

# Discourses on racism in families with school-aged children

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## ABSTRACT

Unfortunately, racism is a kind of violence present in current societies that embodies an attitude opposed to the culture of peace. In this scenario, the family has a relevant role to contribute to the development of values related to human rights. With the aim of identifying patterns and challenges to progress from a polarized debate to an empathetic and nonviolent dialogue, the discourse between parents and children between 3 and 16 years of age is reviewed. For this purpose, a questionnaire was designed and 1,701 families in Catalonia (Autonomous Community of Spain) answered it. The results show that racism represents 9.7% of the controversial topics of conversation at home; the principal values and attitudes that guide the family discourse are: respect (23.1%), fighting injustice (18.7%), and equality (12.4%); families who claim to have suffered racism reach 6%; women and individuals with a low level of education are those who most believe that the economy would improve if immigrants went back to their countries; and those who sent their children to a charter school prefer them to relate with people of the same culture. Considering this evidence, guidelines are formulated to encourage reflection and anti-xenophobic dialogue at home.

## Introduction

The construction of a culture of peace from the individual and the community to the political sphere is recognized as a primordial element in the establishment of just and egalitarian human relationships (Harris 2013). For this reason, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN 2015) includes this need in its objective number 16 devoted to ‘Peace, Justice and Caring Institutions’. Thus, designing a peaceful environment that articulates coexistence, promotes dialogue, and rebuilds the social fabric starting from the family – as a central element of civil society –, is one of the conditions for progressing towards a peaceful society. Children and young people forge, in this primary socializing nucleus, attitudes, values, norms, communicative styles, and conflict management skills that equip them to understand and act in the world. However, as Scott, Shutts, and Devine (2020) point out, there is still a lack of empirical studies that shed light on this issue and can guide families on how to prevent racial prejudice.

Hence, we conducted an analysis of the family discourse on racism, to identify its imaginary patterns, challenges, shortcomings, and needs to place them in the continuum that advances from a polarized debate to an empathetic and non-segregating dialogue.

## Family and Society

Following mainly the ecological model, we understand the family as a relational system organized and integrated by interdependent units linked together by rules of behavior and dynamic functions in constant interaction and in exchange with the outside world (Bronfenbrenner and Evans 2000).

From a strictly educational perspective, the family is identified with the private space legitimized to transmit a model of life in the framework of a current society characterized, among other elements, by the coexistence of diverse models of life (Hakim 2018). Most studies maintain that the family ‘despite all the changes undergone, it continues to be the most influential agent in socialization and constitutes the cornerstone on which the multiple experiences that form the basis of the future behavior of minors are based’ (Torrente and Rodríguez 2004, 100). Similarly, the Council of Europe in the document entitled Strategy for the rights of the child 2016–2021 argues that ‘the family, whatever its form, is the fundamental unit of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of children. Moreover, children enormously value their relationships with their parents and siblings’ (Council of Europe 2016, 8). It is understood, then, that models change but the family, as an axiological referent, persists (Máiquez et al. 2000; Trivette, Dunts, and Hamby, 2010). Therefore, in the family context children construct attitudes, values, and norms to form their own identity and orient themselves in life (Capaneo and Ubach 2013; Rodríguez, López, and Echeverri 2016). Along the same lines, in the study on predictors of moral internalization by Ortiz et al. (2008), interaction and direct moral intervention are the most influential factors since the testimony and reflections received from other members of the family nucleus can later become part of the internal dialogue with one’s own conscience. However, even though most studies consider that the values acquired at home are strongly ingrained, this does not result in the predetermination of the set of values that will accompany the person throughout life, because children and adolescents can assume their own creative and differentiated attitudes (Cummings et al. 2014; Fabelo 2000). Also, it is true that other agents, such as teachers, influence the progress of the culture of peace at the individual and social level (Brantmeier and Webb 2020; Bradley-Levine and Zainulabdin 2000).

Families live immersed in a given society from which they receive influences. Apparently, in today’s divided societies populist values such as distrust of institutions and neighbors, rejection of migrants, and a strong preference for law and order profusely circulate (Ginsburgh, Perleman, and Pestieau 2021). These values are contrary to the culture of peace which, as defined by UNESCO (1998), consists of a range of principles, attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyles among which respect for life, human rights, fundamental freedoms, equality between men and women, democratic participation, and cultural diversity stand out. In this scenario, the family plays a decisive role in contributing to the development of values related to human rights and opposed to any form of violence that segregates. But it is undeniable that in certain cases, due to the vulnerability of the families, the school acquires a greater role (Brunker and Lombardo 2021).

