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Abstract

This paper depicts intercultural communication represented as interactions between the in-group and the out-group in Spain as reflected via a Delphi consultation with experts. Certain trends in southern European countries with high rates of immigration, unemployment and television consumption are reflected in the findings, which suggest that: (1) social interaction between native-born and immigrant populations is a problem because of prejudice and a lack of acceptance of difference; (2) greater multicultural diversity in high-immigration countries does not necessarily translate into greater contact or a symbolic conception of intercultural communication between the in-group and the out-group; and (3) television constructs intercultural interaction from a stance of lack of equality in diversity, resulting in an impossible encounter marked by violence or the “carnavalesque”. In view of our findings, measures are proposed to foster intercultural exchange in multicultural societies.

Keywords: intercultural communication, multiculturalism, Delphi method, interculturalism, media culture, television, critical discourse analysis, focus group

Introduction

This paper focuses on television narratives regarding intercultural communication and their interpretation by a group of experts consulted using the Delphi method. Although focused on Spain, this study can be considered representative of countries with similar histories, cultures, and migratory trends (to be inserted after review). Spain, as a southern European country, has become a nation of immigration, officially recognized as such in 2000-2001 (Birsl and Solé, 2004: 66). In terms of its foreign-born population, among the European Union (EU) countries, it is ranked second only to Germany, and is followed by the UK, Italy, France, Belgium and Greece, in that order (INE, 2012). The immigrant population in 2010, at 5.7 million, represented 12% of the Spanish population. This figure has fallen by more than a million in the last four years, given that many people have returned to their countries of origin or have gone elsewhere in search of better opportunities. The situation of the immigrant population in Spain is precarious; at 32.9%, its unemployment rate is the highest of the entire EU, which has a mean unemployment rate of 16.8% (INE, 2012).

Taking into account this multicultural context, and considering that intercultural communication is produced today more through the media than through migration movements (Garcia Canclini, 1999), the analysis of intercultural media discourse can be regarded as a vital object of study in contemporary societies.

Theoretical framework

Intercultural communication is a highly characteristic feature of contemporary society. However, it is a problematic concept because it is defined through cultural difference (in terms of nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc). As Lustig and Koester (2003: 51) state, “intercultural communication occurs when large and important cultural differences create dissimilar interpretations and expectations about how to communicate competently.” Intercultural communication is also problematic because the phenomenon of communication itself is probably one of the most ambiguous within the social sciences (Craig, 1999). James W. Carey (1989) summarized the two most important conceptions of communication: *transmission*, where communication means the interchange of messages (communication is thus interaction) and *ritual*, where communication is a symbolic process that creates community and society, a dialogue where understanding and empathy may occur. We could argue that these definitions describe two consecutive stages in the process of communication since interaction/*transmission* is the first necessary step for the construction of meanings, society and the development of a deeper encounter with the other (what Carey would define as *ritual*). Considering these theoretical approaches to our object of study, for analytical purposes, intercultural communication is defined in this paper as the interaction process that can launch a deeper dialogue between individuals or groups with different cultural backgrounds. Specifically, as we will see in the following section, we have focused on the interaction (the first step in the communication process) established between different ethnic groups (the in-group and the out-group).

Intercultural communication has also been highlighted for its foundational character pertaining to both multiculturalism and interculturalism (Meer & Moodod, 2012: 182). The

discussion regarding the polysemy, ambiguity, limits and implications of these two expressions is extensive (Meer & Moodod, 2012, 2013; Wieviorka, 2012; Taylor, 2012; Abdallah-Preteille, 2006; Rodrigo-Alsina, 1997; Rodrigo-Alsina & Medina-Bravo, 2013). Multiculturalism is generally more focused on cohabitation (different cultures occupying the same government-regulated social space), whereas interculturalism reflect the interaction established between cultures (Rodrigo-Alsina & Medina Bravo, 2013).

On the one hand, Meer & Moodod (2012, 2013) questioned visions of multiculturalism as a phenomenon more frequently related to resentment, fragmentation and disunity, in comparison to interculturalism, more associated with communication, dialogue and social inclusion: “Until interculturalism as a political discourse is able to offer an original perspective (...) it cannot, intellectually at least, eclipse multiculturalism” (Meer & Moodod, 2012: 192). On the other hand, researchers like Rodrigo-Alsina & Medina Bravo (2013: 4) clearly identify more with interculturalism, since it “focuses on the dynamics of culture, the relational spaces, the frontier spaces, the cultural references that are in between and does not focus on cultures as isolated entities, like multiculturalism does”.

