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CRIME, JUSTICE AND MEDIA

CRIME, JUSTIÇA E MÉDIA

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CRIME, JUSTICE AND MEDIA: DEBATING (MIS) REPRESENTATIONS AND RENEWED CHALLENGES

CRIME, JUSTIÇA E MÉDIA: DEBATES SOBRE REPRESENTAÇÕES MEDIÁTICAS E DESAFIOS ATUAIS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Understanding the ever-complex relationship between the media, society and crime requires exploring several fluid discussions that connect these domains. How does the media affect the way people think about social issues such as criminality and justice? What is the impact of media coverage of crime on how society responds to it? Do the media have a central role in forming public opinion, does public opinion influence what media report, and/or are there multiple and complex influences within this spectrum? What are the challenges imposed by the several forms of media in the scope of mass communication regarding crime and violence? These and other queries are persistent among media scholars researching this field of study. However, studies have shown no clear-cut answers to these questions as they show complex intersections between them and might change significantly according to geopolitical issues, affected social groups and types of media involved.

A robust field of literature on the relations between media, crime, and justice has shown that media play a relevant and decisive role in the overall perception of crime and justice (see, for example, Greer, 2013). In fact, contemporary views of crime are directly connected to how media represent aspects of the criminal justice system, including violent crimes, police activity, criminal investigations, high-profile trials, prison life and others. News media, social media, fictional representations of crime and justice, and the relatively new but effervescent field of “true crime” depictions (in the form of podcasts, movies, and books) make oppositions between collective security and human rights more visible. These media platforms also reify discourses that rely on notions of

“us” and “others”. However, further debate is essential to evidence the profound social inequalities that promote such social cleavages.

Aside from the media’s role in representing crime and justice, we have recently witnessed how it can also be used as a platform for promoting and acting upon violence and criminality. Our daily lives have become increasingly reliant on the digital world, thanks to advances in telecommunications, the rapid dissemination of mobile information, and the popularity of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter (Thukral & Kainya, 2022) and, more recently, TikTok. Such a pervasive use of social media has, consequently, changed the way we understand and experience victimisation and crime. Examples of this relate to online gender violence (Afrouz, 2021; Backe et al., 2018; Bound Alberti, 2021) or online hate crime and hate speech (Castaño-Pulgarín et al., 2021; Müller & Schwarz, 2020; Williams et al., 2020), as well as phishing, identity theft, online job fraud, cyberbullying, cyberstalking, and so much more (Thukral & Kainya, 2022).

In this thematic issue of *Comunicação e Sociedade*, we invited social sciences researchers to reflect upon the various forms of interconnection and disconnection between crime, justice and media. We propose to understand how the media play an essential heuristic instrument for understanding crime and justice, as it both (re)presents and impacts our understanding of criminal events and can be a platform for violent and criminal activity.

This introductory article provides a reflection on the pressing issues around the links between media, crime and justice. It starts with a debate around media representations of crime and justice, moves to discuss the impact of media on the public perception of crime and justice, and then underlines how new media can be used to fuel crime and violence. Finally, the structure of this thematic issue is provided, briefly describing and contextualising the 10 articles that comprise it.

2. MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF CRIME AND JUSTICE

Media representations (a core field in the broad field of media studies) concern how various media platforms portray particular groups, communities, experiences, ideas, or topics from a particular ideological or value perspective. These representations do not necessarily reflect or mirror “reality” but (re)present the reality, creating a new reality. Lippmann (1922) coined this as the pseudo-environment, corresponding to the stereotypical reality presented by the media, which is not the reality in itself, but the reality conveyed to the audience and the reality that the audience perceived as being “real”. In this regard, media theorists have long argued about how certain social groups and events are represented in the media (see some examples in Jewkes, 2004).