Among the dimensions that challenge both the family and the culture of peace, one of the most relevant is communication (Feller and Ryan 2012; Ury 2000). Definitely, insufficient dialogue is usually a sign of damaged relationships and unresolved problems. In this sense, peace studies can make significant contributions in areas such as active listening, consensus building, non-violent communication, appreciative methodologies, conflict co-resolution, and forgiveness and reconciliation, among others (Boqué et al. 2014a). These strategies also contribute to avoiding prejudice and discrimination. Thus, if we focus on specific competencies for the construction of peace in the family sphere, the following stand out: the internalization of peace, coherence in one’s own behavior, nonviolent communication, the development of a critical spirit in the face of unfair situations, the positive management of conflicts, social commitment, and solidarity (Burguet 2012; Fountain 1999). As Moix (2020) affirms, peacebuilding begins at home.

Undoubtedly, interpersonal relationships are the context par excellence in which people place the need to develop skills for peace. It is about an imperfect peace (Muñoz et al. 2001) that urges the cultivation of peace daily, combating the daily violence of our environment. From this point of view, peace is a way of life that guarantees the basic rights of people, from a holistic conception (Boulding 1992; Bajaj and Hantzopoulos 2016).

Among the different existing forms of violence, we focus on the concept and characteristics of violence associated to cultural origins. Our goal is to analyze the social construction of racism and xenophobia and the elements that exemplify the discourse in families with school-aged sons and daughters. According to Halabi (2004), among others, family conversations help in the construction of social values. Also, agreeing with Nomen (2018) and the Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (2020), we believe that intergenerational conversations at home should include issues that truly concern the family members, without any taboos and taking advantage of children's natural curiosity. As it has already been said, families are part of society and in society there are situations of racism and xenophobia that enter every home via media, connected to real situations, or through conversations.

We consider that it is important to vindicate the link between the culture of peace and the fight against xenophobia and racism so that everyone who is against inequalities becomes aware that he or she is acting as an agent of peace (Boqué et al. 2014a).

## **Racism and Xenophobia**

Xenophobia refers to the general rejection caused by one of the common characteristics of groups stigmatized for their external origin or for being different (Malgesini and Gimenez 1997), while racism bases its contempt for the 'other' on the concept of race. The idea of race began to be popularized in the 16th century and, although the taxonomic value of race was eliminated at the International Botanical Congress of 1990, it is still used in the common language applied to animals, people, and State policies (Foucault 1992, 1997). In any case, xenophobic or racist feelings do not occur in reference to any foreign person or collective but are often linked to their socioeconomic situation. For this reason, reports such as those of SOS Racism (2020) point out that xenophobia and racism are mixed with 'aporophobia', which means rejection of the poor, the lack of means and the helpless (Cortina 2017). Also, it should be noted that sometimes the word ethnicity is used instead of race. According to Smith (1971), 1993, Smith (2000), ethnicities refer to human populations that share beliefs, myths, histories and, in short, cultural elements that are associated with a specific territory.

Thus, extensively, the term 'racism' refers to hatred or undervaluation based on race, color, language, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin (ECRI 2016). Moreover, studies consider that racism is above all a social relation of domination that runs through and structures modern societies (Aparicio and Tornos 2012; Gallissot 1985; Goldberg 1993; Guillaumin 1992; Quijano 2014; Rangel 2020; Wieviorka 1992, 1993). According to Coates (2014; Coates 2017), structural racism is a system or a series of systems in which institutional practices, laws, policies, sociocultural standards, and sociopolitical decisions establish and reinforce the norms that perpetuate the inequalities of racial groups. Subsequently, racism permeates the entire society and, as Kendi (2019) suggests, both anti-racist individual actions and systemic changes are necessary to reverse this kind of inequality. Focusing on the types of racism, there are many existing