Even though it is not the purpose of this paper to further expand this discussion but to focus on the social construction of intercultural communication understood as the interaction between different ethnic groups, it could be argued that there is a certain complementarity between multiculturalism and interculturalism, since multiculturalism would be the more general context for interculturalism. And both are built, in part, through intercultural communication. In this sense, “while advocates of interculturalism wish to emphasize its positive qualities in terms of encouraging communication, recognizing dynamic identities, promoting unity and challenging illiberation, each of these qualities already feature (and are

on occasion foundational) to multiculturalism too” (Meer & Moodod, 2013: 4). Similarly, Wieviorka (2012: 230) and Rodrigo-Alsina (1997: 13) defend the common ground shared by these two concepts. Wieviorka (2012: 230) points out that since “interculturalism proposes to connect cultures with each other while multiculturalism is concerned with setting up a legal and institutional framework, both of them can be complementary”. For Rodrigo-Alsina (1997: 13), “multiculturalism is a political project based on the respect for cultural identities as a way through coexistence and miscegenation (interculturalism)”.

Given Spain’s multicultural profile, it can be assumed that intercultural communication is an important dimension of this country. However, analyses of media and direct intercultural interaction are scarce. Firstly, in relation to the media construction of intercultural communication, film (Gordillo, 2006), the press (Roy, 2012) but, most especially, television (Martínez Guillem, 2013; Igartua, Piñeiro and Ramos, 2012; Dervin and Gao, 2012; Kuppens and Mast, 2012; to be inserted after review; to be inserted after review) have been objects of study in relation to the construction of intercultural communication. The scarcity of research into the construction of interculturalism, however, is in strong contrast to the abundant research into the analysis of identities in the media (Al-Hejin, 2015; Granados Martínez, 2013; Castelló, 2008; Sandoval, 2006; Silva Echeto, 2013). Secondly, in relation to the analysis of direct intercultural communication within the broader framework of the EU, little attention has been paid to interaction between immigrant and native populations by either academia or institutions (OPI, 2014: 65). Accordingly, no common indicators are available from the EU that could help consolidate this field of study (OPI, 2014: 136).

Thus, as we can see, the analysis of intercultural interaction (whether mediated or direct) has not been a priority object of study. Nonetheless, the way intercultural interaction is represented in the media, and most particularly in television, is highly relevant. Television continues to be the most consumed medium in Spain, with citizens viewing an average of 238 minutes per day (EGM, 2014). Television is also the most socially integrated medium, as 88.6% of the Spanish population (EGM, 2014) regularly access content via this still hegemonic medium. TV consumption — above 84% for all age brackets from adolescence to old age — increases significantly with age, with rates as follows: 86.9%, 89.8%, 91.5% and 92.5% for the age groups 34-44 years, 45-54 years, 55-64 years and 65+ years (EGM, 2014).

Taking into account the relevance of intercultural communication, the status of Spain as a multicultural society and the importance of television as a medium, our research aim was to shed light on the way intercultural communication (understood as televised interactions between the in-group and the out-group) is represented and interpreted in Spain. This objective can be formalized through the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1. *What is the state of intercultural communication in Spain?*

RQ2. *How does television narrate interaction between the in-group and the out-group?*

RQ3. *What problems are associated with how television constructs intercultural communication?*

RQ4. *How can television foster intercultural communication?*

Methodology

To respond to the research questions, a Delphi-type approach involving nine intercultural experts was implemented. The Delphi method was chosen for data collection given that it is an anonymous consultation procedure suitable for a panel of geographically dispersed experts. After rounds with controlled feedback, experts finally reach convergence in their answers on a subject dealt with by few previous studies (Smith, 1997; Kent and Saffer, 2014; Landeta, 1999). Additionally, the Delphi method yields information on complex events unfolding in unknown areas, providing knowledge in situations for which no objective data or applicable analytical models are available (Landeta, 1999: 56, 163). The method thus perfectly suited our purposes, given that the media construction of intercultural interaction, as already noted, has not been studied in depth.

The choice of the Delphi method can be understood under an interactionist conception of culture, a paradigm that defines culture as the values, ways of thinking, feeling and acting where people are socialized. At the same time, however, people are also constitutive elements of their culture since they transmit, conserve and transform their cultures (Rodrigo-Alsina, 1997). This is why understanding how the media portray intercultural communication from the point of view of experts is a vital research task, since the media and experts are key social actors who reproduce existing cultural meanings who can also transform discourses and beliefs.

