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Racial Discrimination, Black Identity, and Critical Consciousness in Spain

M.ª Ángeles Cea D'Ancona[1]

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Abstract
This article analyzes the relationship of racial discrimination on the identity and critical consciousness of 1369 African and Afro-descendant respondents to the first nationwide survey conducted in Spain in 2020. The survey not only showed the scope of experiences of discrimination based on skin color but has also opened the way for testing whether these experiences of racial discrimination end up affecting the identity and critical consciousness of black people, Africans, or Afro-descendants, based on the questions included in the survey and the rejection–identification hypothesis. According to the statistical models obtained by discriminant analysis, racial discrimination helps to strengthen racial identity. Having been discriminated by skin color was the variable that most differentiated those who self-identified with their country of origin from those who did not and the second most predictive of self-recognition as a black or Afro-descendant person. But when the influences of racial discrimination on racial identity and critical consciousness were jointly analyzed, applying structural equation modeling, the latter outweighed the former: racial discrimination contributes to the awakening black activism. Less clear seems to be the influence of racial identity on critical consciousness.

Keywords Afro-descendants · Racial discrimination · Black identity · Critical consciousness

Introduction

The *International Decade for People of African Descent 2015–2024,* declared by the General Assembly of the United Nations (via resolution 68/237), has contributed to implementing the first survey on the African and Afro-descendant population residing in Spain, in addition to making visible the role of the African and Afro-descendant population in Spanish society and promoting *Afro* activism.[1] One of the first actions was the World Conference *Afro-Madrid* (June 15–19, 2015), which highlighted that discrimination, racial prejudice, intolerance, and social, political, and economic exclusion, continue to be practices that affect and deny citizenship to Afro-descendants, calling into question the quality of democracy and the universal nature of Human Rights.

The existing lack of knowledge about the sociodemographic and socioeconomic conditions of Afro-descendants in Spain was also emphasized.

Subsequently, the 2018 Report of the United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent also underlined the lack of official data on the Afro-descendant population residing in Spain. As did the specialists who participated in the Seminar on the legacy of African and Afro-descendant people in Spain, organized by OBERAXE (Spanish Observatory of Racism and Xenophobia) on October 7, 2020, and whose interventions were published by Barbosa et al. (2020b). To these and other publications of public organizations (Barbosa et al., 2020a) were added several others, which also contributed to making visible their problems of discrimination and identity, through testimonies of Afro-descendant women, of Spanish nationality and African

✉ M.ª Ángeles Cea D'Ancona
maceada@ucm.es

[1] Departamento de Sociología: Metodología y Teoría, Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociología, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Campus de Somosaguas, 28223 Pozuelo de Alarcón, Madrid, Spain

[1] According to the Spanish Pan-Africanist activist and president of the Council for the Elimination of Racial or Ethnic Discrimination in Spain, Antumi Toasijé (2020, p. 57), "the past decade has seen the rise of a renewed *Afro* activism. This activism has emerged in the context created since the International Decade for People of African Descent." Although contemporary *Afro* activism in Spain began to organize itself with the recovery of democracy. It was born mainly of associations and activities by Equatorial Guinean political exiles.

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origin (Angone, 2018; Ekoka, 2019)[2]; of Spanish activists of African origin who claim that "for a long time I hated myself for being black, of Gambian origin and Muslim" (Gerehou, 2021, p. 24), and who justify their activism and incorporation into SOS Racism by a racist police detention, while walking through the university; or publications about African and Afro-descendant artists who live in Spain and define themselves by their historical black identity, denouncing the difficulties of being a black person in a country of white people (García, 2018).

The first *Survey of African and Afro-descendant People Living in Spain* was promoted and financed by Spain's General Directorate for Equality of Treatment and Ethnic and Racial Diversity under the Ministry for Equality, but analyzed and designed by myself based on the findings of previous studies (Cea D'Ancona, 2017; Cea D'Ancona & Valles, 2021b), and with the aim of asking about their identities and experiences of racism and discrimination, as well as anti-discrimination policies. Among the main results (detailed in Cea D'Ancona & Valles, 2021a), it stands out that almost all the 1369 Africans and Afro-descendants surveyed stated that they had fewer opportunities to access a position of responsibility (95%), a job (94%), or a home (91%). Moreover, 78% reported having felt discriminated against because of their skin color, although only 10% of the 1042 respondents who had experienced some forms of discrimination had formally reported this. Nine out of ten respondents had not reported it because they considered that it would be pointless (31%), or they had rationalized the discriminatory act as something that was normal or commonplace (24%). These results were expected, based on what has been observed in other countries where racial discrimination appears to be experienced regularly by Afro-descendant people (Clealand, 2013; English et al., 2020; Fix et al., 2021; Pager & Shepherd, 2008; Sian, 2017; Sue et al., 2007).

Despite being expressly prohibited by law, racial discrimination in domains such as employment, housing, legal contexts, and in everyday interactions, continues to occur covertly, with negative consequences on the people who experience this. The detrimental effects of racial discrimination are well documented, particularly in terms of healthcare (Brody et al., 2015; Fix et al., 2021; Paradies et al., 2015; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009), psychological well-being (English et al., 2020; Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Henderson, 2017; Lee & Ahn, 2013; Prelow et al., 2004), academic achievement (Chavous et al., 2008; Darensbourg & Blake, 2014; Leath et al., 2019; Neblett et al., 2006), racial identity (Branscombe et al., 1999; Butler-Barnes et al., 2018; Del Toro et al., 2021; Leath et al., 2019; Seaton & Iida, 2019; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014; Zeiders et al., 2019), and critical consciousness or activism (Clealand, 2013; Diemer et al., 2015; Hope et al., 2019; Mathews et al., 2020; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015).

