacities for producing culture based on genotypic and phenotypic differences—the core belief of racism—is a fallacy.

Yet, the consequences of the construct of race—that is, racism and racialization—are very real. As Bonilla-Silva (1999), nodding to the Durkheimian tradition, argues, race is

a "social fact" that has real effects on people's lives. This is because the idea of race is structurally embedded in social, political, economic, and cultural institutions (see also Chun and Lo 2015; Goldberg 2002, 2006; Grosfoguel 2004; Hall 1980; Song 2018). As put by Hughey (2017, p. 27), "race is a biological fiction with a social function".

In the same way that race is a concept with multiple dimensions (Roth 2016), racism—that is, prejudice and discrimination based on the idea of race—has many forms and manifestations depending on the context: from biological racism (i.e., the belief in a hierarchy of humans based on alleged biological criteria) to what has been called "new racism" (Barker 1981), "differential neo-racism" (Taguieff 1988), or "cultural fundamentalism" (Stolcke 1995), where culture replaces the idea of biological race as a basis for discrimination or asserted superiority, and differing cultures are viewed as fixed and incompatible entities. Addressing the wide range of discriminations, San Román (1996) coined the encompassing term "alterophobia" to refer to any ideology of exclusion or rejection of the "other", regardless of the criterion or criteria for exclusion (e.g., biology, culture, religion, social class).

A corollary to the concepts of race and racism, "racialization", in brief, is the process of ascribing racial meanings to a relationship, social practice, or group (Omi and Winant 2014). More specifically, it can be understood as the differential treatment of an individual or a group based on a socially attributed racial category—that is, based on perceived visible characteristics (e.g., skin color, clothing, or other aspects of appearance) or perceived cultural distinctions (e.g., language or religion) and the assumptions that are made about these perceived characteristics (Barot and Bird 2001; Chun and Lo 2015; Gans 2017; Hochman 2019; Murji and Solomos 2005; Omi and Winant 2014). In this essentialization of individual or group characteristics in racial terms, the phenotype plays a fundamental role—that is, "aspects of a person's physical appearance that are socially understood as relevant to racial classification" (Roth 2016, p. 1323; see also Jenkins 1997, p. 65). Grosfoguel (2004), for instance, explains how the racialization of Puerto Rican ethnicity in New York is largely based on visible characteristics, such as blackness. As argued by Daynes and Lee (2008), the phenotype or physical visible traits become the object of racial ideas or beliefs through selective perception, a process that is influenced by cultural and historical contexts.

While the concept of racialization is principally associated with the eras of colonialism and postcolonialism (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991), with darker skin color being assigned an inferior status by the ruling classes, visibility does not always characterize the oppressed or discriminated-against minority (Song 2020). Populations that were not subject to colonial history or who were not considered "people of color" have also been racialized, such as the Irish or Italians in the United States (Fredrickson 2002; King-O'Riain 2021). Moreover, as Meer (2014) points out, both Muslims and Jews have historically been racialized as "absolute others"—as have the Romani people throughout history—not only through having their ethnocultural differences treated with contempt but also by having physical differences attributed to them in order to justify their marginalization, exclusion, or even mass murder. Arguably, in present-day Europe, religion (specifically Islam versus Judeo-Christianity) may hold the "master status" (Hughes 1945) or centrality as a dominant attribute in social relations, much in the same way that race has occupied this position in North America (Foner 2015; Grosfoguel 2004; Rodríguez-García 2015).

The fact is, any group is susceptible to being racialized, as the idea of race is a social construct—with fluid, cultural, and minority/majority components—that depends on the context (Telles and Paschel 2014). For this reason, the same person, for example, the actor Antonio Banderas, can be considered White in Spain (in Spain, this would be indisputable) while being labeled as a "person of color" by a number of news outlets in the United States.[1] Another example showing the contextual nature of race is the April 2018 *National Geographic* special issue, titled "Black and White", which featured two twin daughters of an Anglo/Jamaican intermarried couple: One of the twins looks seemingly "White" because of her light skin color and blonde hair, and the other one looks more phenotypically "Black" (Edmonds 2018). Racial labels are shown to be arbitrary and

unmeaningful through this case—and clearly a construct of society rather than a fact of biology. Through these examples, we also see how blackness is a category that is constructed in relation to another invented racial category: whiteness. That is, whiteness should not be thought of as "raceless", but actually as a racial construct, or even as the *primordial* racial construct (Lentin 2020). In this sense, the White population is also racialized (see also Beaman 2019; Lewis 2004; Telles and Flores 2013). At this point, it is important to consider Song's (2014a, p. 107) argument regarding the need "to differentiate more clearly between 'racism' (as an historical and structured system of domination) from the broader notion of 'racialization'" in order to "[articulate] a more nuanced and complex understanding of racial incidents".[2]

Moreover, since racialization is a "dialectical process that involves the processes and resulting structures and institutions in which racialized people participate" (Miles 1989, p. 76), racialization usually intersects with variables other than race, such as gender or occupation. Stereotyped differential abilities may be attributed to both women and men of racialized groups, affecting their access to work. The concept of "gendered racialization" applies to the study of ethnic work niches, where factors of origin/appearance and gender (and class, too) become entrenched in available or common work options. For instance, Asian (Lee 2015), Mexican (Vasquez 2010), and African (Elabor-Idemudia 1999) women have been characterized as having different "essential" skills in the workplace, in turn leading to racialized and genderized economic niches. This ethnoracial homogenization may also be applied to larger groups, such as the Latino population as a whole (Rumbaut 2009; Smith and Abreu 2019; Telles 2014) or immigrants and refugees in general (Aguilar Idáñez and Buraschi 2018; Gans 2017).

In addition to specifically impacting on work opportunities, racialization, viewed as a process, can be a helpful concept for referring to the disproportions that occur between ethnoracial groups in terms of access to goods, resources, services, healthcare treatment, and other needs, and also for describing the social problems disproportionately affecting certain groups as a result of these disparities (e.g., the racialization of poverty, the racialization of crime and incarceration, the racialization of high school dropouts). That is, certain groups are overrepresented in certain areas of social marginalization and disadvantage and are underrepresented in other areas of institutional privilege, such as in the education system, the justice system, the healthcare system, and government (Campos 2012). In this way, racialization can be understood as a process that "reflects the legitimation, rationalization, and justification for racism or the systematic, hierarchical, and unequal distribution of resources and unequal treatment of people once racialized" (Goss and Hughey 2017, p. 1).

3. The Persistence of Racial Constructs in So-Called Colorblind Spain

In the United States, where the Black/White divide predominates owing to the legacy of slavery, the term "race" is still used as an analytical concept and as a popular category within social activism to highlight the importance of color in the dynamics of social inclusion/exclusion. Racial labeling in the United States is embedded in the culture, originally as an obvious tool of oppression, and later as an attempt for certain groups to reappropriate racial terms for both empowerment and anti-discrimination reasons. Black people in the States have been referred to as "colored", "Negroes", "African Americans", and "Blacks", depending on the historical moment, and at present, some non-White groups use the term "BIPOC" to highlight the unique relationship to whiteness that Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color have.[3]

In contrast, in Spain—as in most countries in continental Europe since the end of World War II—the word "race" has largely remained a taboo category (i.e., politically incorrect) in academic and political discourse. A classical anti-racism approach has been adopted, according to which making ethnic or racial distinctions is seen to be at the root of racism. The understanding is that equality is achieved through the invisibilization of differences. Nevertheless, the issue of race is certainly not absent in Spain, or in Europe. Policies and national discourses of race and race relations from past colonial times still have an important

impact on contemporary European societies, where forms of racism and discrimination remain ongoing problems. Although Spain may not be a strictly pigmentocratic society like the United States (Alba and Foner 2015; Hunter 2007; Martin et al. 2017; Price 2012) or Brazil (Telles 2014; Telles and Paschel 2014), numerous studies show that skin color and other physical traits are nonetheless crucial markers for social interaction, social inclusion/exclusion dynamics, and differential treatment in Spain (Cornejo Parriego 2007; Flores 2015; Hellgren 2018; Rodríguez-García 2010, 2015; Rodríguez-García et al. 2016, 2018, 2021), as is also the case in other countries in Europe.[4]