In the words of Kent and Saffer (2014: 569), “the Delphi method is a unique research approach because of the ability to learn about ideas and issues that are not widely recognized among a group”. In short, it is a structured group communication process that is effective in enabling a group of individuals to collectively address a complex problem (Linstone and Turoff, 2002). The Delphi questionnaire used here is based on two previous

studies – on television discourse analysis and audience research – conducted within the wider research project to which this article belongs (to be inserted after review). The first of these studies was a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of 157 Spanish television news items broadcast between May and July 2012 (to be inserted after review). It was concluded that television generally pays little attention to intercultural contact. Of 4,184 news broadcasts during the period, only 157 referred to intercultural communication (interaction between the in-group and out-group), with most stories tending to represent this communication as conflictive (to be inserted after review). The value of CDA lies in the fact that it is “a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (Van Dijk, 2008: 85). In the case of media representations of intercultural communication, this methodological approach provided us with the tools to verify whether the media legitimates asymmetrical situations of power in the context of the relationship between cultures. The tools provided by CDA provided us with insights into how intercultural interaction is represented, how the discourse on intercultural communication is constructed in the media and, more specifically, how the in-group and the out-group(s) interactions are represented in the media (Van Dijk, 1995: 248-249).

In our CDA study we used the following analytical concepts related to discourse processes and strategies (to be inserted after review):

Topics (macro level). Representing the themes that imbue discourses with global coherence, topics are accounted for by semantic macro-structures which, at the same time, derive from the propositions expressed in the text.

Lexicalization (micro level). This refers to the selection of word meaning (Van Dijk, 1995: 259). At this lexical micro level, sentences, nouns, adjectives, etc. are analysed so as to determine how a discourse, whose theme has been defined at the semantic macro-level, is constructed, bearing in mind nuances in meanings (to be inserted after review).

Our first study therefore served to formulate theoretical coordinates used in the present study, namely, the distinction between *conflictive interculturalism*, *possible interculturalism* and *unresolved interculturalism*. *Conflictive interculturalism* presents intercultural interaction as an impossible communicative encounter between “we” the natives and “they” the others (e.g. immigrants, foreign people, etc). *Possible interculturalism* occurs when media construct interaction between the in-group and the out-group marked by intercultural understanding and encounter; in this scenario interaction opens up a deeper dialogue and understanding among the participants. Finally, *unresolved interculturalism* refers to news regarding which the viewer is unsure whether or not an intercultural encounter will be possible.

The CDA found that *conflictive interculturalism* (macro level) featured in 57.3% of the analysed news, reflecting intercultural relationships as an impossible communicative encounter between “us” — represented by police, neighbourhood associations, fishermen and Spaniards victims of robbery and murder — and “them” — represented by Romanians, Africans, Poles and Latin and Dominican gangs, all viewed as a source of violence, threats and disruption to social stability. This “them” tends to be accompanied by adjectives such as “illegal,” “trafficking,” “furtive,” and “criminal.” The actions of “us” tend to involve defence, as a frequently recurring theme is how security forces “dismantle,” “act against,” “defend,” or “protect” the Spanish people from the threat of that which is culturally or

ethnically different. In contrast, the “them” that threatens this Spanish majority “works illegally,” “attacks,” “acts recklessly,” “destroys,” “traffics,” “steals,” “murders,” “participates in brawls,” and “exploits” (to be inserted after review).

Possible interculturalism was represented in 30.5% of the analysed news, often within the framework of cultural and political institutions and, less frequently, as a natural everyday event. When a peaceful intercultural encounter takes place, based on interaction and mutual understanding, it is frequently in the context of intercultural film festivals, art exhibitions, Ibero-American conferences, or international organizations (like the United Nations). In this framework, the type of interculturalism constructed also depends a great deal on who the out-group is.

Finally, *unresolved interculturalism* was reflected in 12.1% of news items, mainly as viewers being uncertain as to whether or not an intercultural encounter would be possible. These particular news items referred to “us” who “denounced”, “claimed” or “issued communications” in order to assist or protect “them”, the persons experiencing situations of inequality. The media does not “resolve” whether or not intercultural encounter is possible, whether it actually takes place, or whether it will continue to be characterized by conflict. Thus, once again there is an “us” versus “them” polarization (just as in *conflictive interculturalism*), but as an action open to subsequent future development (to be inserted after review).

To complement the CDA, four focus groups were organized (34 participants) in two Spanish cities (Barcelona and Seville) for July and August 2014. In both cities, the groups were divided into two age-group profiles: the *young* profile, which included people between 20 and 30 years old, and the *adult* profile, which consisted of people between the

ages of 40 and 60. The young/adult division is relevant to our objectives, because the members of the younger groups were children or adolescents in 2000-2001, when Spain was officially recognized as a country of immigrants (Birsl & Solé, 2004: 66). These participants, therefore, compared to the adults who were born during Spain's pre-democratic period (until 1975), have grown up in a multicultural context. The aim of the focus groups was to analyse how the younger viewers and adult viewers interpreted televised messages on intercultural communication (to be inserted after review).