Because this pseudo-environment becomes the “reality”, it is essential to understand how much of this actually impacts and influences our understanding of the world. For many, the media are the main (or only) source of access to certain facts, events, stories, reports, testimonies or images; and it is also in this way that such individuals form opinions, reinforce beliefs, build images, and give meaning to a complex and changing social reality (Carvalho, 2007; Gomes, 2015; Penedo, 2003). Although the way the public

receives information is not completely uncritical and passive (Guibentif, 2002; Sacco, 1995), most of what people perceive about a certain reality is provided by the media, especially in the case of realities distant from their daily lives (Lippmann, 1922). Media may not say how people should think about a certain topic or event, but they are definitely decisive in defining the topics, and events the public should consider through the way information is highlighted and represented (Machado & Santos, 2009b).

As such, media assume key importance in societies, and media representations are worthy of in-depth investigation as we cannot ignore how certain social issues are conveyed (Gomes, 2015; Greer, 2013). The media are a powerful agent of social control (Pina, 2009) and social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966/2004). The media, therefore, constitute a powerful ideological apparatus, as its discourses are based on assumptions with a strong ideological character. On the one hand, media contribute to social control and reproduction and, on the other hand, operate as cultural commodities, entertaining people, keeping them politically and socially informed and reflecting changes in values and identities (Mendes, 2004, p. 153).

In this regard, it is paramount to understand how media are key producers and purveyors of “knowledge” about crime, disorder and control (Greer, 2013). Our understanding of crime — how much crime is out there, what types of crime are most prevalent, who is most at risk, who are the offenders and what are the best responses — derives mostly from sources other than personal experience. Most people only experience criminality through the news. That is, most individuals are subjected to a representation of the crime instead of facing criminality itself (either as offenders and/or as victims). Consequently, the media’s coverage of a certain type of crime is directly related to fear of such crime (Chadee & Ditton, 2005). Moreover, how the media represent crime not only shapes community identity but also encourages personal and shared senses of fear and security (Banks, 2005).

News about crime and justice and entertainment centring on it are quite widespread (Robinson, 2018). Crime news is one of the most popular and constant in the total amount of news broadcast by the media (Machado & Santos, 2008; Penedo, 2003; Robinson, 2018). Moreover, crime has become the widest and most competitive area of journalism (Pina, 2009). Besides this tendency to the exaggerated coverage of crime news by the media in general, it is relevant to consider how the media report the stories of alleged criminals and their victims and the feelings they consequently provoke in the audience, feeding people’s stereotypes and urban myths about crime (McCombs, 2002). That is why, of the many themes that can be found in the media, that of crime and justice is referred to as being the most revealing of what the ideology of a given society is, involving notions of good and evil, morality, social achievement and social structure (Surette, 1998, pp. 37–38). Wacquant (2000) also adds that the media function like the prison or the ghetto since they are institutions in charge of stigmatising certain groups to neutralise the material and/or symbolic threat they represent or may represent for the surrounding society.

However, why is “crime” so popular in the media? Ericson et al. (2010) argue that the media’s appetite for crime stems from a more general concern with the question of order, in which order is conceived in terms of morality, in a procedural way and as a social hierarchy (see also Sparks, 2001). This order is embedded in reality by the particular interests of certain dominant groups and is masked in the name of objectivity, neutrality and balance that the media aim to achieve (Ericson et al., 2010, p. 98). Surette (1998) summarises the following explanations advanced by different authors for the popularity of crime news: (a) crime news is described as serving a positive social function by defining the limiting acceptable social behaviour, deterring offenders, cautioning potential victims, and providing crime surveillance; (b) crime is an important social issue, and therefore crime news is made to reflect the world we live in; and, lastly (c) crime news increase circulation and has entertainment value for companies that own the media. Each of these reasons explains why crime news is so popular, the types of crime that are most favourable to them and the reasons for their coverage (Surette, 1998).