Having experiences of racial discrimination seems to strengthen group identity and this is positively related to racial identity: discrimination is a predictor of ethnic/racial identity (Branscombe et al., 1999; Fix et al., 2021; Molina et al., 2014; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Zeiders et al., 2019) or reactive identity (Çelik, 2015; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Rodríguez-García et al., 2021; Rumbaut, 2008), that highlights the role of a hostile context of discrimination and exclusion in accounting for the rise rather than the erosion of ethnicity or identification with the racial/ethnic group. But there is also empirical evidence of the inverse relationship between racial identity and perception of discrimination: perceptions of ethnic/racial discrimination are higher when individuals identify strongly with their racial group (Gonzales-Backen et al., 2018; Sellers, 1998; Shelton & Sellers, 2000). There is empirical support for both the protective and detrimental effects of ethnic/racial identity (Yip et al., 2019). Individuals who diminish the salience of race may be less likely to interpret negative interactions as being instances of racial discrimination. On the other hand, those emphasizing the importance of race may be more inclined to attribute experiences of unfair treatment to racial discrimination (Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Yip et al., 2019). Racial identity shapes one's appraisal of such experiences as racially biased or discriminatory and, in turn, racial identity is associated with the mobilization of more adaptive coping strategies (Fix et al., 2021), and the rise and reaffirmation of ethnic/racial solidarity and self-consciousness (Rumbaut, 2008).

Ethnic-racial identity may serve as a buffer against negative effects of racial and ethnic discrimination (Neblett et al., 2012), whereas critical consciousness may provide strategies for marginalized individuals to critically analyze the broader structure of racialized social experiences, develop confidence to challenge these experiences, and engage in social action to disrupt inequality (Watts et al., 2011). Thus, both ethnic/racial identity and critical consciousness are involved in people's processing of the meaning of race and racism in their lives (Mathews et al., 2020).

The current research pursues the twofold objective of testing whether feeling racially discriminated against is positively related to racial identity, as is suggested by the rejection-identification model (Branscombe et al., 1999; Fix et al., 2021; Molina et al., 2014; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Zeiders et al., 2019), and analyzing the influences of both (racial discrimination and identity) on the critical consciousness of Africans and Afro-descendants living in Spain (applying structural equation modeling). This is based on the

[2] With the title "Metamba Miago" (which means "our roots") and "Afro-Spanish women," this publication claims the presence of *Afro* people in Spain. It tells their stories, how they have felt during their search for identity, which has been and continues to be questioned by the color of their skin.

hypothesis that racial discrimination contributes to awaken black people's critical consciousness (Anyiwo et al., 2018; Neville & Cross, 2017), as well as racial identity (Mathews et al., 2020; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015). Like most of the studies carried out, it focusses on perceived racial discrimination, not on confirming whether this occurred or not. As stated by Motti-Stefanidi and Asendorpf (2012), the most relevant aspect is not so much objective discrimination as subjective: the perception of being treated unfairly and differently, as a result of belonging to a particular group. This was confirmed in previous research (Cea D'Ancona, 2020a): perceptions of discrimination indicate a reality in the minds of the people who suffer from them, even though they may not reflect actual experiences of discrimination. First, the survey from which the information was obtained is described; each of the analyses carried out is then broken down, along with the hypotheses to be tested. The results are discussed relating them to previous research that makes up the theoretical framework of this study.

Materials and Method

The survey data analyzed in this research correspond to the *Survey of Africans and Afro-Descendants living in Spain*; a CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing) survey, conducted from October 29 to November 13, 2020, and designed considering the results of previous surveys on multiple discrimination carried out by myself for MEDIM projects,[3] and whose main contributions are summarized in Cea D'Ancona (2017) and Cea D'Ancona & Valles (2021b). These studies confirmed that CAWI survey decreases the effects of social desirability, although it suffers from non-observation errors: the underrepresentation of people with a lower level of education, in addition to the higher nonresponse (De Leeuw et al., 2008; Kreuter et al., 2008; Heerwegh & Loosveldt, 2008); unless the topic of the survey is of interest to the respondent, as in the survey analyzed here. Even the open-ended questions about their experiences of discrimination were very widely answered, providing personal testimonies that a face-to-face survey would not have collected.[4]

The email explaining the research and providing the link to the survey was sent out to a total of 230 associations of Africans and Afro-Descendants and through social networks. They were asked to distribute the link to their members and other contacts that fitted the study population. These measures resulted in the questionnaire being answered (completely or partially) by a total of 1946 persons, although the valid questionnaires finally analyzed were 1369 (the final valid sample of the survey). These were the fully completed questionnaires. A figure is significantly relevant for this type of survey, despite not being fully representative of all the African and Afro-descendant population living in Spain, because of the underrepresentation of people with a lower educational level and without internet access (as usual in online self-completed surveys).

Unlike other countries (such as the US, Canada, or the UK), the population censuses carried out in Spain by the National Institute of Statistics still do not record data broken down by ethnicity or race. Therefore, it is not possible to know the real number of Africans and Afro-descendants residing in Spain, or their sociodemographic and cultural profiles, that would help to design a probabilistic sample. What is more, people with fewer economic and educational resources were underrepresented in the survey, as is usual in online self-administered surveys. Nevertheless, this first survey of Africans and Afro-descendants residing in Spain enabled us to discover the less marginal population and, a priori, less vulnerable to being discriminated against. This positively reverts to the interest of this study, coupled with the fact that the survey covered the different regions of Spain.[5] On the other hand, the fact that the survey had open questions with no limit of space to write down the answer enabled people to narrate and explain their experiences of discrimination. Self-administered surveys are an excellent methodological strategy to obtain knowledge of attitudes and experiences of discrimination because of their lower vulnerability to social desirability bias (Cea D'Ancona, 2017; Chang & Krosnick, 2009; Heerwegh & Loosveldt, 2008; Kreuter et al., 2008; Simmons & Bobo, 2015).

The survey was answered by 1369 Africans and Afro-Descendants, comprising more female (62%) than male (36%) respondents[6]; the remaining 2% self-identified as "non-binary," as they did not agree with the distinction between men and women. As is common for online self-administered surveys, most of the respondents were young, with an average age of 31.9 years (standard deviation of 11.6 years). The population was also notable for its medium to high level of education. Half of them had university

[3] Acronym of the projects "Measuring Multiple Discrimination I" (CSO2012-36127) and "II" (CSO2016-75946-R), funded by the Spanish Ministry of Finance and Competitiveness.