From the 157 clips that were studied in the previous CDA, three news items were selected as representative of the three discourses (*possible interculturalism*, *conflictive interculturalism* and *unresolved interculturalism*). The focus group participants viewed the three news clips and were asked how they interpreted the news, what their opinions were and what stereotypes they perceived in the clips, as well as other related issues not present in the units of analysis.

Some of the insights obtained were that adult participants had less contact with the out-group and were mainly informed through traditional media, whereas the younger participants had more contact with the out-group and more so through social media (to be inserted after review). The younger group made a more critical reading of the news and were generally more critical of strong stereotyping and the lack of information. The adult groups, in contrast, were more accepting of the information transmitted by the clips and their response to immigration was more reactionary. This would concur with previous audience research findings that peripheral relations with problematic issues lead to greater acceptance of media versions of reality (Deacon et al., 1999: 26). There was also a clear ideological polarization in interpretations of intercultural news: the viewers typically

accepted or rejected media stories outright, thus leaving very little room for the kind of negotiation proposed by Hall (1993). Finally, it was also concluded that the focus group participants framed and “read” interculturalism in socioeconomic terms and rejected the influence of television (to be inserted after review).

Drawing on the results obtained in these previous CDA and focus group research phases, we now aim to enrich our study of intercultural communication and interaction using the Delphi method, implemented via an online questionnaire between April and June 2015. With this expert consultation, we conclude a research project articulated in three consecutive phases: television discourse analysis, audience research and expert consultation. The objective of implementing the Delphi method was to map the intercultural landscape in Spain as depicted in televised news stories, given uncertainties arising from a dearth of studies addressing mediated and direct intercultural interaction in this country. Since this lack of prior studies represented a major constraint on this paper, we implement a Delphi-style consultation with experts that enabled us to shed more light on interculturalism in Spain and to draw up proposals aimed at fostering intercultural interaction.

A total of 14 experts in intercultural communication were contacted by e-mail to request their participation in this study, nine of whom — representing seven universities and two research centres — agreed to participate (Table I). Most experts live and work in Spain, although the list also included Mexican and Argentinian researchers very familiar with the Spanish situation, either because they are Spanish by nationality or have worked in Spain. Overall, therefore, the sample of experts represented different parts of the Spanish-speaking academic world. The interdisciplinary experts were academics, researchers and media

professionals. All were reputable experts in interculturalism, whose work has been endorsed by the scientific community with high citation rates for their numerous publications in journals and books.

The data collection instrument used in the first Delphi round was an online questionnaire with 15 open-ended questions and 2 close-ended questions to be answered using a Likert-type scale. The first round was held between 20 April and 5 May 2015. The questions dealt with (1) socialization and intercultural communication in Spain; (2) interpretation and evaluation of the same three news clips viewed by the focus groups; and (3) evaluation of television's potential role in enhancing *possible intercultural* communication. The three news items were representative of the three discourses detected through the critical discourse analysis of 157 news clips:

1. *Redada en Lavapiés* (Lavapiés raid), duration 1 minute 10 seconds, broadcast by Telecinco (one of the main private channels at national level) on 28 May 2012. This example of *conflictive interculturalism* referred to a controversial raid in the Madrid district of Lavapiés and clashes and tensions throughout Spain between police and “*manteros*” (unlicensed street vendors who lay out their wares on a blanket).
2. *Prohibición de redadas* (Raids banned), duration 29 seconds, broadcast on La 1 (the main public channel at national level) on 21 May 2012. This case of *unresolved interculturalism* was a brief news report regarding a circular prohibiting police from making indiscriminate raids on grounds of people's ethnic origins, or of their being undocumented in Spain.
3. *Fiesta country* (Country and western festival), duration 1 minute 22 seconds, broadcast by Telemadrid (public channel for Greater Madrid) on 17 June 2012. This depiction of

a *possible intercultural* relationship was a news story about a country and western-style festival held in Algete (Madrid), featuring US flags and music and Texan-style clothing.

It must be pointed out that immigration is strongly related to two of the clips. Obviously, intercultural interaction goes beyond the issue of immigration — as we have already pointed out, possible interculturalism may be related to intercultural festivals, the arts, conferences, etc — but it is undeniable that, from a critical perspective, cultural diversity is often associated with low socioeconomic status and conflict. In any case, the country and western clip portrays a different kind of interculturalism.