Several recent studies conducted by the Federation of SOS Racism Associations (2015, 2019) conclude that discrimination in Spain based on skin color is overwhelming. The first study (2015) reports discriminatory practices in access to housing, noting a considerable difference in the refusal to rent apartments to the "distinguishable" foreign-born population as compared to the native-born Spanish-origin population (70 percent versus 30 percent, respectively). The second study (2019) warns about discrimination arising from police stops based on ethnic profiling: In 2017, in Catalonia, 54.1 percent of the total police stops by the *Mossos d'Esquadra* (the autonomous police force of Catalonia) involved foreign-born individuals, a group that accounts for only 13.7 percent of the total Catalan population. The United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent similarly found that "racial profiling of people of African descent is endemic" in Spain, and that "black people [in Spain] run the risk of being singled out 42 times more often in ports and public transport, simply because of the colour of their skin" (United Nations General Assembly 2018, p. 7).

Another recent study focusing on the municipality of Barcelona (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2020) also indicates that the main form of discrimination in Barcelona, accounting for 33 percent of reported cases, is racism and racialization, mostly directed towards Maghrebi people and Black African women; similar findings are also reported in France, where discrimination based on skin color or origin is the most common form of discrimination, particularly affecting populations of African origin (including people of Maghrebi origin), regardless of whether populations were born and socialized in France (Brinbaum et al. 2018).

Furthermore, according to the Spanish government's 2020 domestic report on "Perception of Discrimination Based on Racial or Ethnic Origin" (CEDRE (Consejo para la Eliminación de la Discriminación Racial o Étnica) 2020), more than half of the minority populations surveyed (51.8 percent) stated that they had felt discriminated against in the past year. This report presents data from a survey conducted with 1600 Spanish residents or nationals from eight different ethnoracial groups (Romani, Maghrebi, Indo-Pakistani, East Asian, Andean, Eastern European, non-Mediterranean African, and Afro-descendant[5] populations) about their perception of discrimination in different areas of life, such as public education, the healthcare system, government institutions, access to housing, and treatment by the police. Since 2013, the year of the previous government report, the perception of having experienced discrimination in Spain had increased in almost all areas.

These findings can only be explained by the fact that Spain is a society infused with—at all levels of the social structure—the construct of race and the reality of racism, both of which are closely linked to the country's history of colonialism. Before becoming viewed as a scientific category in the 18th century, the idea of race was formulated as a category of moral, religious, and social status in Spain, intended to protect class privileges. It is important to point out the extent to which Spanish racism has been characterized by the primacy given to Catholicism and a related logic of excluding the racialized "religious other" (see Feros 2017; Méchoulan 1981).[6] Discrimination based on both skin color and ethnocultural difference has absolutely formed part of this logic of exclusion—one only has to think of the historical persecution of the Roma in Spain (see, for example, Cortés and Fernández 2015) despite their tendency to adopt the state religion of Catholicism or of the famous Spanish-language song "*Angelitos negros*" that was popularized in 1947 by Spanish-Cuban singer Antonio Machín,[7] which critically questions why there are no Black

angels in the Catholic Church's representations of heaven; however, religion has been a central organizing principle.

The construction of "race" and "whiteness" in Spain can be traced back to the 13th century, when the idea of "blood purity"—a Catholic doctrine of essential/moral distinction between Christians (i.e., Catholics) and non-Christians (i.e., Muslims and Jews)—came into being. In the 15th century, the implementation of the *Estatutos de limpieza de sangre* (Laws of Purity of Blood) sought more clearly to ensure that only people of Christian descent ("Old Christians", interpreted as being "pure White") were able to advance socially and maintain positions of power over Jews, "Moors" (as Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula were called), and converts to Christianity (*conversos*) in mainland Spain, and over Native Americans, Black people (of African descent), and mixed-race people ("mulattos") in the context of the Spanish colonies (Méchoulan 1981). Even the fact of converting to Catholicism, a seemingly inclusive practice that was central to the project of Spanish colonial expansion, did not afford "New Christians" the same status—in terms of both "racial purity" and class privilege—that was held by Old Christians. Thus, in 16th-century colonial America, a caste system was created that matched a person's assigned religious and racial status with the degree of rights and social participation that this individual would have; this system would govern the entire social and economic organization of the colonies. A family's social position (its honor) was based on maintaining the integrity of "blood purity" in its lineage. In this context, the mixing of castes (i.e., of bloodlines) through intermarriage was seen as challenging the hierarchical social order and was considered synonymous with moral and social degradation (Rodríguez-García 2021).

The standards of racial purity in Spain were abolished completely only in 1870. Later, during Franco's dictatorship (1939–1975), the concern of the ruling regime was to morally regenerate what was called "the Spanish race" through a project of national Catholicism and a revival of "authentic" Spanish tradition. The proclaimed notion of *Hispanidad* (Spanishness) was not defined by racial categories per se, but it was highly insular, defined by Catholicism, and deeply antagonistic to "foreign" elements (Campos 2016; Rodríguez-García et al. 2021, p. 841). Since the 1980s, in Spain's post-Franco efforts to assert itself as a modern and civilized European nation that belongs in the European Union, the conceptualization and definition of Spanish society and identity as fundamentally White have continued.

With respect to the ethno-religious origins of Spanish racism, the North African Muslim population in Spain, who are chiefly from Morocco (the largest foreign-born population group in the country), continue to experience discrimination in modern-day Spain, as they have historically been stigmatized and racialized as "absolute others" since the time of the Crusades (Mateo Dieste 2018). As Rodríguez-García et al. (2021, p. 841) have explained, "Islamophobia . . . in Spanish society [has] historical roots dating back to the *Reconquista* [Reconquest], the centuries-long violent conflict in the Iberian Peninsula between Christians and Muslims ("the Moors", from the Maghreb) that predated the era of the Spanish Empire and related colonization. To these intercountry and intercultural tensions, the continual sociopolitical conflict during the Spanish protectorate in Morocco (1912–1958) can be added, as can the widespread suspicion of Muslim communities in the Western world since the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Ramberg 2004)". Given this history, in Spain, even in present times, certain perceived physical traits (such as darker skin color), ways of dressing (such as wearing the hijab), or Arabic accents and names "become signifiers of 'being a Muslim' and elicit social distancing and discriminatory reactions from the mainstream society" (Rodríguez-García et al. 2018, p. 12; see also Rodríguez-García et al. 2016, p. 528; 2021, p. 841; Rodríguez-Reche and Rodríguez-García 2020; Rodríguez-García and Rodríguez-Reche forthcoming).

Spain's historical relationship with the idea of race and with the practice of systemic racism, however, is almost completely overlooked in current times. The disturbing aspects and consequences of Spain's colonialist past—not only its colonization of the Americas but also of parts of Asia and Africa, the latter of where it had colonies in Morocco and Equatorial

Guinea until the late 1960s—as well as the country's historic ethnic cleansing of Jews, Muslims, and Roma are often disremembered by Spanish nationals. The shocking reality is that in Spain and its colonies, Black slaves were sold until as late as 1846—sales that were advertised in newspapers' "Sale of Animals" section (see Viana 2019). In fact, Spain was the last European country to abolish slavery (in 1886). Moreover, playful reenactments of battles between "Moors" and Christians still take place today at schools and popular festivals all over Spain to commemorate the Reconquest of Spain by the Christians. Furthermore, products of popular consumption such as *Cola-Cao* (a widely consumed chocolate drink in Spain, whose early advertisements, remembered nostalgically by many Spaniards, featured a song portraying slaves happily working on cocoa plantations)[8] and *Conguitos* (literally "little Congolese people", a very popular Spanish brand of chocolate-covered peanuts) are examples of the internalization and normalization of the racial imaginary in Spain.