[4] Simmons and Bobo (2015) found no significant differences in the results of their research, when they compared the traditional face-to-face survey (using a fully probabilistic sample) with an online survey (with a non-probabilistic sample), neither in sociodemographic questions, nor in attitudes. They obtained very similar results with both survey methods.

[5] Madrid (35%), Catalonia (24%), Andalusia (9%), Valencian Community (8%), Aragon (4%), Basque Country (4%), and others.

[6] That more women than men responded to the survey did not affect the proportion of reported experiences of discrimination attributed to skin color (77% men, 79% women) or nationality (46% men, 48% women); although did affect the experiences of discrimination declared by gender (26% men, 57% women) and physical appearance (24% men, 35% women).

qualifications at intermediate level or uncompleted higher education (29%) or had completed higher education (21%). Despite this, they were proportionally located more in the lower-skilled (24%) and medium-skilled (44%) occupations, this not being consistent with their levels of education but consistent with the existence of employment discrimination. With respect to "country of birth," 47% of the population surveyed was born in Spain and 71% had Spanish nationality.[7]

Results and Discussion

As indicated in the introduction, this research analyzes whether feeling racially discriminated against affects racial identity and the influences of both (racial discrimination and identity) on the critical consciousness of *Afro* people. According to Clealand (2013, p. 1621), "Discrimination, in particular, heightens the saliency of race and has a clear relationship with how blacks view their own identity and their connection to other blacks."

Racial Discrimination and Identity

On the role of perceived discrimination and racial identity, different empirical studies have supported concurrent and longitudinal mean-level associations between discrimination and various dimensions of ethnic/racial identity,[8] including exploration and belonging (Gonzales-Backen et al., 2018), resolution and affirmation (Zeiders et al., 2019), and private regard. The rejection-identification hypothesis suggests that discrimination may lead individuals to identify more strongly with their ethnic/racial group (Branscombe et al., 1999). In line with this hypothesis, meta-analytic research has identified a positive link between repeatedly experiencing racial discrimination and a stronger sense of racial identity among black children and adults (Lee & Ahn, 2013; Seaton et al., 2009; Sue et al., 2007). Racial discrimination, defined as "beliefs, attitudes, institutional arrangements, and acts that tend to denigrate individuals or groups because of phenotypic characteristics or ethnic group affiliation," is often viewed as such a risk factor (Clark et al., 1999, p. 805).

Cumulative discrimination in everyday contexts has a greater effect on the person's well-being than episodic discrimination in contexts such as looking for a job or a house (Small & Pager, 2020). These experiences are often consequences of structural racism, rather than just isolated incidents of individual prejudice. "Microaggressions can be seen as being deeply intertwined with covert, institutional practices of racism and are central to the production of the invisibility syndrome, which develops from the long-term accumulation of stress, emotional abuse, and psychological trauma linked to racism" (Franklin et al., 2008, p. 13). The vague nature of subtle racism makes it less recognizable as it tends not to fall within the conventional remit of "clear intentionality" which we see commonly associated with blatant acts of racism (Essed, 1991, p. 72–80; Reid & Birchard, 2010, p. 479).

Almost eight out of ten respondents (78% of the 1369 Africans and Afro-descendants surveyed in Spain in 2020) affirmed that they felt discriminated against because of the color of their skin. Racial discrimination that was most denounced by the African and Afro-descendant population between 37 and 49 years old (82%), with university or postgraduate studies (81%), and with an income over 3000 euros per month (83%). Contrary to studies that have found that racial discrimination is more common among men than women (Caton, 2012; Chavous et al., 2008; Cogburn et al., 2011; Seaton et al., 2008), this study did not show any significant differences in overall frequency between them. It was also found that the most frequent conjunction of experiences of discrimination was *skin color* + *nationality*: 55% of the people who had been discriminated against because of their *skin color* were also discriminated against for not being of Spanish *nationality.* The second was the origin conjunction of the conceptualization of *intersectional* discrimination, which was introduced by the Afro-American academic Kimberlé W. Crenshaw to highlight the different discrimination experienced by black women in North American society[9]: *skin color* + *gender* (46%). The other most frequent conjunctions were *skin color* + *physical appearance* (35%), + *culture* or *customs* (35%), + *age* (31%), + *not having economic resources* (26%). On the other hand, other combinations were barely mentioned, such as *skin color* + *religion* (14%), + *physical disability* (6%), or + *sexual identity* (6%).

[7] For more information, see the survey in Cea D'Ancona & Valles (2021a).

[8] As stated by Cokley (2007, p. 225), "When researchers are interested in how individuals see themselves relative to their cultural beliefs, values, and behaviors, ethnic identity is the more appropriate construct to study. However, when researchers are more interested in how individuals construct their identities in response to an oppressive and highly racialized society, racial identity is the more appropriate construct to study." Differences between *racial identity* and *ethnic identity* reflect the distinctions between *race* (a socially constructed characterization of a group of people based on shared phenotypic characteristics, such as skin color and facial features) and *ethnicity* (a characterization of a group of people based on shared ancestry, history, and culture) (Lee & Ahn, 2013, p. 1).

[9] As stated by Crenshaw (1991, p. 1244), "the intersection of racism and sexism factors into black women's lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately."

When they were then asked "where," the spontaneous response "everywhere, in society in general" was the most frequently mentioned (34%), followed by "a constant in my life" (18%), regardless of whether the person was born in Spain or had Spanish nationality, adding further weight to their discriminatory experience. So, it was not surprising that they put Spain at the top of the structural racism scale, reaching an average of 8.5 (with a deviation of 2.4); 51% even gave Spain the maximum score of 10 on the structural racism scale. Illustrative examples were open-ended responses such as "throughout my life I have been discriminated against or denied opportunities for being a black person, although I was born here," or "since my childhood, in certain environments, my identity has been reduced to my skin color as a defining characteristic of my person."