classifications, for example, for Todorov (1991), racism has two aspects: 1) racism itself – identified with a behavior grounded on discredit, including hatred of people with physical characteristics significantly different from one's own – and which is universal and dates back to very ancient times; and 2) racialism – understood as a doctrine on races – and which is related to the scientism of the eighteenth century. In turn, Cachón (2003) distinguishes three dimensions of racism: 1) racism as prejudice (stereotypes, opinions, or beliefs); 2) racism as practice (discrimination, segregation, and violence); and 3) racism as ideology (theories, doctrines, and worldviews). Finally, Foucault (1992) and Goldberg (1993) identify four types of racism based on how people may feel discriminated against or be victims of inequalities: 1) aversive racism, claiming equal rights and freedom, advocates that each group lives its own culture openly, which produces an unbridgeable distance and lack of empathy, and leads to a very made-up type of racism that goes unnoticed; 2) symbolic racism, which apparently defends the right to be equal, but with nuances; 3) ethnocentric racism, build upon the cultural superiority of one's own group and believing, therefore, that the others pose a cultural threat, which is why submission to the predominant group is demanded. Thus, the rejection of customs, beliefs, behaviors, religions, or languages of different ethnic groups are recurrent attitudes in this type of racism; and 4) biological racism, which fathoms that one race is biologically superior to the others and considers that the other races threaten to degenerate the main one.

Lately, the concept of neo-racism, new racism, postmodern racism, culturalist or differentialist racism, linked to migratory movements, has been taking shape (Ballestín 2017). Thus, the biological referent is replaced by a sociological referent such as culture, so that people are linked to their culture of origin, which is considered incompatible with other cultures, making it impossible for them to coexist in the same territory (Ayala et al. 2016). Specifically, during the last few years, social psychology has certified the birth of a new racism that is no longer explicitly expressed, but manifests itself in a veiled and covert manner, in this way it has managed to adapt to social control, hiding under new forms of linguistic expression, beliefs and attitudes, within the framework of what is considered politically correct (Pascale 2010).

Recently, with the aim of alleviating this situation, the European Commission (2020) has launched the EU Action Plan to combat racism 2020–2025. This strategy seeks to build a European Union that is truly anti-racist, and that moves from condemnation to action. It is precisely in relation to this objective that our research is developed.

## **Research Objectives and Methodological Design**

Based on the above-mentioned references, the general objective of this study consists of examining the discourse of families, as relevant socio-educational agents, on racism that directly or indirectly affects their children. The operational objectives were: To analyze the alignment of families regarding some topics related to racism and xenophobia according to sociodemographic variables; to detect what aspects of racism and xenophobia are addressed by families with their sons and daughters; to identify the values that guide the discourse of families with their sons and daughters when they talk about racism and xenophobia.

From an interpretative methodological design, we approach the reality under study through the perceptions of the subjects immersed in this same reality. It is a mixed design that combines quantifiable and qualitative data. Quantitative data is primarily aimed at describing the family

scenario and contextualizing the discourse, while the analysis of the discourse itself (qualitative data) provides an insight into what violence is considered and how the issue of racism is discussed.

## Participants

The sample is made up of 1,701 people (221 from the pilot study and 1,480 from the final study) being fathers, mothers, or guardians of children and adolescents aged between 3 and 16 who attend schools in Catalonia (Autonomous Community of Spain).

The main characteristics of the sample are displayed in Table 1.

To better know the profile of the participants, we also asked whether the family had suffered any type of violence that could influence their answers. In this regard, 59% of the families, a not-insignificant percentage, indicated that violence, in general, continues to be a scourge of society. Specifically, bullying is the most reported type of violence (26.70%) they have experienced, followed by sexism or gender discrimination (22%), racism (6%), and violence based on disability (4%).

## Instrument

An instrument based on a broad review of the literature on the subject was designed, validated by experts, and piloted to answer the questions posed in this research. The instrument has three main sections and a final open section for observations: The first part is composed of 15 multiple response items to collect the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents. The second part aims at discovering the families' perception of racism with three items formulated on Likert scales, being 1 totally disagree and 4 totally agree. The third part addresses the family discourse through a hypothetical case of racism related to school and is composed of four dichotomous items, to determine the positioning of the families, and two final open-ended items, where fathers and mothers can freely explain their views.

## Procedure

To send the questionnaires to the parents of students between 3 and 16 years of age, all the associations of families of schools in Catalonia were contacted.

**Table 1.** Variables that define the main characteristics of the participants in the study.

Concerning the analysis, data obtained in the quantitative section were treated with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0, performing a descriptive-inferential analysis, as well as a correlational analysis of the information obtained through the questionnaire. In this way, a descriptive study was carried out using Kruskal-Wallis and Chi-square tests to detect trends, regularities, and patterns concerning the variables taken into consideration.

Regarding the qualitative data, a thematic analysis was carried out following the steps indicated by Braun and Clarke (2006): (a) become familiar with the data by reading and rereading, (b) generate the initial codes systematically, (c) search for the themes by compiling the codes, (d) review the themes generated at two levels, (e) define and name the topics, and (f) prepare the final report.