Responses obtained in the first round, after processing and analysis, already revealed strong convergence. Six questions for which convergence was absolute (100%) were eliminated from the second round. The remaining questions — showing high but not absolute convergence — were included in the second round, which took place between 20 May and 8 June 2015. In this round, consisting of 11 open questions, participants were asked whether, on the basis of the responses in the first round, they would ratify or moderate their stance. After these two rounds, the Delphi sessions were concluded, given that consensus was reached regarding responses.

Results

First-round findings

An earlier phase of the research project to which this Delphi corresponds found, as noted above, substantial differences between younger people and older adults in interpreting mediated interculturalism. Regarding the question “Do you think young Spaniards aged 20 to 30 years old perceive interculturalism differently to older people aged 40 to 60 years

old?”, six of the nine experts answered in the affirmative, arguing that young people have experienced different historical, social and cultural contexts from the 40-60 year olds, who have had less direct contact with different cultures than the younger groups, socialized in ethnically diverse schools, more aware of migration processes, with experiences of studying abroad, adept in social networking, etc. Regarding whether intercultural socialization was greater, experts were divided. Almost half responded in the affirmative, indicating that we live in more open societies, with more immigration and more diversified family, neighbourhood and work settings, and also as a result of online communications. The remaining experts disagreed, indicating that more immigration, multiculturalism and pluriculturalism (and, therefore, more coexistence between cultures) did not automatically imply greater intercultural socialization.

Another first-round statement was “Direct intercultural socialization increases the chances of developing healthy intercultural communication without stereotyping”, scored using a Likert scale. Six of the nine experts agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, two were uncertain and only one disagreed.

The experts were unanimous in agreeing that intercultural communication in Spain was a social problem. They also indicated that much remained to be done (including with the media), given that stereotypes are difficult to combat even when social openness is greater. People needed to have suitable interpretation codes to ensure that misunderstandings and miscommunication were avoided. Furthermore, social problems would continue unless public bodies (including schools) proactively fostered coexistence. In short, according to the group of experts, social interculturalism was “a big problem because there is a great deal of prejudice and a general lack of acceptance.”

We next addressed issues related to television and how it constructs intercultural communication. The first — dual — question on this topic (previously asked of the focus group participants) was: “To what extent do you think television news influences your perceptions of interculturalism? And the perceptions of citizens in general?” The experts were unanimous in declaring that the influence of television was almost null for them, because, as experts, they viewed the media critically. In contrast, they were of the opinion that television greatly influenced citizen perceptions.

We also asked the experts regarding the influence of television on viewer images of interculturalism. They were unanimous in agreeing that television in itself was not capable of modifying criteria and attitudes, even as news reports confirmed prejudices and negative stereotypes. The key was broader social — and televised — discourse regarding interculturalism. This discourse, according to the experts, would become part “of the universe in which we are immersed, of the messages that we receive from everywhere that form part of the general learning environment in which we all make the same assumptions about race, culture, phenotypes and interculturalism.” Regarding whether the media dedicated time and resources to interculturalism, the experts were unanimous in agreeing that the media paid little attention to interculturalism and, when they did, it was normally in terms of conflict (which is not interculturalism, according to some experts), using stereotypes and in a “forced” manner. Giving as examples the Balkans, Latin America and the BBC, the experts insisted that interculturalism was treated part of life itself, not as something “external” or “alien”, and was handled with “tact and respect”. In contrast, Spanish television offered no programme that covered the issue in any depth — despite this

being necessary to truly embrace interculturalism. Television series also failed to reflect the true interculturalism of the population, according to the experts.

After viewing the three news clips, the experts, when asked to identify the kind of discourse being disseminated, denounced simplification. The first two clips (referring to the Lavapiés raid and the banned raids), for instance, simplistically associated undocumented individuals and immigrants with crime (amounting to racism, according to one expert). There was no perceived integration or dialogue, so interculturalism was presented as “something alien, something added and external.” Despite Spain being a country with a long history as a crossroads of cultures, the intercultural processes that have unfolded over the centuries tend to be obscured (to be inserted after review; Vernet, 2006). Signalled as “irresponsible” was equating “a mere offence [selling CDs on the street] with crime.” Interculturalism was in this way being associated with criminals mocking the police and the justice system. The discourse, in general, was underpinned by a perception that immigration was a source of danger. Regarding the country and western festival (the third clip news, an example of possible, harmonious intercultural communication), the experts indicated that, in this case, interculturalism was being depicted as frivolous, folksy, exotic, fun, superficial and anecdotal — in short, as “carnavalesque”.