The case of Conguitos, in particular, is very revealing of the extent to which racist images of Black people in packaging and commercials have changed so little over the decades in Spain. Initially, starting in the 1960s, the Conguitos wrapper and advertisements featured colonialist images of "primitive" African people in their huts (always with caricatured features, especially oversized lips). In more recent decades, the product's packaging and ads have included references to hip-hop culture and to sports, such as basketball. Either way, the product has always maintained a strong stereotype of Black people. The fact that all the Conguitos' faces and characters are consistently Black and that they are being offered up to "be eaten" or consumed by a White majority sends a doubly disturbing message about power relations in Spanish society.[9] Most Spaniards, young and old, are completely unaware of this normalized form of racism in their society. And not surprisingly, it is still common for kids at school to call their Black peers "Conguito" as a pejorative term—and to call their Muslim peers "*moro*", or "Moor" (Ballestín González 2012; Rodríguez-García et al. 2018, 2021).

One of the ways in which we are able to evaluate and observe the persistence of racial constructs is through the study of mixedness—that is, the study of mixed couples and their multiracial/multiethnic descendants. A recent study conducted in Spain on ethnoracially mixed youth (Rodríguez-García et al. 2021) demonstrates the ongoing reality of differential social treatment based on constructed, ascribed racial categorizations.[10] The following interview excerpts from native-born Spanish youth who participated in the study show how these respondents, most of whom are multiracial, have clearly been given the message that *they do not belong* on the basis of their perceived physical appearance; only a few examples from the many narratives that articulate similar experiences could be included here owing to space limitations.

> The discrimination I have experienced in my life has, above all, been linked to my skin color. At school, there were the typical comments of "Conguito", "Black", etc.[11] (. . .) If I do not speak, [people] see me as a total foreigner. But as soon as I speak, [they comment,] "Oh, how interesting! What beautiful and perfect Catalan you have!" (. . .) It might be the darkness of my skin . . . , [but] when I open my mouth and I speak with this deep Catalan, I am forgiven my blackness. Even more so once they know that one of my parents is super White, and that I am in university.
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> (*22-year-old female, Spanish mother and Rwandan father*)[12]
>
> Nobody identifies me as Spanish. Instead, as Brazilian, Saharan, Moroccan, Indian, Latin American . . . I have this face [referring to her dark skin color], and they think that I'm a foreigner (. . .) There's a lot of difference between my sister and me: My sister is very light-skinned, so she is not noticed.
>
> (*27-year-old female, Spanish father and Colombian mother*)
>
> Eighty percent of the people I have met in my life have asked me what I call "the big question". They have never taken it as a given that I am from here. They've seen me as a foreigner—as Moroccan, Dominican . . . Because of my hair, because

of my skin color (…) I've been in line at a disco and girls that I did not know at all have touched my hair.

(*24-year-old female, Cape Verdean father and Spanish mother*)

If I have to define myself, I will say that I am a Black male born in Spain. I don't feel [Spanish] because people haven't made me feel it. Because of these life experiences, you also have to keep your guard up … Here, the Catalans or Spaniards do not see me as Catalan or Spanish, but I see myself as Catalan and Spanish. They just see me as Black. I remember a comment from a co-worker that made me kind of happy and reflective; he said that it was an achievement that there was a Black man working at the Red Cross. That made me think [about how] Black people in Spain have so little power that any minimum achievement means a lot (…) When I was a child, I would have liked having had a Black teacher, a Black doctor …

(*29-year-old male, Spanish mother and Guinean father*)

Similar sentiments of experiencing exclusion and imposed "non-belonging"—and, in this case, overt racism—are communicated by a parent regarding her Spanish-born multiracial children:

[My daughters] belong here; they feel they are from here, but people see them as foreigners … For example, there was a third-grade teacher who told [my eldest daughter, who was then eight years old,] while preparing for the play *Little Red Riding Hood*, "Since you are Black, you will be the wolf". That time I went and complained to the principal.

(*Dominican woman married to a Spanish man*)

All of the above narratives show the relevance of skin color for social inclusion in Spanish society and express the more limited identity options available to Spanish-born ethnoracially mixed individuals who are *perceived* as having "foreign" origins. The following interview excerpt also comments on how having a darker skin color may restrict a Spaniard's personal freedoms in comparison to his or her White-perceived peers:

To be a Black/White [mix] is not at all the same thing as being Black/Black. No comparison. I think I would not have even met my current partner [a native White female] if I was Black/Black (…) Racialized people are very constricted. Many times, I would like to be White (…) Almost all my friends are White, and I [inline] skate and I really like going out at night with my friends, but they are much more daring than me. They can skate in front of the police or they can drink in front of the police, and I know I can't do that; I don't even try!

(*22-year-old male, British mother and Cameroonian father*)

The two final narratives reveal not only the privileging of whiteness within Spanish society but also the existence of cultural racism—the privileging of Western cultures and the expression of prejudice towards "non-European" ethnic groups and religions, especially towards Muslims:

I have been turned away from entering a bar, or [have experienced prejudice] when looking for an apartment (…) Now that we have signed our rental contract, we have had to put my partner's name on it because his name is more Spanish than mine.

(*24-year-old female, Mexican mother and Tunisian father*)

My twin sister does not experience [discrimination] as much—because she does not wear the hijab, and she is lighter and has straight hair and such. So, she does not usually receive [racist] comments. Of course, the consequence of wearing the hijab is that you stand out more. I take the subway and I see that people are staring at me—every day.

(*19-year-old female, Moroccan parents*)

All these examples demonstrate the prevalence of what we can identify as casual racism, micro-racism, "everyday racism" (Essed 1991), or "microaggressions" (Sue 2010)—for example, experiences of verbal slights or insults, being stared at, or being regarded with suspicion and distrust. The findings from this study on multiracial and multiethnic youth in Spain show the important role that *the interpretation* of skin color/physical appearance still plays in social interactions in Spain; these results are largely in line with other studies conducted in Europe and beyond (see below for some examples). Such research indicates that, contrary to what classical assimilation theories had predicted (Gordon 1964), in Western societies, socially transformative processes of intermarriage and mixedness paradoxically coexist with the persistent stigmatization and discrimination of certain groups, particularly people of Black African heritage and people of Muslim background; these racialized groups may be more socially constrained when it comes to having their identity options and sense of belonging validated by the larger society (see, for example, Song (2017) for the nuanced case of the United Kingdom; Beaman (2019) and Brinbaum et al. (2018) for the case of France; Gilliéron (2017) for the case of Switzerland; Brunsma (2006), Khanna (2010), Lee and Bean (2012), Spencer (2011), and Waters (1996) for the case of the United States; Telles and Paschel (2014) for the case of Latin America; and Chito Childs (2014), Rodríguez-García (2015), and Osanami Törngren et al. (2021) for a global perspective).

4. Colorblind Interculturalism? Bringing "Race" into the Discussion on Managing Diversity

It is clear that the idea of race, perpetuated by the interpretation of phenotype and other physical features, factors importantly into social dynamics and processes of discrimination nowadays, having a real impact on the lives of racialized groups. Daily lives are still marked by racial divides, as this article has shown for the Spanish context through both survey and ethnographic data. Therefore, it would be reasonable to think that this reality should be taken into account in current policies for managing diversity and improving social cohesion. But is this the case?