The fact that the questions on where and what this discrimination consisted of were open-ended questions with no limitation on length, enabled the respondents to elaborate further on their experiences of discrimination. Just like Clealand's (2013) study in Cuba, the questions where respondents gave a more detailed description of their experiences of discrimination strengthened and provided a qualitative, nuanced view of what kinds of discrimination black people experienced. Life stories were collected such as: "I have lived through many discriminatory situations all my life to the point that I have already normalized them. Some of them are, for example, that nobody sits next to me on public transport, that they sexualize me as a black woman, that they judge me for my physical appearance, that they believe that I live in a precarious situation because I am black, and I get bad looks on the street. I have been chased by the security personnel as soon as I enter a store… , etc."[10]

Many of the respondents who cited structural discrimination pointed to inequalities and absence of representation in government, managerial positions, and the media, along with a devaluation of black people by the whole country. A total of 75% of the 1369 respondents cited specific incidents of job discrimination. The two most common answers were: "I was rejected during an interview" (37%), and "not having access to jobs which I am trained for" (37%). In both cases, more women (41%) than men (33%) gave these responses. In contrast, discrimination in access to housing was more often experienced by men. A total of 47% of the 1150 people who claimed to have a rented home or were homeowners, said that they felt discriminated against in accessing a residential property. "Because I am black" was the main reason mentioned (56%) in a higher proportion by men (66%) than women (47%). The second main reason was "they don't want black people," even if they are Spaniards: "When they see you, the house is no longer available." Given the relevance of both experiences of discrimination (in access to housing and employment), these were added to the explanatory model described in Fig. 1, as indicators of racial discrimination.

Regarding the identity of the African and Afro-descendant population in Spain, some authors point out that "Spanish Afro-descendant youth, born and educated in the nation, have to claim their nationality because non-white Spanish citizenship has not yet been conceived" (Rocabruno, 2020, p. 27). Others advocate the common application of the term Afro-descendant, this being the one chosen by the states during the Durban Conference to "include the entire diaspora in combatting the specific discrimination suffered by people of African descent without leaving any descendant from African behind" (Mamadou, 2020, p. 13); or by the generic term *Afro*, although self-description as Afro-descendants is configured as a novel and inclusive concept, "the sense of belonging to this category is not unanimously stated." On the other hand, the term *Afro* stands out as a binding element to various identities, generating neither confusion nor conflict" (Barbosa et al., 2020a, p. 62). "blackness is the most representative trait with which black people feel constantly read as "other people" and, in turn, suffer racism in their daily lives." (p. 62). On the contrary, the concept of *Afro* is configured as an inclusive term, which encompasses all identified identities.

The *Survey of Africans and Afro-Descendants living in Spain* included two open-ended questions on identity. The first one: "Apart from your name, how do you recognize yourself or like to be called?". As the question was open, the respondents did not have to choose between answer options, but rather used their own words to identify themselves. Self-recognition as "black" and "Afro-descendant" were the most frequently mentioned with the same percentage: 19%. After these, the self-recognition as "African" (17%) and "Afro-Spaniard" (12%), emphasizing their double consideration of being Afro-descents and Spaniards. On the other hand, there were also respondents who spontaneously claimed that they liked to be called by their name (14%); they did not like "nicknames of any kind," or "classify people." They pointed out that "the qualifier by the color of skin or origin is too much."

The second question on identity was also open-ended and the last one in the questionnaire: "Finally, who do you identify with the most? [e.g., nationality, community of descent, public and private personalities, etc.]." Neither "black" nor "Afro-descendant" was the most frequently mentioned answer but rather a generic answer that encompassed the country or community of descent or origin: "with my

[10] In Spain, as in Cuba (Clealand, 2013), young black males are overwhelmingly targeted more than any other group by the police.

people" (19%). This answer was followed by the generic "Afro-descendant community" (12%) and "Afro-Spanish community" (11%), in similar proportions. Some reflections that accompanied these answers were: "I cannot consider myself 100% a Spaniard, even though I was born here and even my parents are Spaniards because I have been harassed because of my skin color. This has caused me anxiety and has led to eating disorders and mental health problems"; or "Because people here always have a way of reminding you that you are not a Spaniard, simply because of your skin color." Relationship between identity and belonging that recalls what Anthias stated (2008, p. 7–8): "it is necessary to disentangle the notion of identity from the related one of belonging, although they are symbiotically connected." "Where do I belong" is a question that "emerges out of attributions by others and concerns by others (including institutions and public bodies) with sorting populations for the purposes of regulation and control. It is represented in intersubjective relations by that question so many visible 'outsiders' face (visible either through skin color, language, accent, or name) about 'where are you really from' and 'where do you really belong'."[11]

These and other reflections expressed by the people surveyed point to the link between racial discrimination and identity. An equally often observed link in the question that preceded it: "Do you feel you are a Spaniard?" 60% of the 1369 respondents answered "no." The main reason ("why?") was "they do not recognize me as such" (28%), even though they were born in Spain or had the nationality, "by the color of your skin." An answer that matches the ones mentioned above: "despite being a Spaniard, they continually remind you that you are not"; or "I have never been treated as if I were from here, as just one more Spaniard. I am not seen as a Spaniard."[12] These responses were followed by others: "I feel I am more from my country of origin," or "from my roots" (17%); "I refuse to love a country that treats me badly" (12%); "Because of experiences of discrimination and accumulated rejections" (10%).

These justifications for the lack of feeling of *Spanishness* are reminiscent of what was collected in a previous study on multiple discrimination. Members of associations for the defense of persons vulnerable to discrimination highlighted the existence of identity conflicts because of the feeling of being rejected and discriminated against. In a particular way, immigrants, transsexuals, and homosexuals stated: "We cannot be first class citizens when they consider us second class citizens at the same time"; "It is a crossing of identities" (Cea D'Ancona, 2020b, p. 31). These and other reflections illustrate the reactive identity that results from experiences of discrimination and social exclusion (Çelik, 2015; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Rodríguez-García et al., 2021; Rumbaut, 2008).

From the data collected by the survey, the research question that arises is to what extent having experience of racial discrimination affects racial identity. Previous research confirms that having experiences of racial discrimination strengthens group identity and is positively related to racial identity (Branscombe et al., 1999; Fix et al., 2021; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Zeiders et al., 2019); also, that racial identity may serve as a buffer against negative effects of racial discrimination (Neblett et al., 2012). These studies of ethnic-racial identity have a foundation in Social Identity Theory, which emphasizes the importance of group membership and knowledge of social class to establishing a consistent sense of self (Turner et al., 1979), as well as a referent for feelings of inclusion and affirmation (Ashmore et al., 2004). Individuals have a host of social groups with which they may identify and once they have selected social identities, they invest in maintaining and enhancing a positive self-concept.