The construction of interculturalism was perceived as creating several problems: simplification in terms of ethnic, geographical and national origins (excluding, however, gender and sexual orientation); a lack of discourse reflecting cultural diversity; and the construction of an ambiguous and sensationalist discourse that typically treated viewers as an amorphous mass of consumers, rarely as citizens. The experts also noted that the discourse and visual images often enhanced the perception of conflict, failing to educate

regarding intercultural interaction between different cultures or regarding multiculturalism (the existence of different cultures in the same territory). In short, “the news is made by ‘us’ who speak in passing of others who live here.”

Regarding the threads identified in the CDA (*conflictive*, *possible* and *unresolved interculturalism*), the experts were asked to consider what kind of interculturalism was being represented in the clips, scoring their opinion on a Likert scale ranging between 1 (*conflictive interculturalism*) and 5 (*possible interculturalism*). Participants rated the Lavapiés raid story with a mean score of 2, indicating a perception of conflictive interculturalism, and rated the raids ban story with a mean score of 2.55; in this latter case, although the score reflected conflictive interculturalism, it was recognized that the police, in attempting to reduce discrimination, at least partially defused the conflict unfolding in the first clip. Finally, the experts rated the country and western festival story with a mean score of 4, thus acknowledging it clearly as a case of possible interculturalism. This evaluation is in line with the results of our CDA, as developed in above.

Regarding the three news items, the experts generally perceived risks but no benefits. Media constructions regarding the first two clips potentially had repercussions for the social imaginary, as intercultural relations were presented in terms of power, with immigrants as the controlled object. As for the news regarding the festival, the treatment was considered to be superficial and folksy and likely to awaken prejudices regarding how “other people are colonizing us with their culture”. Since none of the news items represented equality in diversity, they neither fostered integration nor normalized cultural relations. According to the experts, the news stories were built around stereotypes, conflict, risk, depersonalization

and even xenophobia. In short, they marked distance, whether due to exoticism, danger or delinquency.

The experts also evaluated whether, in a broader sense, televised news tended to represent *possible, conflictive, or unresolved* intercultural viewpoints. Seven of the nine experts were of the opinion that the tendency was to depict *conflictive interculturalism*, given the general emphasis on conflict and poor living conditions, but also due to the conservative nature of most media institutions. This conclusion coincides with that drawn from the CDA performed in the first phase of this research project (to be inserted after review): immigrants are treated differently because of their socioeconomic status. We consequently asked experts to rate whether the wealth, power and influence of the immigrant's country of origin affected representations of particular nationalities as a focus of harmony or conflict. The experts were unanimous: wealth, power and social class were key factors in the representation of nationalities and groups. As one of the experts pointed out: "Racism is, above all, classism, and discrimination is more a matter of social class and power than of ethnicity. What comes from countries with less wealth is perceived as more threatening." This aspect was also highlighted by the audiences that participated in the focus groups (to be inserted after review).

Second-round findings

As noted earlier, the number of issues included in the second round was reduced as a result of response convergence in the first round. Regarding whether young people and adults had different perceptions of interculturalism, given the high convergence achieved for the first-round question, the following question was posed: "Would you say, in general, that younger people from an urban environment with a reasonable education level would have a

more open and flexible view of interculturalism compared to other groups (adults, pensioners, rural dwellers, unemployed, etc)?" Seven of the nine experts agreed with this statement, acknowledging that perceptions of, and even attitudes to, interculturalism was a complex issue composed of several layers and was undoubtedly affected by any number of cultural factors (age, geographic origins and location, socioeconomic status, etc). However, they warned that younger people from urban environments, although accustomed to difference, "continue to have colonial and xenophobic attitudes as sub-currents to the discourse of diversity". One of the two experts who did not agree with the statement said: "Rural areas have received many immigrants who have become fully integrated (...) What marks difference is the possibility of being in actual contact with diversity".

Another first-round question was whether there was greater intercultural socialization in Spain nowadays compared to a few decades ago. On the basis of the issues identified in the responses, in the second round we asked the experts if they would agree with the following statement: "Culturally and symbolically, there is more intercultural interaction than previously, but this opening up of the collective imaginary does not necessarily translate into more direct and unmediated intercultural interaction." The experts unanimously endorsed this statement: increased awareness and diversity in the collective imaginary did not necessarily translate into greater opportunities for interaction. Indeed, ghettos of closed-off communities were commonplace in many areas. Interestingly, even mentioned were Erasmus students (international students attending Spanish universities), who tended to have relatively little contact with local students. Finally, while recognizing the validity of the statement, it was pointed out that: "Mediation — in the social imaginary, the media

system, the education system and the family environment — is very powerful in facilitating direct intercultural interaction”.