In an attempt to avoid the limitations and reputed negative outcomes of multiculturalism in the European context, interculturalism—the preferred new paradigm for managing diversity in society—claims to distinguish itself from both the assimilationist policy paradigm (cultural uniformity, in which minority ethnocultural groups are absorbed into the "dominant culture") and multiculturalist approaches to diversity. Multiculturalism, a philosophy or policy model that stands in opposition to assimilationist (and colorblind) perspectives, involves the state playing an active role in the defense of minority rights and cultural diversity to further goals of equality, inclusion, and anti-discrimination. This policy paradigm has experienced a backlash in recent decades, influenced by events such as the Rushdie Affair of 1989, the 2001 summer riots in northern towns of the United Kingdom, and the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States, among other incidents (Joppke 2004; McGhee 2008; Rodríguez-García 2010; Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010; Zapata-Barrero 2019). Over the course of renewed debates about how best to approach and govern diversity in modern times, interculturalism has emerged as a suggested model. While the interculturalist policy paradigm also acknowledges and values diversity in contemporary societies, it is critical of what it views as multiculturalism's overly strong focus on cultural/group rights and the recognition of differences—a policy focus that has been argued by interculturalists as hindering social cohesion. Zapata-Barrero (2017, p. 1) explains how interculturalism shifts the emphasis to a "contacts-based policy approach, aimed at fostering communication and relationships among people from different backgrounds", "focuses on common bonds rather than differences", and "centres its policy goals on community cohesion and reframing a common public culture that places diversity within rather than outside the so-called Unity". Interculturalism emphasizes contact or "positive interaction" (Zapata-Barrero 2016) and dialogue (Council of Europe 2008) between groups, commonality, community cohesion, identity flexibility, and dynamism; and these goals should surely constitute part of an optimal approach to managing diversity within societies. I myself,

in an earlier publication, have advocated for a model of interculturalism, conceptualized as "the interactive process of living together in diversity, with the full participation and civic engagement of, and social exchange between, all members of society beyond that of mere recognition and coexistence, in turn forming a cohesive and plural civic community", as this approach, apart from encouraging interaction, "has the merit of focusing on the negotiation and conflict-resolution *process* . . . and of emphasizing the changing nature of cultures and societies" (Rodríguez-García 2010, pp. 260–61). However, my wariness of current European concepts and projects of interculturalism stems from, on the one hand, their presumed cultural evenhandedness, and on the other hand—in their eagerness to distinguish interculturalism from multiculturalism and its perceived failures—their great reluctance to name and defend certain aspects of diversity that still, based on empirical evidence, need specific attention, namely race (see also Keval's (2014) critical discussion of interculturalism's "de-racing" and "de-classing" tendencies).

It is beyond the scope of this article to engage with all the features or specific arguments of the interculturalist policy paradigm, many of which are positive and workable, nor is it my goal specifically to enter into the debate about whether interculturalism is a variant of multiculturalism or an entirely new paradigm (see, for example, Barrett 2013; Cantle 2012a, 2012b, 2013; Joppke 2018; Mansouri and Modood 2021; Meer and Modood 2012; Modood 2017; Zapata-Barrero 2017, 2019). Both approaches or frameworks, at a theoretical level, are underpinned by similar principles for managing diversity or pluralism (Young 1990; Grillo 1998): the principle of respecting difference (of origin, culture, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and so forth) and the principle of trying to foster equality and non-discrimination. Furthermore, the reality is that both multiculturalism and interculturalism in practice combine pluralist and assimilationist perspectives to lesser or greater degrees depending on the context. My concern here, therefore, is not with what the emerging or refined policy model should ultimately be called, but rather with what it proposes to do—and for this reason, in relation to the specific topic raised in this article, I find it necessary to address certain areas of weakness that I perceive in the interculturalist approach that is steadily gaining acceptance in European contexts.

The interculturalist policy paradigm in Europe is premised on a post-racial understanding of contemporary society and a related belief that identity categorizations based on "race", origin, and nationality are increasingly less pertinent to the diversity debate (Cantle 2012a, 2013; Zapata-Barrero 2016, 2017). Within this framework, the universalist approach to the issues of race and equality is a race-neutral rhetoric and a colorblind public policy[13]—a "post-racial liberalism", as coined by Wise (2010), which de-emphasizes "racial discrimination and race-based remedies for inequality, in favor of . . . 'universal' programs" (Wise 2010, p. 16). This trend of thought, which started with Wilson's (1978) *The Declining Significance of Race* and underpinned Obama's successful campaign for the presidency of the United States, is also apparent in contemporary theories of global citizenship (Dower 2003).

However, the post-racial notion that processes of ever-increasing globalization, transnationalism, and "super-diversity" (Vertovec 2007) have rendered the concept of race far less significant is fallacious. Interculturalists tend to present three connected arguments to support a post-racial viewpoint. The first is that in our current global landscape, identities are increasingly multiple and fluid, if not chosen, and that single identifiers of race, ethnicity, or national origin are no longer appropriate or particularly meaningful, nor do they capture the internal diversity within these categories (e.g., Cantle 2012a, 2013; Zapata-Barrero 2016). The second argument is that because of all the diversity that characterizes contemporary Western societies, in which so many citizens are of either second- or third-generation immigrant background or mixed ethnoracial descent, community relations within nations can no longer be approached through the same minority/majority assumptions that have driven multiculturalist policies (e.g., Cantle 2013; Zapata-Barrero 2017), nor can we conceive of social relations in terms of a clearly discernible color/racial divide that is disadvantaging to non-White groups. Cantle (2012a, p. 40), one of the leading advocates of interculturalism

in the British and European contexts, has explicitly stated, "The black–white binary divide is no longer central and should no longer underpin our view of race and racism". The third post-racial argument that interculturalist discourses employ—an idea that flows from the previous premises—is that given that race, as both a basis for identity and social inequalities, does not hold the same importance that it once did, we need to shift our focus to other areas of difference and regard them as equally significant aspects of identity (Cantle 2012a, 2013; see also Zapata-Barrero 2017).

Based on my own extensive research on mixedness (i.e., mixed unions and mixed-background descendants) during the past two decades (e.g., Rodríguez-García 2015; Rodríguez-García et al. 2018, 2021), in addition to sociological and anthropological data available from multiple research studies conducted in both Europe and North America (see the previous section of this article), these post-racial arguments tell only part of the truth. They tend to minimize the actual importance of race—visible traits that are assigned an ethnoracial meaning or interpretation (e.g., skin color, "non-European" religious dress)—in people's *lived* experiences (see also Keval 2014) and also to discount the real possibility that these shared experiences, whether in terms of identity or discrimination, may continue to form a basis for collective solidarity. There can be no doubt that hybrid or multiple identities are an ever-growing reality, which means that people may find "self-classification" increasingly difficult and may feel connected to a variety of ethnic, religious, national, and racial identities. However, the fact that identity, like culture, is complex, multiple, and flexible—with multiple layers that intersect—along with the recognition that mixed, pan-ethnic, and cosmopolitan affiliations across the globe are on the rise does not signify that there are no significant positionalities. Complex and multifaceted personal identities do not necessarily indicate that people's identities have become diluted of all specific ethnocultural, racial, and group attachments and that a sense of sharing collective bonds on these grounds is not experienced.

Moreover, interculturalism needs to better acknowledge that not all individuals can navigate flexibly and freely across their different layers of identity (Rodríguez-García et al. 2021), nor may they wish to (Modood 2016). Some aspects or dimensions of identity, including racial or ethnic heritage, can be more salient than others, whether by choice or imposition. Even though racial categories and identifications are becoming increasingly complex precisely because of super-diversity and the growth of mixed-race populations (see, for example, Song 2014b), the post-racial suggestion that White and non-White phenotypes or that "Western" and "non-Western" physical appearances now carry the same level of inherent social privilege in the European context contradicts what many people of color and many people who are visibly Muslim (especially women), among other racialized groups, are saying about their lived experiences; citizens who are "visible" in relation to White European society frequently find their national belonging questioned in European countries, and they report experiencing microaggressions as well as other forms of exclusionary treatment (e.g., more limited access to housing). Certainly, different countries and cities might experience different issues (see, for instance, Modood (2016) on the British context) and might report varying degrees of prejudice, but we know that pervasive race-based discrimination continues to exist—and it definitely exists in Spain, which is where my primary research has been conducted.