In the rejection–identification model, more frequent experiences of discrimination are thought to promote subsequent identification with one's stigmatized group as a mechanism by which to preserve psychological well-being (Branscombe et al., 1999). Similarly, Cross's model (1995) of racial identity suggests that racial discrimination may initiate engagement in ethnic-racial identity processes to evaluate the personal meaning of one's ethnicity/race. Racial identity is defined as "a sense of group or collective identity, based on one's perception that [one] shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group" (Helms, 1990, p. 3). Later, Umaña-Taylor et al. (2014) state that racial identity is a multidimensional construct that reflects tasks of exploring one's ethnic-racial background and gaining a sense of clarity regarding the meaning of this aspect of one's identity. In specific reference to African Americans, Fix et al. (2021) highlight that the concept of racial identity represents the set of beliefs that an individual might use to describe what it means to be African American (/Spaniard) or black people. Many factors shape the development of racial identity over a lifetime. Chief

[11] According to Anthias (2008, p. 8), "the two terms of identity and belonging live together but involve a different emphasis." Identity involves "individual and collective narratives of self and other, presentation and labeling, myths of origin and myths of destiny with associated strategies and identifications. Belonging on the other hand is more about experiences of being part of the social fabric and the ways in which social bonds and ties are manifested in practices, experiences, and emotions of inclusion." "To belong is to share values, networks and practices and not just a question of identification."

[12] "Aspects of physical appearance, whether real or imaginary and typically crystallized in ethnic stereotypes" (Jenkins, 1997, p. 66). Visibility seems to be a crucial factor in determining ethnic/racial identity. "It is greatly through these visible and phenotypical markers that individuals are socially categorized and valued as either members of the host society ('us') or as outsiders ('them')" (Rodríguez-García et al., 2021, p. 841–2). "The unintended consequences of accentuating group differences, heightening group consciousness of those differences, hardening ethnic identity boundaries between 'us' and 'them,' and promoting ethnic group solidarity and political mobilization (Rumbaut, 2008, p. 110).

among these are personal experiences of maltreatment or unfair treatment that are interpreted as racially motivated.

In this research, racial identity is analyzed from the answers given in the questions described above. Specifically, recognizing oneself as a black or Afro-descendant person, or as belonging to the country of origin, or as a Spaniard. Although there are authors, such as Mbembe (2017), who consider that the whole matter of identifying as being black is problematic because "black" is a name chosen by others to be given to someone; a name functioning as a form of objectification and degradation. In the survey analyzed here self-recognitions as "a black" and "an Afro-descendant" were the two spontaneous most frequently mentioned answers: 19%, in both cases. Almost four out of ten respondents claimed what most distinguished them from the population as a whole was the color of their skin, in addition to their African origins, proudly claiming their roots. For his part, Maluleke (2000, p. 26) warns that there is no united, homogeneous Africa or African identity: "there are and should be many and various ways of being an African."

On the other hand, Molina et al. (2014) have demonstrated that for most ethnic minorities higher perceptions of group discrimination are related to lower levels of national identity and higher ethnic identity. For this reason, another objective of the current research is to verify whether having experienced racial discrimination affects self-recognition with the country of origin and as a Spaniard, in addition to self-recognition as a black person or Afro-descendant. Table 1 shows the three models obtained after carrying out a discriminant analysis for each of these three dependent variables, and analyzing the predictive effects of 13 independent variables: the three variables of experiences of discrimination (discriminated by skin color; access to employment and housing) and ten sociodemographic variables that can affect self-recognition or identity (gender, age, education, occupation, income, social class, born in Spain, born in an African country, born in a Latin American country, and with Spanish nationality). Different studies have found that racial identity varies by sociodemographic characteristics, such as gender, age, educational attainment and occupation, or birth status. Despite the fact that racial identity is not believed to be a linear process, a greater proportion of adults, compared to college students, were observed to be committed to their racial identity (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014; Yip et al., 2006). Similarly, black men and women may respond to discrimination in different ways, in part as a result of differences in gender socialization (Dotterer et al., 2009).

While a binary logistic regression analysis could have been carried out, discriminant analysis was chosen because of its greater effectiveness when comparing predictor variables with unequal variances. Through the discriminant analysis we sought to obtain the linear combination of predictor variables (canonical discriminant function) that would maximize the differences between those who recognize themselves as a black person or Afro-descendant ($Y=1$) and those who do not ($Y=0$); similarly, between those who self-identify with their country of origin ($Y=1$) and those who do not ($Y=0$), and those who feel Spanish ($Y=1$) and those who do not ($Y=0$).[13] Table 1 summarizes the main results of the discriminant analysis after applying iterative procedures to include and eliminate predictive variables based on their discriminatory power. Variables are ordered by their overall discriminant effect, as measured by their structure coefficients (or discriminant loadings), whose value (from 0.0 to ± 1.0) measures the linear correlation between each independent variable and the discriminant function. Klecka (1980) recommends the use of structure coefficients (in preference to standardized coefficients) as indicators of the relative importance of each variable in each function because their value is unaffected by the interrelationships of the predictor variables. Their effect is significant when their value is $\geq \pm 0.30$. Each variable included in Table 1 satisfies the twofold condition of having a low lambda value and a high F value. Both requirements denote that the means of the variables differ significantly between the groups and, in turn, give rise to a high level of cohesiveness between members of the same group.

Table 1 also includes the statistical significance of each discriminant function and its relevance to the classification in terms of variance. The three predictive models are statistically significant, according to the χ^2 test and the percentages of correctly classified cases after cross-validation. The proportion of variance explained by each discriminant function is adequate, mainly the one that differentiates those who self-recognize as Spaniards from those who do not, since the canonical correlation is 0.635. In this model, the discriminant function was made up of the linear combination of six variables, though the predictive effect of the last two variables (born in an African or Latin American country) was not significant, as their structure coefficients were less than 0.30.