To guarantee credibility and reliability, the peer debriefing technique was used as recommended by Brantlinger et al. (2005), Lincoln and Guba (1985), Morales-Sánchez, Pérez-

Lopez and Anguera (2014) or Rivadeneira (2015) in qualitative studies. Therefore, all the steps described were carried out independently by the first and third authors. Subsequently, analytical discussion meetings were held to construct the definitive themes, recursively reviewing the transcript of the responses to the items. This process was conducted to explore those aspects that would otherwise remain implicit in the researcher's mind. Finally, to increase the reliability of the data analysis the second author, who had not previously been part of the data analysis, calculated the percentage of agreement. She was provided with the issues arising from the analysis with their corresponding definitions. Thus, she impartially analyzed 30% of the data. In total, the percentage of agreement with the two open items was optimal. Specifically, for the item "Imagine that your sons and daughters ask you why you think that way, what arguments would you give them?" an agreement degree of 81.5% was obtained, and of 90% for the item "Have you ever had to talk about controversial or controversial issues with her sons and daughters? Could you give some examples? The formula used to calculate the percentage of agreement was to divide the number of agreements by the number of agreements plus disagreements multiplied by 100 (Kennedy 2005).

This research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards laid down in the 2013 Fortaleza version of the Declaration of Helsinki (WMA 2013). Moreover, before recruiting participants for the study, the Ethical Committee of the Ramon Llull University reviewed and approved our project. We agreed to respect the obligations derived from the Organic Law 3/2018 on Personal Data Protection and Digital Rights, the General Regulation on Data Protection (UE) 2016/679, and the current complementary legislation. Hence, both in terms of design and development and evaluation, the study contemplates the ethical dimension as a constitutive element that contributes to the transparency of the research. The fundamental principles preserved were the principle of beneficence, the principle of respect for human dignity, and the principle of justice. The study, which implies informed consent by all participants, also complies with the right to privacy and maintains confidentiality in data processing.

## **Results and Discussion**

The results are shown through descriptive data (means and deviations) of each item and correlational analyzes are performed, indicating whether there are significant differences based on some sample data. Additionally, the differences found are further explored by contrasting them with sociodemographic variables. Thus, the three proposed operational objectives are met.

Before addressing the results, it is worth noting that, even though the questionnaire was aimed at the family, it was mostly women who responded, as usually happens in these types of studies where data is collected via the school (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte 2014). This bias is explained by the fact that everything to do with the education of children still falls on women. Then, we have come up against a confirmatory result, in the sense that educational co-responsibility is still a pending subject in the home.

Also, in this study, we are dealing with families in the upper middle socio- cultural and economic class. This fact is interesting because it provides a compact picture of Catalan families who enjoy a certain level of well-being and how they deal with racism. In this sense, Arenas (2000) emphasizes that the possibility of responding to the demands of the school is always more difficult for urban and working families, as corroborated by studies carried out both nationally and internationally (Panero 2020).

## Results of the Alignment of Families Concerning Racism and Xenophobia in Function of Sociodemographic Variables

With racism, the means and deviations of the responses obtained (Table 2) show low scores on items 1 and 3 and a susceptible higher score on item 2, which refers to the adaptation process of people from other countries or cultures. These results can be related to Foucault's (1992) and Goldberg's (1993) conceptualization of different types of racism, including ethnocentric racism.

In general, the affirmative responses reflect an assimilationist model of society that is heading towards the hegemonic consolidation of the dominant culture and/or the host country, based on the absorption of the different ethnic groups in a society that claims to be homogeneous. From this paradigm, ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity are conceived as a problem that threatens the integrity and social cohesion (Cummins 1989). This situation is difficult to reverse because in most cities there are quarters in which members of a minority group live especially because of social, legal, or economic pressure. Since the schools are in a specific territory, and generally receive the nearby population, this unequal distribution is transferred to the school, resulting in little interaction among the different cultures (Alba 2015; Alguacil, Boqué, and Ribalta 2019; Migration Policy Group 2006).

For this reason, a school founded on pluralism and participation in social activities, as a generator of social capital, and a promoter of values based on human rights, as pointed out by Alesina and La Ferrara (2000), constitutes a key factor of cohesion in heterogeneous communities, so that each individual, each family, and each group is an essential social agent in the construction and

**Table 2.** Mean and Standard Deviation of the items related to 'Violence based on ethnicity.'

maintenance of a just, inclusive and peaceful society that connects one another to overcome common challenges.