Furthermore, with respect to interculturalism's questioning of whether contemporary diversity policies can or should still apply the same ethnoracial majority/minority divide in their understanding of societies, this viewpoint strikes me as somewhat paradoxical because of the unacknowledged majority privileged position that seems to be implicit in interculturalist discourse. The interculturalist goal of "placing diversity *within* the mainstream" (Zapata-Barrero 2017, p. 6) is certainly laudable and desired, but the discourse's post-racial and colorblind approach, as well as its extreme wariness of recognizing cultural or ethnic groups (interculturalism recognizes individuals), makes it difficult to understand which aspects of diversity will be valued and mainstreamed and also who will be determining what inclusions—or exclusions—are made. There seems to be an absence of critical

analysis regarding the power and cultural hierarchies that are embedded in the process. As Kymlicka (1995) has argued, states are never culturally neutral. Lähdesmäki and Wagener (2015) have made similar arguments, pointing out that official European discourses on interculturalism, specifically the 2008 *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue* by the Council of Europe, have sometimes approached questions of diversity from a limited Western European viewpoint, generally employing a Eurocentric interpretation of cultures and cultural differences and minimally acknowledging the sociocultural or historical differences between European societies (see also Lähdesmäki et al. 2020).

As regards interculturalism's claim that race matters less than before and that all aspects of difference should be given equal consideration in the policy arena, of course, diversity and identity are multidimensional phenomena and are not defined only by race. There are certainly multiple other forms of difference, based on religious affiliation, gender, ethnic affiliation, social class, sexual orientation, disability, and age, among other factors, all of which intersect. However, that does not preclude the fact, borne out by empirical evidence provided here and elsewhere, that race is still a crucial part of the equation. While the notion of racial categorization itself can be problematized (as can categorization according to national origin), we cannot ignore the fact that people cannot choose their phenotype, how it is perceived by others, and how this may impact their everyday lives. I would also argue that acknowledging "intersectionality" (Crenshaw 1989) and the multiple factors that influence identity does not mean that we can assume that all aspects of identity carry the same weight in people's day-to-day lives, their social interactions, or their experiences of social inclusion/exclusion processes. For this reason, theoretical conceptions and proposed policy models related to diversity management must be supported and complemented by an ethnographic approach to the subject that takes peoples' real everyday experiences into account. Authors such as Bonilla-Silva (2013), Jefferess (2018), Simon (2019), and Wise (2010) argue that by dismissing the dynamics of race and racism (i.e., the historical and institutional structures of White domination that so often determine social position and opportunity and that also underlie everyday instances of racism), the "benevolent" public political discourses on post-racial global citizenship normalize, rather than challenge, structures of inequality, in turn making it easier for right-wing xenophobic parties to gain ground. A paradox pointed out by Lentin (2008) is that the silence about race in Europe—notably, the term or concept of "race" is largely divorced even from initiatives specifically undertaken to combat "racism"—has allowed European nations officially to declare themselves non-racist while simultaneously maintaining a conception of a fundamental European superiority, a notion or norm that tacitly presupposes whiteness (see also Beaman 2019; Roig 2017; Simon 2019). A post-racial or colorblind public policy view, then, while it may in theory seem fair and sensible, is somewhat impractical, as it limits discussion and opportunities concerning difference where they are most needed, effectively diverting attention away from, if not silencing opposition to, ethnic and racial inequality in society.

A further limitation of interculturalism is its insistence on re-centering diversity debates around the issue of *individual* identities, preferences, and practices; such a stance indicates a departure from the multiculturalist practices of recognizing ethnocultural and racial *groups* and protecting what Kymlicka (1995) has called "group-differentiated rights", both of which are disputed ideas in interculturalist discourse (see Cantle 2012a; Council of Europe 2008; Zapata-Barrero 2016, 2017).[14] In its contemplation of questions of both identity and rights, interculturalism's conceptual separation of the individual from the group seems somewhat flawed in logic to me—which I will go on to explain—and, in my opinion, acts as a potential stumbling block to interculturalism achieving its stated anti-discrimination objectives (see, for example, Cantle 2013; Council of Europe 2008; Zapata-Barrero 2017).

The argument that has guided the reaction against multiculturalism in recent years, particularly in northwestern Europe, is that the active recognition of minority cultures and rights—a public policy that emphasizes ethnoracial identity, group membership, and cultural rights—reinforces differences and ultimately gives rise to social divisiveness

and group segregation. However, multiculturalism, since its first official formulation by Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in 1971, has been a federal policy that was designed not only to defend ethnocultural diversity and minority rights but also to combat discrimination and promote social cohesion. Cantle (2013, p. 85) has strongly criticized the "outmoded ideas and divisive conception of multiculturalism", highlighting its policy failures, yet conceding that somehow the "progressive multiculturalism" (2013, p. 77) found in Canada—which he claims differs from "the separationist British model" (2013, p. 77)—has seemed to work; he states that the federal Canadian version "leans towards the concept of interculturalism and relies upon the development of commonality and a sense of belonging and inclusion across all areas of difference" (2013, p. 77). It strikes me as a strange assertion that the *original* fully fledged multiculturalist framework for managing diversity, which is now 50 years old, has been generally successful all these years on the basis that it is some type of "progressive" or exceptional form of this policy paradigm. It is far more likely that outcomes of group separation and social fragmentation in European contexts have been the result of poorly devised and exclusionary national immigration and integration policies (e.g., long-standing "guest worker" or temporary residence policies; very restrictive policies concerning access to citizenship; the absence of multicultural and anti-racism education in schools), among other policies and factors, which in some cases have led to the exclusion and socioeconomic disadvantage of certain groups (see also Grillo 2018, pp. 82–84).

Indeed, multiculturalism as practiced on a national level in Canada—which is a theme I have dealt with in earlier works (e.g., Rodríguez-García 2010, 2012)—demonstrates that a number of interculturalism's fundamental policy objectives can be achieved. Regarding the need to bridge unity and diversity, as well as to reconfigure these concepts so that they are not viewed as separate entities (Zapata-Barrero 2017), the multiculturalist policy approach in Canada has implemented specific policies regarding the promotion of civic equality that could be argued to be assimilationist and unifying in orientation: for example, non-discriminatory incorporation in the labor market, full participation in Canadian institutions, acquisition of the country's official languages (with government-funded language courses offered), and so forth (Rodríguez-García 2012). Notably, Canada requires citizenship tests (demonstrating a basic understanding of Canada's history, geography, government, and laws) and citizenship ceremonies. There is no reason why multiculturalism policies that "heighten the public salience of ethnicity", in turn "[helping] to combat the stereotypes and stigmatizations that . . . erode feelings of solidarity across ethnic and racial lines", cannot go hand in hand with "explicit 'nation-building' policies" (Kymlicka and Banting 2006, pp. 299–300). As stated by Kymlicka and Banting (2006, p. 299), "We dispute the claim that MCPs [multiculturalism policies] necessarily corrode solidarity". With respect to Cantle's claim that "multiculturalism revolved around race and failed to take account of other forms of difference that have moved firmly into the public sphere" (Cantle 2012a, p. 41), the Canadian policy of multiculturalism and the complementary *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982) "together draw attention not only to the protection of ethnocultural differences, but also to the rights of many groups who have historically been discriminated against, whether on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, or disability, among other factors. Respect for diversity of all types, therefore, becomes a central value-and-practice that unifies citizens and contributes to social cohesion in Canada" (Rodríguez-García 2012, p. 35). This positive outcome also speaks to interculturalism's wise concern, as articulated by Zapata-Barrero (2017), for the need to foster "a diversity-based common public culture" or to include diversity as a "common value" within the civic national narrative.[15] For these reasons, I would argue that if *actual*—not purely theorized—Canadian diversity management policies and outcomes are seen as meeting key objectives set by the European interculturalist agenda, then the core problem behind poor social cohesion outcomes in Europe has very little to do with multiculturalism's conceptualization of group identities or its protection of cultural rights—i.e., the rights of cultural minority or visible minority groups.[16] I fail to see the incompatibility between pursuing the contacts-based