However, as we already alluded to in this introduction, the problem with crime in the media is not only how crime is portrayed but also the frequency in which it is reported, exaggerating the importance of crime in people’s lives. Media analysis studies evidence that the news shows a map of criminal events that differs, in many ways, from that provided by official crime statistics (Gomes, 2013; Katz, 1987; Robinson, 2018; Sacco, 1995). Indeed, several studies show that, even when statistics indicate that most crimes committed are non-violent, the media show us exactly the opposite (Sacco, 1995). The media overwhelmingly focus on violent and sexual crimes, which have greater news value (Greer, 2013), and on crimes committed by strangers rather than by acquaintances or family members (cases of domestic violence are, for example, less often reported than street crimes; Pina, 2009). By doing so, media representations exaggerate both the levels of serious interpersonal crime in society and the risk of becoming a crime victim (Greer, 2013). Also, media reports of criminal facts are usually limited to the description of the event and immediate consequences, not focusing on critical perspectives or wider debates around causes, prevention, or policy (Carvalho, 2007; Greer, 2012, 2013). Criminal events are simply represented as a result of aberrant individual deviations (Bortner, 1984; Haney & Manzolati, 1981; Hans & Dee, 2010), practised by crazy or evil people (Pina, 2009) with a vast set of choices (Surette, 1998). In this sense, offenders are often seen as if they were not part of the world in which rules, values and considerations of justice apply and, no less commonly, are associated with the more vulnerable social classes (Machado & Santos, 2009a) and racial and ethnical minoritised groups (Gomes, 2013, 2015). In sum, offenders from the most disadvantaged social groups are portrayed as the culprits for the existence of violence in the streets (Hayward & Yar, 2006; Ramos & Novo, 2008).

Considering the dramatic and emotional potential of criminal stories, the media explore emotionally shocking scenarios, elect heroes, and punish villains, always with an exemplary perspective of restoring order, truth and justice (Ferin-Cunha, 2003, pp. 2–3), being, thus, ideologically imbued. This replacement of the order is again in line with the idea of Ericson et al. (2010) that crime news would have a positive social function of social

control. The darkest side of human nature is scrutinised, stimulating the most voyeuristic eyes (Peelo, 2006) and exacerbating feelings of repulsion towards criminal acts, anger towards injustice and offenders and the shame, remorse or guilt of offenders (Karstedt, 2010).

3. MEDIA EFFECTS ON PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF CRIME AND JUSTICE

Media representations of crime have been a perennial cause of concern (Reiner, 2007). It is undeniable that the media representations of crime end up influencing policy and practice related to crime control in Western societies. That is alarming because coverage of criminological issues by the media is interspersed with moral panics (see Altheide, 2009; Cohen, 2011; Cyr, 2003; Garland, 2008; Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994; Hall et al., 1978; Hunt, 1997), a fear-producing process of strong disapproval of moral threats (Garland, 2008) that exemplifies a right-wing inclination of the media (Cohen, 2011). In fact, moral panics can be actually considered more dangerous than the crime itself, as it induces authorities' actions for crime control in the direction of social fears and anxieties instead of in the direction of what statistics prove to occur (Hickman, 1982).

The issue of the media's effects on the public perception of crime has given rise to research on the relationship between levels of exposure to media content and the sensationalist treatment of certain crimes and opinions and public attitudes towards criminal reality (Carvalho, 2007; Ferin-Cunha et al., 2007; Guibentif, 2002; McCombs, 2002; Penedo, 2003; Pina, 2009; Santos, 2009; Webster, 2001). Media are not solely responsible for inducing fear of crime since the risk of victimisation, previous experience as a victim, environmental conditions, ethnicity, and previous contacts with the police and the criminal justice system are also among the many factors that interact through complex processes that influence public anxiety about crime (Rego, 2015). Nonetheless, media play an important role in creating a "cultural climate" in which certain types of criminal behaviour are portrayed more often, and with greater intensity, than others (Jewkes, 2004, p. 167). The same can be concluded regarding certain groups of people, usually poor, foreign and ethnic groups, who are portrayed as deviants, offenders or villains of the stories narrated in the news (Cádima & Figueiredo, 2003; Carvalho, 2007; Ferin-Cunha et al., 2008; Gomes, 2015; Mills et al., in press; Santos, 2008). The media are thus responsible for manipulating and feeding public fears about some crimes and certain social groups (Jewkes, 2004).