Next, the most significant results of the sociodemographic variables explored in relation to racist and xenophobic discourses in the family context are presented.

### ***Gender of the Respondent***

As shown in Table 3, there are only statistically significant differences according to the groups of people determined by the variable 'gender' in item 3: 'If immigrants left this country, probably the economy would improve.'

Table 4 presents the mean score and deviation for each group considering the gender variable. Accordingly, women are the ones who most believe that the country's economy would improve if immigrants left. However, it should be noted that the score is low. If we consider that primary socialization takes place in the family and that till today mothers are the ones who are mostly in charge of caring for their children, we believe that this is a very relevant piece of information since interaction is one of the most decisive factors in the transmission and construction of values and beliefs, as noted by Halabi (2004) and Surià (2011).

In relation to the age of the participants there are no significant differences.

### ***Level of Studies of the Person Responding to the Questionnaire***

Regarding the participants' level of education (Table 5), there are statistically significant differences for two items: 'It bothers me that people from other

**Table 3.** Contrast study according to the variable 'gender.'

**Table 4.** Mean and Standard Deviation of the items in relation to ethnicity as a function of the variable 'gender.'

**Table 5.** Contrast study according to the variable 'level of studies.'

countries or cultures do not adapt to our customs' (item 2); 'If immigrants left this country, probably the economy would improve' (item 3).

As shown in Table 6, regarding the level of studies, the participants with secondary education are the most concerned by the fact that people from other cultures do not adapt to the customs of the host country. On the other hand, participants with no education are the ones who most believe that if immigrants left the country the economy would improve. As we have pointed out in the previous analysis, this choice corresponds to an assimilationist paradigm, which – since the level of studies matters – could be counteracted by introducing an intercultural approach to the school curricula. Intercultural education aims to develop a civic culture based on democratic values and human rights, while promoting interaction between the different communities that live in the same country. Such interaction occurs under the premise that people have the right to maintain their affiliation with an ethnic group and the right to cultural and religious differences, which can be freely displayed in public. Therefore, the entire society must adhere to the same constitution of fundamental rights and duties, without exception (Veugelers and de Groot 2019). It should be noted that the school, as discussed above, can foster a positive attitude towards cultural diversity (Lombardo, 2021).

**Table 6.** Mean and Standard Deviation of the items in relation to ethnicity as a function of the variable 'level of studies.'

**Table 7.** Mean and Standard Deviation of the items in relation to ethnicity as a function of the variable 'family composition.'

Regarding family composition (Table 7), there are statistically significant differences only in item 3: 'If immigrants left this country, probably the economy would improve', supported by participants with 'other family compositions', in agreement with Van Eeden and Shih (2022). However, the score is low.

#### ***Type of School Attended by the Respondent's Children***

Regarding the type of school attended by the participants' children (Table 8), there are statistically significant differences in two items: 'I prefer my children to interact with people of the same culture or religion' (item 1); 'It bothers me that people from other countries or cultures do not adapt to our customs' (item 2).

Families who take their children to a charter school are those who, according to the data (Table 9), state that they prefer their children to interact with classmates of the same culture. This may be due to the differences in educational ideology between charter schools and public schools, since the latter, in general, present school models aligned with an intercultural paradigm and peace



education, and the origin of the students is very heterogeneous, too (Alguacil, Boqué, and Ribalta 2019; Castellano 2017; Castro 2019; López et al. 2019).

Table 9 reveals that the participants who send their children to a charter school are the ones who most prefer their children to interact with people of the same culture or religion, and they also are those who are most bothered by the fact that people from other origins or cultures do not adapt to the customs of the country. In this sense, in addition to promoting intercultural and anti-racist education in all types of schools, it is necessary to avoid school segregation, because it prevents encounter and plural dialogue (Lupton 2005). School segregation consists of the concentration of a homogeneous social group in one single school, in which this group usually belongs to a predetermined class that does

**Table 8.** Contrast study according to the variable ‘type of school.’.

**Table 9.** Mean and Standard Deviation of the items in relation to ethnicity as a function of the variable ‘type of school.’.

not represent the sociocultural variety of the population (Bonal and Bellei 2018). Thus, data indicate that families’ choice of school encompasses reasons that go beyond academic performance and seek to preserve their cultural background. These results agree with those studies that corroborate that, nowadays, the type of school plays a role in social, economic and racial segregation (Marcotte and Delane 2019; Waitoller and Lubiensky 2019; Wilson and Bridge 2019).