approach proposed by interculturalism—which focuses on bringing different people and communities together and fostering dialogue, respect, common bonds, and solidarity—and simultaneously acknowledging that different ethnoracial groups or communities exist in a given society and may need their rights to be protected by the state or municipality. People can simultaneously belong to multiple communities: a national community (or national communities); a residential or municipal community—whose formation can be positively encouraged and consolidated precisely by interculturalist practices designed to bring different people together in shared spaces (Zapata-Barrero 2019); and ethnic or cultural communities, in which shared religion, race, or cultural practices may create common bonds and a shared sense of belonging. Pro-solidarity policies can acknowledge all these things at once. Either–or choices between individuals and groups are not necessary, and such choices may, in fact, be detrimental to outcomes of social justice and social cohesion.

Interculturalism's preference to focus on individual practices and rights tends to stem from two critiques that it makes of multiculturalism. The first is that multiculturalism's "groupist" policies are premised on an incorrect understanding of identity and ethnicity, or culture, as fixed and ascribed entities (e.g., Cantle 2013; Zapata-Barrero 2017). The second is that multiculturalism's focus on accommodating and protecting the rights of ethnic minority groups can give way to what Zapata-Barrero (2017, p. 5) has termed "a *boundless multiculturalism*", in which illiberal cultural practices that go against human rights may be permitted by the state.

With respect to the first argument, just about all anthropologists and sociologists of contemporary times would—and have—equally argued that cultures cannot be essentialized: that they not only are heterogeneous, but also dynamic and flexible (see also Modood's (2017) discussion of this topic). The notion of identities, both personal and collective, being fluid and having multiple dimensions and affiliations is not a new idea, and it does not make a compelling argument for why states should not offer support and specific anti-discrimination protections to ethnic and racial minority groups. Group identification—self-chosen!—still exists, and sometimes the protection of rights at a group level is needed, especially if a significant or large number of individuals within a given ethnocultural or racial group (however individually diverse these people may be) are making a similar claim. Such group recognition by the state is not some kind of imposition on, or misunderstanding of, individual identities. Indeed, there may be many varied positions, even opposing ones, among individuals who share similar racial or ethnic heritage—and also within activist groups representing certain minorities. However, the reality is that some individuals may not have their individual rights protected if legitimate group claims based on race, religion, or ethnicity are not given policy consideration by the state.

In general, how issues of diversity are approached should not be constructed as a debate between individual-based rights versus group-/minority-based ones, in which upholders of multiculturalism are allegedly arguing that the former should be given diminished consideration in favor of the latter. Instead, I, supported by other scholars, would contend that in a truly liberal context, community rights are an extension of, or a condition for, individual freedoms and equality (Bauböck 2001; Kymlicka 1995; Modood 2007; Parekh 2006; Rodríguez-García 2010; Taylor 1994; Vasta 2007). It is not always so easy to separate individual rights from group rights, as "the reality is that the collective is already present in individuals, who, inevitably, are socialized, politicized, and culturalized beings" (Rodríguez-García 2010, p. 259; see also Grillo 2018, p. 97). The following question, then, might be raised: What should be done if certain cultural practices or purported community rights go against the principles of the larger society? In that case, whose rights do we prioritize, and how do we ensure that societies do not become fragmented? This line of questioning takes us back to the aforementioned second critique of multiculturalism: that it may lead to a permissiveness of illiberal cultural practices that violate individual human rights, not to mention the general moral code of the liberal democratic society.

In addressing this crucially important concern, we need to recognize that matters of collective rights do not concern and affect minority groups only. As I have explained in a

previous publication on assimilationist and multiculturalist approaches to the management of diversity (Rodríguez-García 2010, p. 264), "in democratic societies, the incorporation of difference and particularistic social causes within the larger civil sphere only occurs, as Alexander (2006) argues, when [these views become] the moral choice of the largest number of people in that society. While this reality can, and historically often has, led to the discrimination of minority and/or marginalized groups (e.g., the racial segregation and oppression of American Blacks prior to the civil rights movement), it also is the reason why societies can change and effect what Alexander calls 'civil repair'; that is, these differences become recognized 'as legitimate by constructing them as variations on the theme of a common humanity', thus leading forms of diversity to be welcomed into the mainstream and leading the mainstream to be characterized by increasing diversity (see Alexander 2006, pp. 259, 452)". By the same token, cultural practices that are viewed as being in violation of the larger society's moral and human rights code will not be legally permitted; these forms of "diversity" will not be given recognition or accommodation at any official or authorized level within the society, and they may be subject to serious legal consequences. An illiberal cultural practice, therefore, would *not* be construed as a "cultural right", and if there were any disputes between the state and certain individuals or ethnocultural groups over such matters, interculturalism's own dialogue-favoring approach is the best tool for promoting better integration outcomes and for preventing social fragmentation. Hearing people out around sensitive cultural practices promotes values of social inclusion, trust, and a general respect for difference, but the willingness to listen to different perspectives (and perhaps, in some cases, to try to understand the symbolic meaning of certain practices) does not mean that the state will make diversity accommodations that endanger or infringe upon individual human rights. It is for this reason that the harmful practice of female genital mutilation/cutting—which clearly goes against principles of gender equality and the protection of an individual's health and safety—is illegal in both Canada and Australia, both of which are countries that have a strong tradition of multiculturalism. The bottom line is that liberal democracies have protective mechanisms for restricting illiberal or unlawful cultural practices.

In my view, recognizing and supporting diversity at only the individual level or defending difference-based discriminations on a case-by-case basis (e.g., in the case of racism)—as interculturalism tends to propose—will not ultimately make societies more just or cohesive. Interculturalism's project of fostering common bonds and developing a common public culture among citizens and residents from diverse backgrounds through "contact promotion" and "knowledge exchange" policies (Zapata-Barrero 2019) articulates very important goals and strategies for diversity management. However, I would argue that a focus on positive contact and interaction in public spaces, while it may generate increased trust, respect, and neighborliness, is not in itself enough to shift entrenched power imbalances in society (see also Keval 2014). The diverse identities in societies need to be positivized, normalized, and reflected back at all members of the society; and meaningful interactions between people of diverse backgrounds need to take place in authentic, day-to-day contexts. One important way in which this type of deeper social change occurs is through visible minorities and historically marginalized ethnic groups equally holding positions of leadership, influence, and authority (including as teachers, doctors, nurses, police officers, journalists, politicians and appointed officials, etc.). Affirmative action initiatives—which, by definition, recognize racial, ethnic, and group identity—are still needed as part of diversity management policies to address structural racism and other systemic inequities, and consequently to ensure that diversity truly enters the shared community of a city or country.

Policy paradigms that are designed to reduce prejudice in societies are ultimately abstract theorizations if the people experiencing prejudice continue to feel it. Interculturalism's emphasis on commonality, coexistence, positive interaction, and negotiation/dialogue is not incompatible with the visibilization and support of ethnic and racial difference precisely because of this diversity model's policies of equal treatment. The defense of the

rights of groups who, for example, have suffered a long history of racial oppression is perfectly aligned with the interculturalist tenets of equality and anti-discrimination. Indeed, it is possible for diversity management policies to support both individual and group rights, to encourage meaningful common bonds among members of a society while still recognizing differences and addressing historical injustices. Not only are these ideas not contradictory, but by somehow making them compete, we are denying the truth of some people's or groups' lived experiences of social disadvantage—which in turn can create intergroup tensions, rather than achieving interculturalism's objective of improved understanding between diverse individuals and groups and increased social harmony. As pointed out by Young (1990), the notion of "universal citizenship" can homogenize aspects of diversity, limit dialogue and negotiation, favor privileged positions, and, therefore, lead to marginalization.