As such, crime and justice are at the same very appealing matters for the media and a projective matter of tensions and social imbalances (Penedo, 2003). Surette (1998) identifies five different ways the media influence the collective perception of crime and fear of crime — (a) substitution: people who do not have alternative sources of knowledge to replace fear-promoting media information; (b) resonance: people with a concrete experience of victimisation who corroborate or come across the information conveyed by the media; (c) vulnerability: people less able to prevent victimisation

are more easily frightened by information from the media; (d) affinity: people with demographic similarities to crime victims also become more fearful and more susceptible to being influenced by the media; and (e) maximum effect: people who already feel high levels of fear are, because of that, beyond the reach of the media's influence (Chiricos et al., 1997).

Therefore, the media can be seen as a cause and a way to fight crime (Brown, 2003; Surette, 1998). This paradox stems from how the media are, at the same time, responsible for reporting crime and for telling us how it can be fought. Not only do we learn about crime and justice through the media, we learn to live with it through the same source (Surette, 1998). The media sell the fear of crime while lamenting it (Brown, 2003, p. 26) and demanding it to be fought. The idea of a “socially constructed reality” about crime, in which the processes of information flows create our perception and understanding of the world we live in, is a central and profoundly important aspect of knowing where the truth about crime ends and the truth about the media begins (Surette, 1998).

4. NEW MEDIA AS A PLATFORM FOR VIOLENCE AND CRIME

In the last decades, the web has transformed the rules of socialisation, defying notions of space and time and setting an over-stimulated imagination about itself as a new medium (Malbreil, 2007). This added complexities and new challenges to everyday life, including the way crime and justice events happen and are portrayed. In fact, nowadays, it is common that crime and justice events are *webcast* as they happen, high-profile “celebrity” trials are tweeted live, and riots and revolutions are orchestrated through social media (Greer, 2013). Furthermore, the web can be used as a platform for criminal behaviour, and a means to prevent and fight crime. To understand how new media enable cybercrime and the social implications of crime and violence mediated by technology, we must first place new media representation in the common imagination.

The web has been feeding people's fantasy and imagination since its earliest predictions: when the novelist Jules Verne talked of a network to send documents through signs in the 1860s; when the documentalist Paul Otlet imagined a telepicture book at the end of the 19th century; when the poet Paul Valery started a discussion about ubiquity almost a century ago. Overall, views of the web have been positive, and cyberspace has been described through optimistic metaphors, such as “digital library”, “information highway”, “virtual community”, “digital ecology”, and “narrative stream” (Mosco, 2004). While there were certainly negative uses of the web from its very first days of widespread use — for example, discussions about spam in the middle 1990s (Brunton, 2013) — only recently have negative and positive perspectives become more evenly balanced. Part of the process in which new media's positive meaning is constructed through media representation is responsible for nurturing people's minds and bringing together real and fantastical meanings (Orgad, 2012).

Contemporary debates about the impact of the web finally include emerging negative issues, focusing especially on online social networks and their uses. For instance, de Vries and Schinkel (2019) discuss the imaginary surveillance surrounding social media