As a result, the discriminant variable that most differentiates those who self-recognize as a Spaniard from those who do not was made up of the linear combination of the variables of having Spanish nationality, being of a higher social class, being older, and lacking experience of racial discrimination (as its structure coefficient is negative: -0.299). On the contrary, having been discriminated by skin color was the variable with the greatest predictive effect of identifying with or self-recognizing as from the country of origin (structure coefficient $=0.566$) and the second most predictive of self-recognition as a black person or Afro-descendant.

[13] These were spontaneous responses given to the open question discussed above: "Apart from your name, how do you recognize yourself or like to be called?."

Table 1 Explanatory models of self-recognition as a black person or Afro-descendant, of the country of origin, or a Spaniard, applying discriminant analysis

Black or Afro-descendant		Country of origin		Spaniard	
Variables	Structure coefficient	Variables	Structure coefficient	Variables	Structure coefficient
African	−0.778	Discriminated by skin color	0.566	Spanish nationality	0.598
Discriminated by skin color	0.429		0.541	Social Class	0.517
Gender	0.216	Education	−0.467	Age	0.493
		African	0.355	Discriminated by skin color	−0.299
		Spanish nationality		African	0.198
				Latin American	−0.077
Canonical correlation = 0.493		Canonical correlation = 0.473		Canonical correlation = 0.635	
$\chi^2 = 58.492$ ($\rho = 0.000$)		$\chi^2 = 52.231$ ($\rho = 0.000$)		$\chi^2 = 125.563$ ($\rho = 0.000$)	
74.5% correctly classified cases by cross-validation		82.6% correctly classified cases by cross-validation		77.8% correctly classified cases by cross-validation	

The same explanatory models were obtained by binary logistic regression and with similar predictive effects

In sum, as expected, having experienced racial discrimination does seem to affect racial identity; how a person self-recognizes. Those who have been discriminated against because of their skin color identified more with their country of origin or self-recognized as black people or Afro-descendants. In the last self-recognition, the discriminant function was made up of the variables: not being African (since its coefficient was negative: −0.778); having been discriminated against by skin color and being a man (gender is a dummy variable coded: 1 = male and 0 = female). Finally, the discriminating function that distinguishes those who identified with their country of origin was made up of the variables: having been discriminated against by skin color, having a high level of education, not being African, and having Spanish nationality. Although they have Spanish nationality, having experienced racial discrimination leads them to identify with their country of origin, as was also obtained by Molina et al. (2014).

Critical Consciousness

Having tested that racial discrimination can affect identity (especially in those who self-identify as black people or Afro-descendants or with their country of origin), the second main objective of the current research is to verify the influences of both (racial discrimination and identity) on critical consciousness. According to Mathew et al. (2020), ethnic-racial identity and critical consciousness frameworks have largely been separate bodies of work, and this disconnect likely does not reflect the experiences of youth of color.[14]

Contextual factors associated with racial identity seem to be related to the development of critical consciousness. An "awakening" experience that initiates an individual's understanding of what it means to be black often occurs because of unequal treatment (racial discrimination), prompting the individual to question why such differences exist. This process implies a form of critical reflection that is central to the critical consciousness perspective but is not explicitly discussed as a potential precursor to the development of racial identity (Neville & Cross, 2017). Recent theory suggests that more personalized sociocultural experiences, such as racial discrimination, likely contribute to black people's critical consciousness (Anyiwo et al., 2018). Experiences with racial discrimination are expected to trigger racial awakening in the racially marginalized and stimulate critical reflection over social inequality (Neville & Cross, 2017).

Racial identity (the meaning, importance, and connection one has to one's racial group) and critical consciousness (the process of recognizing and challenging social inequalities) are salient in the lives of youth of color (Rivas-Drake & Umaña-Taylor, 2019; Watts et al., 2011). Social movements such as *#BlackLivesMatter* are a result of their racial identity and development of critical consciousness. Indeed, some youth of color engage in activism to counteract their ethnic-racial groups' oppression and marginalization in their schools, communities, or other public spaces (Hope & Bañales, 2019; Hope & Jagers, 2014). Or as Gerehou (2021, p. 26) highlighted, "as a result of a racist police stop, while I was walking through the university, when I decided to join SOS Racism to turn my silence into action and transform an individual struggle into something collective."

Critical consciousness is a framework grounded in Freire's (2000) concept of *conscientizing*, or the process by which marginalized individuals identify and take action to challenge social inequalities. Freire (2000) conceptualizes the relation between critical reflection, political efficacy, and

[14] Mathews et al.'s theoretical paper (2020) provides an overview of research on both phenomena (ethnic-racial identity and critical consciousness), mapping their potential areas of congruence. The article concludes with suggestions of how the two processes might influence one another to foster positive developmental outcomes among youth of color.

critical action as a reciprocal process. Engaging in action may prompt individuals to reflect further on inequalities, and changes in critical reflection may in turn be related to future motivation to address social inequalities, and later, civic action (Diemer et al., 2015). Critical action is the behavioral component of critical consciousness that includes the activities people engage in to challenge social inequalities, both individually and collectively (Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015).

In the survey *Africans and Afro-Descendants living in Spain*, there are two questions that could measure critical consciousness. First, it was asked: "Do you think that the different public administrations are making sufficient efforts to achieve full equality of rights for Africans or Afro-descendant?" A total of 45% of the 1369 respondents answered "definitely no," and 44% "no, not really." Therefore, the first response became the first indicator of critical consciousness, as it was the most critical toward the actions of public administrations. This indicates a demand for more public action to achieve full equality of rights.

The second question was: "Do you belong to (or are you registered in) any association of Africans or Afro-descendants?" Two out of every three respondents answered "no" (67%), and one in three answered "yes" (33%).[15] They were then asked why they had joined an *Afro* association. The most frequently mentioned reasons were, firstly: "Being together makes us strong enough to defend ourselves. We need to give each other support, togetherness, brotherhood and sisterhood, and protection." (20%); secondly, that this is "the best way to fight for our rights. Organizations can set up and push specific actions based on political impact." (19%); thirdly, "To empower myself and strengthen my identity. To maintain and not lose my cultural roots. Interest in disseminating knowledge of Africa and its diasporas." (14%); or fourthly, "Believing in self-organization of Africans and Afro-descendants. My own conviction. We need to be united." (13%), among other reasons.