It is important to point out that interculturalism, at the level of discourse, is already equipped to deal with group protections and to rethink its position on race. In the *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue*, an early but intellectually influential document, the Council of Europe (2008, p. 27) states,

> Over and above the principle of non-discrimination, states are also encouraged to take positive-action measures to redress the inequalities, stemming from discrimination, experienced by members of disadvantaged groups. In the public sphere, state authorities must strictly respect the prohibition of discrimination ... Yet, formal equality is not always sufficient and promoting effective equality could, in some cases, necessitate adoption of specific measures that are coherent with the principle of non-discrimination. In certain circumstances, the absence of differential treatment to correct an inequality may, without reasonable and objective justification, amount to discrimination.

A similar argument is offered by Zapata-Barrero (2017, p. 8):

> Antidiscrimination promotion also includes tackling disadvantage, as it is hard to see how the ICP [intercultural policy paradigm] can continue over time if one or more sectors of society are so unequal that people are led to believe they have no real stake in that society.

In sum, whether interculturalism, as a pro-diversity and inclusion-oriented policy framework, is complementary to multiculturalism or is a new paradigm in itself, it needs to recognize the social reality of race and to ensure that anti-discrimination discussions and policies—happening at all levels of government—explicitly address this reality. Interculturalism's post-racial viewpoint may express what is *hoped for*, but policies and actions have to deal with what is socially real. In this respect—and returning our attention to the Spanish context—the interculturalism agenda would need to bolster the affirmative or positive action *measures* (i.e., beyond discourse) that public institutions take in order both to counter the traditional structural barriers that certain ethnoracial minorities face in society and to remedy the underrepresentation of these ethnoracial groups in social and political institutions. That is, there needs to be a reinforced awareness, positivization, and normalization of diversity through the empowering visibilization of minorities that have historically suffered more oppression in Spain, such as Afro-descendant, Muslim, and Romani people, the latter of whom are one of the most overlooked minority groups in diversity policy formulation. Efforts, therefore, need to be strengthened to combat discrimination in its different forms—racism (including "small-scale" or everyday racism), racialization, xenophobia, cultural racism, Islamophobia, etc.—and in all areas of social life (work, education, media, government, etc.). Some examples of active measures that could be taken in Spain might be the following: (a) encouraging the incorporation/recruitment of individuals from minority ethnoracial backgrounds into certain professions and other areas of the labor market (including public office) in which these groups have been underrepresented, also by providing opportunities (e.g., scholarships) in the Spanish education system; (b) modifying and diversifying school curricula to promote values of diversity

and social justice, such as incorporating more information on different cultures and their traditions; including an anthropology of religions course, instead of teaching Religion in the exclusive Catholicism-based form in which it currently exists; discussing the history of the Roma; and providing a greater critique of Spain's history of colonialism, slavery, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia; (c) encouraging multilingualism and the maintenance of first languages in the education system; and (d) implementing goals and targets to increase the amount of multicultural content provided by the media.[17] All these measures would require more training for practitioners working in Spanish public institutions, particularly for those working in the education system.[18]

5. Conclusions

In this article, I have shown the historical origins and continued omnipresence of racial constructs and processes of racialization in Spain, situating this discussion within the European context. The aforementioned *National Geographic* "Black and White" feature story on biracial twin sisters makes us question precisely what is meant by race; how appearance, especially skin color, influences how we classify both ourselves and others; and what preconceptions we project upon people. However, offering a critique of race as a concept or construct and wishing for a society without race-based inequities does not mean that we can just pretend that race has no meaning in our present-day society. As Michael Banton (2005, p. 475), the acclaimed sociologist who wrote extensively on racial and ethnic relations, cautioned, "Social scientists will have to pay more attention to the social significance attributed to differences in skin color than the recent preoccupation with racism has permitted" (see also Banton 2012; Solomos 2019).

Of course, diversity is not defined only in terms of race, an aspect of identity that intersects with other significant variables, such as gender, age, social class, sexual orientation, and religion. Moreover, the prevalence of anti-Muslim sentiment/Islamophobia in Spain (and in Europe in general) further complicates discussions around race and racism, as it is clear that other dimensions of diversity, such as visible non-Christian religion, can be racialized and can become markers for differential (i.e., marginalizing) social treatment, much in the same manner as skin color has been (Foner 2015; Grosfoguel 2004; Rodríguez-Reche and Rodríguez-García 2020). Nevertheless, the fact that we are living in an era of super-diversity, of greater fluidity of identity, and of increased awareness of the multiple aspects of difference and their intersections does not remove the construct of race from being a key part of the identity equation—perhaps even a factor of identity that may be more enduring and salient than the rest. The same logic could be applied to arguing for the continued relevance of social class (based on the persistent hierarchy between the rich and the poor) despite widespread belief in social mobility, or for the relevance of nation-states in the current era of transnationalism, as the reality is that states continue to exercise sovereignty and border control—determining who is permitted to enter a territory and on what terms, and which people are allowed to become members of a national community—as Europe has witnessed in recent years with the ongoing and much-discussed refugee/migrant crisis.

In this article, I have focused on the case of Spain, an archetypal former colonialist nation. While Spain (along with other countries in Europe) thinks of itself as a "post-racial" society that has overcome its colonialist past and in which all citizens are treated equally, the social disparities between different ethnoracial groups—discrepancies that have their roots in historical disadvantages and hierarchies—continue to exist in all areas of the social structure. This article has also shown that even when processes of ethnoracial mixing occur, racial constructs persist and affect people's social inclusion. Racism and racialization are so deeply entrenched in the social order that they often go overlooked, as could be seen in the seemingly "trivial" example of the Conguitos chocolate candy. Yet the contemporary liberal theories of global citizenship, with their distinct post-racial or colorblind approach and their well-intentioned avoidance of reproducing the language of race, serve to evade the social significance of race and the consequences of colonialism; as a result, these frameworks ultimately fail to challenge structures of inequality and they undermine the anti-racism

struggle. As Song (2018), Simon (2017, 2019), Beaman (2019), and Lentin (2020) have pointed out, racialization and racism are normalized and perpetuated precisely by ignoring the issue of race. Moreover, the use of euphemistic, rather than direct, language vis-à-vis race further serves to invisibilize systemic racial differences and lived racial realities, consequently keeping societies from tackling core inequities. As Mazzocco (2015, p. 6) also contends, colorblind racial ideology disallows conversations concerning the role of race in society "and, as such, becomes a powerful mechanism in the continuation of racial disparity" (see also Boulila 2019a, 2019b; Roig 2017).

In this regard, while anti-discrimination and the fostering of positive interaction among people from diverse backgrounds may be inherent principles of interculturalism, this colorblind policy approach, as currently practiced in European contexts, might be falling short in the fight against discrimination by avoiding still-needed discussions around race and by failing to acknowledge sufficiently that racism is a social problem that affects *groups*, not just individuals. Importantly, interculturalist discourse has rightly promoted diversity as "an advantage and a resource" (Zapata-Barrero 2017, p. 1); however, if discrimination against groups and widespread patterns of racism, including cultural racism, are not recognized and addressed at a policy level—with efforts made to positivize ethnoracial difference at a far-reaching level and to rectify the underrepresentation of certain minority groups in social and political institutions—then diversity assets can actually be lost. For example, children from certain ethnoracial minority groups may not become proficient in the language(s) of their immigrant parent(s)—that is, these descendants' linguistic cultural capital may be diminished—as families may feel discouraged from transmitting or maintaining languages that have a stigma attached to them and that cause their children to be negatively perceived as "foreigners" (see Rodríguez-García et al. 2018).