Regarding the age of the participants’ sons and daughters, there are no significant differences.

All these data help to show that, although racism and xenophobia are not an explicit position in the participants of this study, it is an issue that is part of the current social situation in our national context and is framed within structural racism (Kendi 2019).

Altogether, these data contribute to showing that, although racism and xenophobia are not explicitly identified by the participants of this study as their own, they are acknowledged as part of the current social situation in our context (Segurola 2020). In this sense, Ayala et al. (2016) consider that when incompatibility is perceived between cultures that are present in the same territory, a gap opens up that makes coexistence enormously difficult. Likewise, the Report of European Comision (2020) aimed ating this situation recognizes that the fight against racism and hatred is weak and it is difficult to move forward, but it is very easy to take steps back.

#### ***Results of the Aspects of Racism and Xenophobia Addressed by Families with their Sons and Daughters***

In relation to the second objective of the research, to identify what aspects of racism and xenophobia are addressed by families with their sons and daughters, the data revealed (Table 10) that racism stands out as the third most present

**Table 10.** Controversial topics of conversation that are discussed in the family.

controversial issue, with a 9.7%, that is, 220 occurrences, in the conversations that fathers and mothers have with their sons and daughters. These results provide an opportunity to think about the issue of racism and modulate positions, as communication about controversial issues helps to establish critical thinking (Feller and Ryan 2012).

From the detailed study of the families' discourse on racism (Table 11), firstly, it is observed that half of families (52.3%) speak with their sons and daughters about racism in general terms while others give examples of racist behavior and show their disagreement, although we have also found some, very few, who express positions that can be considered discriminatory, coinciding to the so-called

**Table 11.** Subcategories related to racism and xenophobia that emerge in family conversations.

neoracism (Pascale 2010) and with research such as that of Rubio (2020). Secondly, 27.3% of families reckon that they talk about this topic referring to migratory movements, fitting with the new concept of racism or culturalist racism (Rodríguez, López, and Echeverri 2016; Ballestín and López 2017), as shown for example by the quotes: 'My 5-year-old daughter said that her classmates with parents native to North Africa smelled bad. We had to work on this idea and find out where it came from', or 'Immigration is often associated with discrimination and we have to remember that they are families like us, but in a different situation'. In this section, we found three types of contributions: those that focus on the description of situations close to them (school, neighborhood, or personal realities); those that generically defend the equality of people and their right to mobility; and those that question immigration. Thirdly, with 7.3% and 5% respectively, stand out the discourses that refer to ethnic diversity and cultural and religious diversity (Solis, 2020).

These data would be in line with the literature and research that explains that, in many cases, the sense of belonging to a group – a very important element in the social constitution of people at all ages – supposes an element of identity opposed to the 'other.' (Berger and Luckmann 1972; Hernandez-Castilla 2020; Pajares 2003; Rojas et al. 2007; Pascale 2010; Gachet 2020). And in this framework, among the constructs that explain the 'other', race and ethnocentrism often occupy a preeminent place in considering one's own cultural values as superior. From there, people are appreciated according to their proximity or remoteness with respect to one's own values, so that difference is seen as a threat bringing xenophobia into play. The construction of stereotypes contributes to depersonalizing and ignoring other groups that, far from being valued for their capacity to enrich the society, are considered dangerous for the survival of their own identity. For this reason, the fight against stereotypes and racial and xenophobic prejudices has been present in our society for years and continues to persist today (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2020; CIS 2017; Gachet 2020; Migration Policy Group 2006; SOS Racism 2020; Varennes 2019).

Finally, even less frequently, the discourses of families are focused on the relationship between racism and social class (3.2%), when in fact different researches link social class and racism (Komlos 2022), the Black Lives Matter movement in the US (3.2%) and racist language (3.2%). In this regard, the research by Sáez (2022), which analyzes how racism is manifested in the press, is very interesting. These data illustrate that ethnicity is an issue that worries families, so that racism and xenophobia are sufficiently burning issues that are triggered at the demand of the parents themselves or in response to questions or actions of their children (Casás 2018).

These results highlight that some situations occurred throughout 2020, such as the case of the dissemination of George Floyd's video – that caused a wave of protests first in the U.S. and then throughout the world –, and the "Black Lives Matter" movement – that has impacted everywhere – had an effect in the family

context. Similarly, there are references to immigration, especially referred to those from North Africa with different positions. Nevertheless, we do not find any reference to groups from our own country that are traditionally discriminated against, as it is the case with the Roma community.