As to whether direct intercultural socialization would favour healthy communication without stereotypes, in reaffirming their views the experts achieved consensus in their responses in this second round. They noted that the only apparently discordant opinion in the first round (“building spaces in common does not imply socialization if relationships are unequal and asymmetric”) was not entirely negative, but rather introduced a nuance which one expert explained as follows: “Inequality does not facilitate interculturalism. Another matter is a symmetric relationship between equals.” To achieve healthy communication without stereotypes, “we need to modify certain conditions as they stand at present”. In short, although intercultural socialization is the basis for the changes needed to ensure more diverse and complex relationships, improving opportunities “is not necessarily any indication that improved relationships will result”. In short, “coexistence does not automatically imply living in harmony”.

In the first round, the experts pointed to the two main intercultural discourses evident in the news clips: interculturalism as a source of social conflict and violence, and interculturalism as something frivolous and folksy. In the second round we asked the experts why they thought these two very different discourses were articulated around the “other” who comes from elsewhere. They pointed to race and poverty, or in other words, racism and classism, as key factors. “With people coming from similar countries, a folksy, exotic, superficial kind of language is used”. Both discourses also referred to cultures in a very generalized way (the exotic and folksy versus the dangerous and criminal). The media tend to rely on

simplification and stereotyping so as to reinforce its own, normalized environment as “the most desirable world.”

With regard to how the wealth, power and influence of a country influences media constructions, in this second round the experts reaffirmed their opinions, but also added in the gender variable: “It’s no accident that men predominate in the news. Women are invisible and doubly so when they are immigrants”.

One research question referred to how television could enhance intercultural communication in a multicultural society like Spain. The experts made the following proposals:

- Provide more intercultural education for journalists and viewers.
- Ensure a more plural composition of the media industry through new laws to break monopolies and foster more open television, radio, newspapers, etc.
- Educate viewers in how to critically analyse content (media literacy) and promote critical viewing of intercultural news.
- Promote diversity in newsroom staffs and enhance minority access to content production.
- Reformulate the concept of news over and above expressions of social conflict.
- Change formats/durations for news items on interculturalism (more time would ensure that diversity was represented in a more profound way and from different perspectives).
- Ensure approaches that are comprehensive and never simplified.
- Foster more citizen participation in the construction of news, for example, by conducting focus groups.

- Foster exploration of the concept of culture and a responsible rethinking of interculturalism.
- Broaden the range of factors marking differences between people to avoid a reductionist focus on ethnic or geographic origin and to foster intercultural relations with co-citizens on the basis of gender, social class, education and sexual orientation.

As to actual media content, the experts made the following proposals:

- For situations of inequality when people of different origins are in positions of less prestige or power, explain the reasons and show that this is not a natural state of affairs but has social, political and economic roots.
- Provide a broader view of interculturalism by including food, music, literature, languages and religions in content.
- Include anecdotes and other common elements from other cultures (to demonstrate that their way of being is not so different from ours) and cover positive news stories showing coexistence, common projects, etc.
- Depict diversity as routine and not as exceptional and point to it as a source of cultural richness. In short, include news that “contributes something” to society, rather than, for instance, news on repression by the authorities.
- Remove information biases and avoid stereotypes associated with ethnocentrism.
- Provide more numerous and more varied sources of information that tell other sides of a story.
- Discuss intercultural issues in programmes other than just the news.
- Give a voice to minorities (and not only in conflict situations) and build media stories that ensure that their voice does not reinforce the ethnocentric vision of the medium.

- Include people from diverse backgrounds in series and other fiction programmes.

Discussion

Our findings regarding intercultural interaction and communication in Spain may help explain similar trends in other countries of southern Europe, which, like Spain, have high immigration rates, high unemployment rates for both native-born and immigrant populations and high media consumption (television among older adults and social networks among young people). This article is part of a broader three-part research project, consisting of the Delphi research described above, preceded by a CDA of 157 televised news stories on interculturalism (to be inserted after review) and audience research regarding how viewers interpreted three stories representative of the main interculturalism issues detected in the CDA (to be inserted after review). In this final part of the project we have proposed a set of measures for the television medium — validated by field experts — aimed at enhancing intercultural interaction between immigrant and native-born populations in Spain and, by extension, in similar southern European countries.