The answers "definitely not" and "membership in an Afro association" are the only two indicators of critical consciousness included in the survey of Africans and Afro-descendants. In this way, they are represented in the causal model described in Fig. 1. A model through which we want to test main hypotheses derived from the theoretical framework of the research:

1) Experiencing racial discrimination increases racial identity and critical consciousness. As tested by Szymanski and Lewis (2015), more stress from experiences of racial discrimination and racial identity are predictors of black (African American) activism (more political and civic engagement).[16]
2) A greater sense of racial identity may lead to more critical actions. For those who are very clear about their racial identity, participating in action that they associate with their groups are more likely to become a means of demonstrating their group identity (Sánchez-Jankowski, 2002).

The model was designed on the assumption that personalized sociocultural experiences shape racial identity. Those who have experienced racial discrimination are more likely to have a high degree of group identity and racial consciousness, although the reverse may also be possible (those who have higher levels of racial consciousness are more likely to be aware of racial discrimination). The causal model focusses on racial discrimination as the latent exogenous variable, because of the increase in experiences of discrimination reported by the African and Afro-descendant population in Spain and other countries.

On the other hand, social identity theory suggests that one component of self-categorization assumes that the group which one identifies with provides positive affirmation of one's identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Therefore, individuals who have strong positive feelings toward their ethnic-racial group are more likely to have strong motivation to maintain positive views of the group and oppose its negative characterizations (Quintana & Segura-Herrera, 2003).

As Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) provides a straightforward method of dealing simultaneously with multiple interrelated relationships of dependence and the hypotheses were checked using this multivariate analytical technique. Figure 1 presents the final model obtained using the Maximum Likelihood method (ML) in the AMOS program. This includes the standardized coefficients corresponding to the structural model. These coefficients relate the latent exogenous variable "racial discrimination" with endogenous "racial identity" and "critical consciousness" (gamma coefficients), and the beta coefficient that measures

[15] Mainly activist socio-political associations such as: Akanim, Biznegra, Afroféminas, África Activa, Karibu, Alcemos la Voz Africanos, Afrocolombianos desplazados, Afrodescendiente Negra Bloque Afro, Kwanzaa, Centro Panafricano Kituo Cha Wanafrica, Conciencia Afro, Organización Panafricana Española para los Derechos Humanos, Uhuru, Afrofem Koop, Hibiscus, Moviment Afrobanyolí Social, Azalak Elkartea, Potopoto-Afromurcia en Movimiento, among others detailed in Cea D'Ancona & Valles (2021a, p. 13–64).

[16] Following Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (Spencer, 2006), Hope et al. (2019) examined how experiences of institutional and cultural racial discrimination relate to orientations toward activism in the black community among black adolescents and emerging adults. They investigated the role of racial identity (centrality, public regard, nationalism) as moderators of those relations in a national sample of 893 self-identifying black adolescents and emerging adults aged 14–29 years old. They found that experiences of cultural racial discrimination, racial centrality, and nationalistic ideology were related to a greater orientation toward low-risk black community activism.

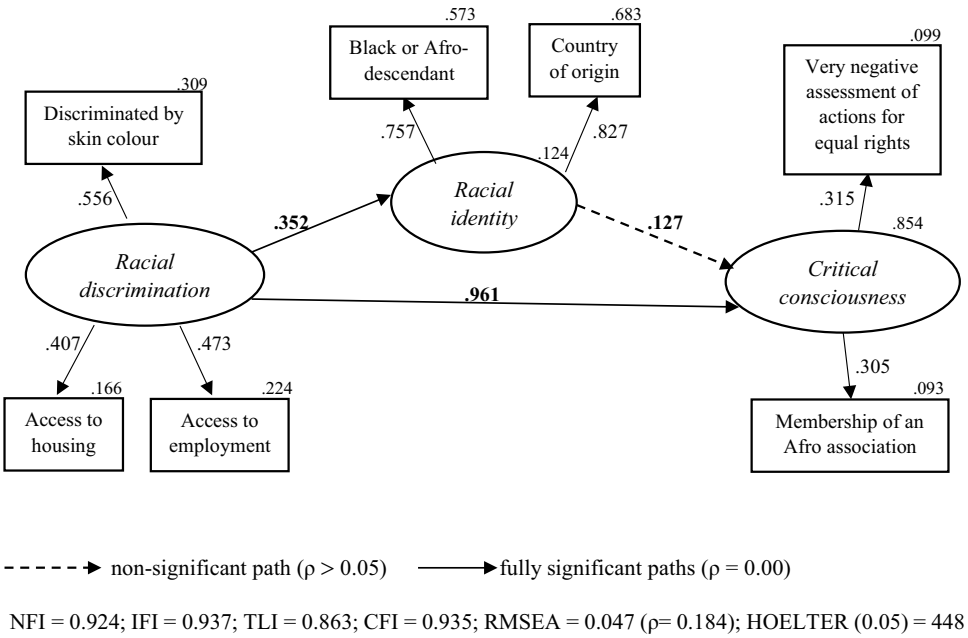

Fig. 1 Final structural and measurement model, applying structural equation modeling

the relationship between these last two latent endogenous variables. Being standardized coefficients, they express the change (in units of standard deviation) in the variable indicated by the arrow for each unit of change in the variable which the arrow comes from.

Figure 1 also describes the measurement model with lambda coefficients that link each latent variables with its indicators. The endogenous latent variable "racial identity" is only measured by the indicators "self-recognition as a black person or Afro-descendant" and "identifies with the country of origin." It was because, in the initial model, the lambda coefficient corresponding to the indicator "self-recognition as a Spaniard" turned out not to be statistically significant ($\rho = 0.867$). For this reason, this third indicator was eliminated from the final model and the overall model fit improved. The nine error terms of the model (two perturbance terms for each endogenous latent variable and seven measurement errors for each indicator) are not included in Fig. 1, to simplify the display of the model.