### **Results of the Families' Perception about the Values that Guide their Discourse when they talk about Racism with their Children**

To respond to the last objective of the research, identify the values that guide the discourse of families with their sons and daughters on racism and xenophobia, in the third section of the questionnaire, parents or legal guardians were asked to assess the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the complaint raised in the following hypothetical case: The Association Anti-Racism (AAR) has filed a complaint against the neighborhood sports club. Makena's mother has protested because in the basketball team where her daughter plays, she is usually called 'la negra' (the black one). Most of the participants (89.3%) in the study believe that the complaint is appropriate and that there is a smaller part (10.7%) believe that it is not.

In addition, the inferential analysis from the Chi-square test reveals that there are significant differences depending on the variables: educational level of the parents ( $p = 0.005$ ), having suffered bullying ( $p = 0.021$ ), and having suffered sexism, sex discrimination, or gender discrimination ( $p = 0.017$ ). Specifically, as can be seen in Table 12, people that most agree with the complaint are those with higher education, followed by those who have suffered (themselves or any of the people with whom they live) bullying; and those who have suffered (themselves or the people with whom they live) sexism, sex discrimination or gender discrimination.

Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte (2014) and The Council for the Elimination of Racial or Ethnic Discrimination (CEDRE, 2022) report that an intercultural school contributes to eliminating racial prejudices. Likewise, both institutions point out elements to improve this intercultural education, such as being critical of colonialism, increasing the presence of different groups, avoiding school segregation, or increasing the number of teachers from different backgrounds. Also, the fact of having suffered some type of violence in the family has an impact on the positive response (complaint), since it explains the increase in solidarity towards people in vulnerable situations, coinciding with research such as that of Bonelli (2019), Brendgen et al. (2016), or Cerezo et al. (2018).

However, it is surprising to see that having suffered racial discrimination ( $p = .859$ ) is not significant. In this sense, there are some studies that indicate that the victims themselves tend to minimize their problems and accept discriminatory language and attitudes as normal. Nevertheless, the different

Table 12. Frequencies and percentages corresponding to the hypothetical case about racism according to the variables "level of education", "having suffered bullying" and "having suffered sexism, sex discrimination or gender discrimination".

studies show the need to influence language to favor the elimination of racism (González 2003; Van Dijk 2010; Zavala and Back 2017).

Next, families are inquired about the hypothetical case: Imagine that your sons and daughters ask you why you think that way. What arguments would you give them?

As for the answer to this question, the values and attitudes that underpin the reasons argued in a controversial conversation parents-children are studied. 2,433 citations were counted, and 13 categories have emerged, plus one more grouped as “others”. These categories are ordered from highest to lowest in three groups: higher frequency to 100, frequency less than 100 and greater than 10, and frequency less than 10.

As can be seen in Table 13, the reference value is respect, with a frequency of 561 mentions, which represents almost a quarter of the total. As for the rest of values, they are based on the defense of human rights and democratic culture (Rodríguez and Hinojosa 2017). It is interesting to point out that only 3 people (0.1%) report that the guiding factor for them is peace. This leads us to wonder why, even though the values indicated belong to the sphere of the culture of peace, families do not associate them to this construct as it could be expected, surely because in the current situation, with wars such as the one in Ukraine, the culture of peace is devalued (Ramos 2022).

The means and standard deviations of Table 2 on the topics related to racism and xenophobia, as we have remarked, show an assimilationist model of immigration and people from other cultures. From this perspective, it seems to be contradictory with the values that the families state that inspire the answers

**Table 13.** Attitudes, values and norms on which parents or legal guardians base their arguments when they talk to their sons or daughters about controversial issues.

(Table 13) such as respect, equity, empathy or diversity . . . Apparently, we are in front of a desire to be “politically correct“ in accordance with the so-called ”new racism“ that is camouflaged through a falsely inclusive language (Pascale 2010).

A review of the meaning of these values would also be appropriate. For example, it can be observed that respect is considered by almost a quarter of the participating families as the main reason when it comes to justifying their way of thinking about controversial issues such as racism. The word “respect“ comes from the Latin word *respectus*, a word composed of *re* and *spectrum*, which means “appearance“. It derives from the family of *specere*, which means “to look“, therefore, the term ”respect“ would refer to ”to look again“, not to stay with the first look, to review the first idea that we have of something, and to look at it again. This term is also related to the interest in the other (person or thing) that deserves to be listened to, observed, analyzed, in other words: its presence is recognized. Of the various meanings, in the case of the responses analyzed, following the methodology of Braun and Clarke (2006) and using the peer debriefing technique as recommended by Brantlinger et al. (2005), the concept of ”respect“ revolves around respect as a civic value, understood as those behaviors that are considered correct for proper civic behavior. In general, respect is mentioned as the fundamental basis for a healthy and peaceful coexistence among the members of a democratic society.