applying facial recognition technologies, thereby allowing the rise in “algorithmic anxiety”. McGregor (2019) argues that journalists currently co-opt social media activity in their political reporting to reflect and represent public opinion, which attributes to companies such as Twitter and Facebook a legitimised role in creating a general idea of public opinion. According to Oz et al. (2018), these platforms are constantly seen as enabling uncivil and impolite behaviours, especially in interactions with strangers. In addition, these platforms might also be used to enact gender violence (Afrouz, 2021; Backe et al., 2018; Bound Alberti, 2021), hate crime and hate speech (Castaño-Pulgarín et al., 2021; Müller & Schwarz, 2020; Williams et al., 2020), cyberbullying, cyberstalking, economic fraud, and several other types of crimes (Thukral & Kainya, 2022). Recent research also discusses the use of Twitter for the distribution of misinformation, commonly labelled “fake news”, now a reality inserted into political discussions and imposing a challenge to democracies (Brummette et al., 2018; Vargo et al., 2018). There is also research showing the negative social and psychological impacts of social media, especially amongst the youth (van Dijck, 2013); the lack of protection of users’ privacy by technology corporations such as Google, Facebook and Amazon (Striphas, 2015); abuses perpetrated by governments in liberal regimes (Greenwald, 2014); and individual, corporate and governmental vulnerability to cyber-attacks (Landau, 2017).

Positive representations of new media still focus on how they can be used to protect people’s right to private communication and access to information (Floridi, 2014; Hoang & Pishva, 2014; Jardine, 2018; McLeod, 2011; Sharon & John, 2018; Wu & Atkin, 2018). However, new and growing forms of crime and violence through new media exemplify to which extent technological development adds sophistication to cybercrime, promoting more sceptical views and representations of the web (Larsson et al., 2012; Martin, 2014; Morselli et al., 2017; van Hardeveld et al., 2017). Interestingly, Curtis and Oxburgh (2022) argue that victims of online crimes and cybercriminals rely on a sense of security given by both the use of technology and the distance between themselves: while victims feel falsely protected by these things, offenders are actually enabled by them, avoiding any accountability. As mentioned by Dupont and Holt (2022), there is a clear relationship between the increase in the use of new technologies in everyday lives and its appropriation for criminal and anti-social activities, which makes it “vital to increase our understanding of the nature of offender behaviour, correlates of victimisation, and the utility of policies to deter crime” (p. 860). That said, victimisation is a topic that requires special attention and research, considering that it is undeniable that criminals have explored the web. Victims must be empowered to report a crime, which will only happen if cases are dealt with seriously, preventing further victimisation and mental health issues; considering that in a post-pandemic world, most people have to spend time online, this is not optional anymore (Button et al., 2022).

5. INTRODUCING THIS THEMATIC ISSUE

As we argued so far, links between crime, justice and media are deep and complex, as media and social media (re)present, (mis)represent and impact our understanding of crime and justice but can also be used as a platform for violent and criminal acts. This special issue addresses this complexity by comprising research about traditional mass media such as newspapers and television (Luhmann, 1996), as well as new media that is not based on the broadcasting logic (Scolari, 2009), which Manovich (2002) equates to digital media, for instance, social media.

Considering the efforts for decolonisation in academia and the prominent global feature of the media, this special issue brings together research about multiple countries, contexts and realities. As argued by Laidler et al. (2017), research about the crime-media nexus has to include the nuances in the Global North and Global South, taking into consideration not only political and social situations but also geopolitics and economic aspects.

This thematic issue consists of 10 research papers, distributed in three main themes: media representations of crime and justice, online crime and violence, and technology.

The first set of articles explores *media representations* of certain violent and criminal events in news and entertainment media. The first article, written by Célia Belim and Artur Simões, explores two Portuguese newspapers' agenda-setting and framing when representing the Hong Kong protests. These protests originated in March 2019 after the Hong Kong government proposed an extradition bill, which led to citizens' fear that they could become subject to a different legal system, undermining the region's autonomy and the citizens' rights. Reports of attacks on protesters, arrests of activists and communications problems during protests concerned United Nations human rights experts. Regardless of the differences between media outlets, this article provides an interesting debate on the importance of covering protests and social movements. After all, as stated by the authors, "a protest without media coverage is a non-event (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993), assuming the logic that it exists if the protest is represented in the media" (Belim & Simões, p. 44). More than that, the way the media cover these events might strengthen or compromise the cause, and the impact of media representations is discussed.