Precisely because of the reluctance of academia and political institutions to adopt a race-conscious approach in recognizing and confronting social inequalities in Spain, new or revitalized forms of activism, in which racialized and "visible" identity is embraced (e.g., Afrofeminism), are (re)emerging as empowering ways of self-categorizing, as means of reappropriating colonialist constructions (Grosfoguel 2007) of the "other", and as anti-racism strategies. In Spain, there is now a growing number of Afro-descendant social activists, mostly women, such as Lucía Mbombio and Desirée Bela-Lobedde, who are leading the Afrofeminist movement. Other activists, like Miriam Hatibi and Silvia Agüero, are doing the same around countering Islamophobia and anti-gypsyism, respectively. There is also growing activity at the level of civic/community organizations, such as AfroFemKoop, as well as through social media networks like Twitter, with the establishment of groups such as @Afrofeminas, @blakbarcelona3, @Revista_Negrxs, and @catarsiabcn, the last of which is an anti-racism collective run by activists of Asian descent that focuses on racism directed towards people of Asian ancestry.

Despite the clear persistence of racism and racial "othering" in Spanish society, there is a lack of commitment to discussing race, racism, and racialization issues in the country, as if the problem would just go away by not talking about it, as Lentin (2008, 2020) has similarly stated about the European context in general. Ultimately, the endorsement of colorblind or post-racial perspectives in a society where racial stratification persists, as is the case with Spain, helps to maintain the symbolic, institutional, and interpersonal dimensions of racism. For this reason, in my opinion, if interculturalism wants to succeed as the preferred model for managing diversity and improving social cohesion in the present-day world, it needs to deal explicitly with the social reality of race and to address the question of White (and also White Christian) privilege.

This article has attempted to show that the continued existence of the *social reality* of race is at odds with the colorblind discourse that currently informs diversity and anti-discrimination policies in most European countries. In a global context of increasing xenophobia and growing support for right-wing populism, it is essential to encourage more productive discussions about race in Europe and elsewhere; and scholars need to combine

efforts with policymakers and third-sector practitioners to improve intergroup relations and to strengthen social cohesion.

Notes

[1]   Regarding this discrepancy, see the newspaper articles by Laborde (2020) and Hernandez (2020).

[2]   White people can indeed be racialized and can face stereotypical assumptions and racial pigeonholing based on their skin color; however, this type of racialization does not equate to racism because of the inherent systemic imbalance of power between those with a lighter skin color and people of color. Racism exists only when there is a power structure weighted in favor of a particular race. White people have historically held the power when it comes to racial divides, while people of color have been the ones who have encountered systemic and structural racism and oppression.

[3]   See, for example, https://www.thebipocproject.org/ (accessed on 12 December 2021).

[4]   See, for example, Aspinall and Song (2013) and Song (2018) for the case of the United Kingdom, and Simon (2019), Brinbaum et al. (2018), Beaman (2019), and Beaman and Petts (2020) for the case of France; in Beaman and Petts (2020), a comparison is made between France and the United States, showing that colorblind racial ideology, while conceptualized differently in the two countries, ultimately functions similarly in both places. For the EU as a whole, see, for example, the report by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2018, pp. 37–38) on the experiences of Black people living in the EU; twenty-seven percent of the survey respondents stated that skin color was the main factor behind the discrimination they had experienced in the areas of work, education, housing, using public services, etc. See also Alba and Foner (2015) for a comparison between North America and Europe, Lentin (2008, 2020) for a theoretical/political discussion of racism in Europe, and Farkas (2017) for a critical report on the reluctance of EU law and courts (both domestic and European) to define and address racial discrimination directly.

[5]   "Afro-descendant" is the term that is commonly used in Spain (including by activist groups and civil society organizations) to refer to people of African descent, so I have used it in this article when specifically discussing the Spanish context.

[6]   For an extensive discussion of the historical construction of Spanish racism and its relationship to Catholicism and imperialism, see Feros (2017) and Sánchez León (2020).

[7]   The song "*Angelitos negros*" is based on the 1940s poem "*Píntame angelitos negros*" ["Paint Me Little Black Angels"], written by the Venezuelan poet and politician Andrés Eloy Blanco.

[8]   See https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=vyup1hs-vDA&feature=emb_logo (accessed on 12 December 2021).

[9]   See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7xx011coJk (accessed on 12 December 2021).

[10] For this study, 152 in-depth interviews were conducted with Spanish-born youth from very diverse ancestry, representing 51 different nationalities. To know more about the results of this study and the methodology used, see Rodríguez-García et al. (2018, 2021). It should be noted that follow-up interviews, conducted in 2020, have been done with some of the respondents; this article draws on those interviews as well. See also Rodríguez-García et al. (2016) on the prevalence of ethnoracial constructs in attitudes towards intermarriage in Spain.

[11] This particular comment was made in a follow-up interview with the same respondent when she was several years older. All the rest of the excerpted text was stated in the initial interview with the respondent, when she was 22.

12   In all cases, the name of the country refers to the place of birth, not to nationality.

13   Bonilla-Silva (2013) defines this type of colorblind ideology as "colorblind racism" and identifies it as the dominant racial ideology circulating in contemporary America; he argues that while racial inequality is no longer perpetuated by overtly racist practices and arguments, in the case of colorblind racism, Whites, under the guise of being colorblind, refuse to acknowledge the continued existence of racism and reject any consideration of how their own racial identity provides them with privileges vis-à-vis people of color.

14   For a helpful analytical summary of how both interculturalism and multiculturalism think about individual identity, collectivities, and collective rights, see Grillo (2018, pp. 95–100).

15   None of this is to say that Canadian multiculturalism has not had its shortcomings or is above criticism. See, for example, Gomá's (2020) feminist anti-racist critique of the narrative underlying multiculturalism policies and practice in Canada.

16   Modood, who has written extensively on interculturalism's tendencies to misrepresent multiculturalist concepts and practice (Modood 2017), has also discussed multiculturalism's overall success as a pro-diversity policy framework in Australia (Mansouri and Modood 2021), both in its original forms and more recently complemented by positive contributions from interculturalism. See also Keval (2014, p. 132), who has stated, "It is the intersectionality and multiplicity of inequalities which have driven wedges between groups of identified ethnic and cultural unities, not the presence of multiculturalism as policy or practice (Rattansi 2011)".

17   Public broadcasting is more regulated in some European countries and may involve the implementation of affirmative action measures as well as quotas (in an amplifying, rather than a restrictive, manner) on multicultural content (European Commission (Directorate-General for Justice, Freedom and Security) 2010). For instance, "France Télévisions launched a Positive Action Plan for Integration in 2004. In cooperation with Radio France International, it is responsible for the project PlurielMedia, which carries out research on diversity inside France Télévisions, diversity training for managers, intercultural training for journalists, and training of young media professionals from ethnic minority groups working in French television" (European Commission (Directorate-General for Justice, Freedom and Security) 2010, p. 40). According to the Migrant Integration Policy Index, in recent years Poland has also implemented positive action measures, such as the inclusion of minority groups' representatives in public radio stations; Poland additionally has a special educational track to train Roma doctors and nurses (Niessen et al. 2007).

18   See also the excellent policy recommendations, including positive action measures, that have been provided in the *Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on Its Mission to Spain* (United Nations General Assembly 2018). One important idea emphasized by this report is the need for the Spanish government to collect data disaggregated by ethnicity or race, which the authors state "is vital in understanding the severity and scope of racial discrimination against people of African descent and in developing targeted and holistic responses"; the absence of such data, which is in keeping with Spain's race-neutral policy approach, actually "leads to the invisibility of the community of persons of African descent and prevents racism, racial discrimination and social exclusion from being effectively addressed" (United Nations General Assembly 2018, p. 12).

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