## Conclusions

According to Torío (2006), among others, the family performs its educational function according to conscious or unconscious models of communication and values. Thus, it is very important to study how the dialogue between parents and children is established and which axiological referents support their arguments. However, research aimed at explaining how families position themselves

with respect to various factors related to the drive for a peaceful and anti-racist society must consider a good number of influential variables (Axness 2012). In our case, we were able to detect some variables that have an impact on the response, as we have seen in the results.

To have a rich discourse and avoid falling into racist stereotypes, it is advisable to identify one's own starting point (Estévez et al. 2007), reflect and develop practical strategies of effective, affective, and non-violent communication to favor understanding. In this sense, most manuals refer to assertiveness and active listening tools such as: empathy, paraphrasing, clarification, synthesis, or reformulation. We believe, following Baires, Catrone, and Mayer (2021), Cangas and Moldes (2006, 2011), Contreras (2001), Faber and Mazlish (1997, 2003), Franco (2010), Ginott (2005), Mejías et al. (2002), Müller (2021), or Urra (2008) that positive communication will facilitate the rejection of stereotypes related to racism and other violence.

The empowerment of the family, as the democratic engine of society, can contribute to overcoming the vulnerability generated by social division and guide it towards the active practice of peace in globalized contexts. Raising family awareness is, likewise, a way to empower their sons and daughters to

start together with a path of personal choice that contributes to eradicating surrounding violence and regenerating the social fabric (Akyil et al. 2016). Moreover, we recognize the capacity of minors to improve and pacify the world (Boqué et al. 2017).

Following, for example, Rodríguez, López, and Echeverri (2016) research that considers family values, communication styles, and conflict management strategies in the home, – once put under the magnifying glass of the culture of peace (Galtung 2003; García-Raga, Alguacil, and Boqué 2019) –, help to better understand internal family dynamics and, in turn, contributes to extending the bridge towards a greater understanding of social dynamics. Consequently, it is worthwhile to promote family-centered peace studies that explore each of these dimensions in-depth to advance, in the social imaginary, towards the construction of the family as an agent of peace. The construction of a culture of peace and anti-racism from the individual, the family, and the community to the political sphere is recognized as a fundamental element in achieving a fairer and more egalitarian society (Harris 2013). In addition, as McCoy (2019) states, to prevent division and mistrust from intensifying in polarized societies, the family is a first-order agent, because apart from exercising primary socialization it is highly permeable to the environment. We have verified that the issues that are discussed at home had to do with the current socio-political situation at the time the field work of this study was carried out, as evidenced by the results of the issues discussed at home, specifically those that have a frequency greater than 100 (78.7%): sex and gender, politics, racism and xenophobia, bullying and social injustice.

Moreover, the basic communicative skills are learned at home. In the studies by Chaffee, McLeod, and Wackman (1973) and Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2006), two dimensions are identified in the analysis of family communicative schemes: orientation to conversation and orientation to conformity, which gave rise to the theory of Family Communication Patterns (FCP), and that can help better understanding attitudes acquired at home.

The family also influences the values of its members. In this sense, the values that according to the participants in the study guide the family discourse are respect, the fight against

injustice, equality, empathy, diversity, dialogue and tolerance, that is, values related to the culture of peace and human rights (Rodríguez and Hinojosa 2017).

Consequently, it is worth promoting studies of peace centered on the family that explore each of these dimensions in depth to advance, in the social imaginary, towards the construction of the family as a valuable agent of peace.

Finally, it is necessary to bear in mind that, as we have pointed out in Table 1, only 8.6% of the questionnaires were answered by people born outside Spain, so for a future investigation it would be necessary to balance participation by incorporating families of diverse origin. This would probably require adapting

the questionnaire and translating it into other languages apart from Catalan and Spanish. It would also be interesting to resort to other data collection strategies, such as oral interviews and focus groups.

### **Data Availability**

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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### **Ethical Standards**

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards laid down in the 2013

Fortaleza version of the Declaration of Helsinki.

## **Informed Consent**

Informed consent was obtained from each participant

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