In line with H1, the structural model corroborated the fact that experiencing racial discrimination increases both racial identity and critical consciousness, especially the latter. The influence of racial discrimination on critical consciousness was very significant, close to 1 ($\gamma_{21} = 0.961$), and with a positive sign, expressing a greater critical consciousness as experiences of racial discrimination increased. The statistical effect of racial discrimination on racial identity was minor, although equally positive ($\gamma_{11} = 0.352$). In contrast, the effect of racial identity on critical consciousness was not so clear. While it seemed that a greater sense of racial identity led to more critical action (H2), its effect was very slight ($\beta_{21} = 0.127$) and not fully statistically significant ($\rho = 0.072$), unlike all other coefficients included in Fig. 1 ($\rho = 0.000$).

Regarding the measurement model, the greater adequacy of the two indicators of racial identity stood out: Country of origin ← Racial identity ($\lambda_{21}{}^{y} = 0.827$) and black people and Afro-descendants ← Racial identity ($\lambda_{11}{}^{y} = 0.757$). In contrast, the lambda coefficients corresponding to the indicators of critical consciousness were lower, although with a positive sign: Very negative assessment of actions for equal rights ← Critical consciousness ($\lambda_{32}{}^{y} = 0.315$) and Membership of an *Afro* association ← Critical consciousness ($\lambda_{42}{}^{y} = 0.305$).

Figure 1 also includes the squared multiple correlations (R^2), located above each indicator and latent variable. The three observed variables with the highest proportion of variance explained were: country of origin ($R^2 = 0.683$), black people or Afro-descendants ($R^2 = 0.573$) and discriminated by skin color ($R^2 = 0.309$). This last indicator was the one with the greatest weight in the latent exogenous variable "racial discrimination" ($\lambda_{11}{}^{x} = 0.556$). Regarding endogenous latent variables, "critical consciousness" was the variable with the greatest proportion of variance explained by its predictors ($R^2 = 0.854$); mainly racial discrimination, as already seen (critical consciousness ← racial discrimination: $\gamma_{21} = 0.961$). Racial identity was lower ($R^2 = 0.124$) because the predictive effect of racial discrimination was reduced to 0.352.

As was expected by the large sample size (> 500 units; exactly 1369 persons), a statistically significant χ^2 was obtained ($\chi^2 = 60.192$; df. = 11; $\rho = 0.000$), which would imply rejecting the null hypothesis that observed and predicted variance–covariance matrices were the same. As χ^2

test is very sensitive to sample size, heeding the recommendations of Hu and Bentler (1999), other goodness-of-fit statistics were used to assess the overall model fit: NFI (Normed Fit Index), IFI (Incremental Fit Index), TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index), CFI (Comparative Fit Index), RMSEA (the Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation) and HOELTER's critical N, whose values are included in Fig. 1.

Most of the overall fit indices indicated a good, but not perfect, fit for the model obtained. Incremental fit indexes (NFI, IFI, TLI, and CFI) reached a value greater than 0.90, indicating an adequate fit with the data (Bollen, 1989; Hair et al., 2005). With respect to RMSEA, Browne and Cudeck (1993) stated that a value of 0.05 or less indicates a close fit (and $\rho > 0.05$), while a value greater than 0.10 would suggest that the model should be rejected. Therefore, the adjustment would also be acceptable according to this fit index, as well as HOELTER (rates > 200, indicating a good fit). From this, it can be concluded that the model represents the original data structure well and shows, above all, the great predictive effect of racial discrimination on critical consciousness.

Conclusions

The first survey carried out on the African and Afro-descendant population residing in Spain not only shows the scope of experiences of discrimination based on skin color. It has also opened the way for testing whether these experiences end up affecting the identity and critical consciousness of black people, Africans, or Afro-descendants, as they prefer to self-identify. Previous research concludes that both racial discrimination and racial identity are predictors of black activism (Anyiwo et al., 2018; Hope et al., 2019; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015). The survey data analyzed here using SEM highlight the greatest influence of racial discrimination on the awakening of critical consciousness. Although it has also been found that having experiences of racial discrimination can lead *Afro*[17] people to identify more strongly with their ethnic-racial group and strengthen racial identity, corroborating the rejection-identification hypothesis (Branscombe et al., 1999; Fix et al., 2021; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Zeiders et al., 2019), its influence was less than that shown on critical consciousness: in both cases, with a positive sign, corroborating H1.

On the other hand, having experienced racial discrimination seems to be the variable that most distinguishes those who identify with their country of origin from those who do not and the second most predictive of self-recognition as a black person or Afro-descendant, according to the statistics models obtained through the discriminant analysis. What is in tune with Molina et al.'s observation (2014): for most ethnic minorities, higher perceptions of group discrimination are related to lower levels of national identity and higher ethnic identity. But when the influence of racial discrimination on identity and critical consciousness was jointly analyzed, the latter outweighed the former. This is perhaps because many factors shape the development of racial identity over a lifetime, among which personal experiences of abuse or unfair treatment stand out, as stated by Fix et al. (2021)

So far it can be said, paraphrasing Clealand (2013, p. 1621), that "discrimination, in particular, heightens the saliency of race and has a clear relationship with how blacks view their own identity and their connection to other blacks." Less clear seems to be the influence of racial identity on critical consciousness. Its statistical effect was minor, although somewhat more significant than when the reciprocal relationship between critical consciousness and racial identity was analyzed.

This research represents an advance in the knowledge of the interrelationships between racial discrimination, identity, and critical consciousness of black people, Africans, and Afro-descendants residing in Spain. Nevertheless, there are several limitations of this study that point to directions for future research. As a cross-sectional design, the direction of causality cannot be conclusively established. In its favor is the fact that the survey data correspond to a large sample which covers different regions of Spain and includes a variety of African diasporic backgrounds. Future research could leverage longitudinal and experimental designs to test how racial identity and experiences of racial discrimination influence activism over time.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest The author declares that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. The article adheres to the author's national ethics guidelines.

[17] The generic term *Afro* is configured as an inclusive term, "stands out as a binding element to various identities, generating neither confusion nor conflict" (Barbosa et al., 2020a, p. 62), while the sense of belonging to the category of Afro-descendant (the term chosen by the states during the Durban Conference to include the entire diaspora) seems not to be unanimously stated, according to Barbosa et al. (2020a).

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