Our first research question (RQ1), aimed at exploring the state of intercultural communication in Spain, revealed that, in general, intercultural interaction is typically viewed as a social problem because of prejudice and a lack of acceptance of difference; furthermore, television has tended to reinforce such perceptions. This suggests the need for public and political institutions to adopt measures to foster interaction between native-born and immigrant populations in Spain and the rest of southern Europe, within the framework of the EU. On the basis of the results of the CDA, the focus group and the Delphi method, it can be argued that Spanish multiculturalism has not been translated into a strong

intercultural environment. In other words, from a communication perspective, it could be said that intercultural interaction (the *transmission* view highlighted by Carey) has barely developed deeper intercultural understanding and dialogue (a *ritual* view on communication).

Regarding intercultural socialization – an important aspect of the state of intercultural communication – the experts were of the opinion that younger people, socialized in urban environments and with an average cultural level, are more aware of difference and are more predisposed to intercultural communication. Note, however, that direct intercultural socialization does not automatically ensure interculturalism, although it does prepare the ground. The opinion of the experts corroborates the findings obtained for the focus group sessions, namely, that younger people with more exposure to difference had a richer and most open perception of interculturalism than older adults who had experienced very little or no direct intercultural interaction (to be inserted after review).

Regarding the influence of the media, the experts warn that television reproduces and reinforces predominant beliefs in the social environment. This issue makes understanding the influence of television more complex, since, over and above any cause-effect relationship, televised discourse reproduces the social order, which, as we have seen, does not as yet concede the possibility of intercultural encounter. This conclusion reinforces the interactionist conception of culture developed above.

As to our second research question (RQ2), regarding televised discourse content the experts stated that “the news is made by “us” who speak in passing of “others” who live here”. This way of presenting information portrays immigrants as objects to be controlled. The fact that ethnocentrism is very much a feature of television further problematizes the issue of

interculturalism. The experts criticized the simplification of news stories and their lack of sensitivity to intercultural communication: immigration equals delinquency, violence, frivolity and the “carnavalesque”. Intercultural communication is, in short, something alien and external, something that belongs elsewhere. A different culture is viewed as superior or inferior but never equal, and dialogue with something so substantially different and strange is not possible.

In this regard, we must point out a limitation of our study: given the relevance of immigration issues in the selected clips, it could be argued that intercultural conflict was to be expected. Consequently, and although it is undeniable that conflictive interculturalism reigns in the Spanish media, more research is needed with regard to the representation of intercultural phenomena unrelated to immigration.

Television refers little to interculturalism and, when it does, it typically does so in terms of conflict. The construction of the “other” as alien to “us” and the perceptions of conflict are entirely consistent with the findings for our CDA of 157 televised news items (to be inserted after review). Intercultural contact is typically marked by conflict, or if not by conflict, treated as a matter for institutions, not for the everyday life of ordinary people and ordinary citizens. Bearing in mind the interactionist conception of culture developed above, we could argue that only majority groups participate in the construction and reproduction of media discourses and representations. The engagement of minorities in the social construction of reality, however, is crucial, as a way to avoid reproducing existing meanings but also of challenging and changing current exclusive values and beliefs.

Our third research question (RQ3) addressed the problems associated with the televised construction of intercultural communication. The main problem, according to the experts, is

that television coverage of interculturalism promotes racism, classism and a heteronormative perception of reality. TV discourse in general reflects a lack of equality regarding diversity. In the audience research conducted as part of our research project (to be inserted after review), the focus group participants denounced — in a less systematic way — stereotyping of immigrants and different treatment depending on country of origin. Our analysis, however, also revealed polarized interpretations of media messages: participants either accepted or rejected outright the hegemonic readings proposed by the media. This polarization did not occur in the Delphi study, given that the experts unanimously rejected and denounced media handling of interculturalism. In neither case was there a stance regarding negotiation in decoding, as proposed by Stuart Hall (1993). This may indicate the absence of negotiated interpretations when television stories tackle sensitive social and cultural issues, such as those relating to interculturalism. Thus, the three stances identified by Hall — dominant-hegemonic, negotiated and oppositional — do not help explain how the receiver reacts — given the emotional impact of images — when television tackles questions of deep social and cultural significance. Thus, the fact that the predominance of acceptance or rejection might actually simplify media interpretation processes needs to be further explored in relation to interculturalism and from ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and religious perspectives.

In relation to our fourth research question (RQ4), experts put forward several proposals aimed at improving the situation as analysed, including suggestions for fostering plurality in the media. Finally, our paper suggests future research lines aimed at fostering intercultural communication in Western societies, namely, exploration of the intercultural

encounter from gender, sexual orientation and religious viewpoints as an alternative to nationality, ethnicity and its related immigration issues.

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