Then, Gilmar José dos Santos discusses how the online media have been representing corporate manslaughter by focusing on two case studies: Samarco's and Vale's criminal tragedies in Brazil. Among other findings, the author evidenced that online news is reluctant to report the cases as corporate manslaughter, framing the episodes as accidents or tragedies. Although the alternative-independent media appeared to be more inclined to frame it as a homicide, not enough resources were available to produce their own content. As such, it was observed that the reporting approach neutralised and re-signified the crimes, favouring the companies. This article raises relevant debates around what voice is given to the victims in such criminal tragedies, how the transgressors do not fit in the media or society's representation of the criminal and how this ends up impacting the way media convey corporate crime.

Continuing with the focus on news articles, Ester Amaral de Paula Minga explores the social representations around the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in two influential Portuguese newspapers. This Church was the subject of many news reports during the 1990s due to accusations of serious crimes such as charlatanism, connections to drug trafficking and child abduction. Much of the news linked the Church with stereotypes about Brazil and Brazilians and referenced Brazilian soap operas, which were quite popular in the country at that time. Via critical discourse analysis and framing analysis, the author analysed if these same ideas persisted through time. The author concludes that the negative image of the Church identified in the 1990s remained, although the Church's media presence has since reduced. Although the current presence of the Church in the media is less pronounced, recent cases such as the 2017 *O Segredo dos Deuses* (The Secret of Gods) suggest that the emphasis on melodrama in coverage of the Church remains and may come once again, to be associated with contexts of xenophobia and religious intolerance. This analysis over time allows us to discuss the eventual impact media have on public opinion through time.

The following article focuses on the discourse of photographs instead of the common analysis of the journalistic text. Ângela Cristina Salgueiro Marques, Angie Biondi and Ana Paula da Rosa provide an analysis of a set of journalistic photographs about two major police operations in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, one of them at Complexo da Maré in 2014 and the other one at Jacarezinho in 2021, both considered massacres as civilians have lost their lives. Analysing those photographs and comparing the position and attitude of police officers and local people, amongst other nuances, the authors enrol in a philosophical debate around visibility conditions and journalistic context. According to the authors, the presence of ordinary people in those images, while doing their daily chores, gesturing, glancing and simply reacting to the horror of the situation, interfere with the images' enunciative character. The article then takes a step further to discuss these appearances' political and aesthetic power, as they can highlight the nuances between the visible and the readable.

While the previous articles focus on media representations through newspaper articles (text or image), the last two articles within the media representations section of the special issue focus on media representations of entertainment, particularly television series. Melina Meimaridis and Rodrigo Quinan explore the normalisation of brutality and police authority in American television series. The authors argue, for instance, how television series reinforce the police institution's authority treating its actions as unquestionable, or how they normalise police brutality, with narratives often justifying violent acts as an efficient investigative tool. By doing so, this article creates a great platform to discuss the significant role that television fiction accomplishes in mediating and constructing meaning about the police. It also helps question these representations in the face of conflicting events such as the death of George Floyd, a Black man who was murdered by a White police officer who knelt over his neck, suffocating him, and the subsequent debate around the defund the police movement.

Jesús Jiménez-Varea and Antonio Pineda, on the other hand, focus their analysis on the popular television show *Arrow* to discuss the representation of vigilantism, a form of extra-legal crime fighting. This empirical analysis explores the various rhetorical strategies used by the television series to justify vigilantism, such as the representation of legal and governmental institutions as corrupt and inefficient, the multiple rationales whereby vigilantism is practised, and the sanctioning of private crime fighting by institutions. Among other debates, the authors evidence that the show boosts individualism and anti-government neoliberalism ideologies by portraying the state as inefficient and/or corrupt. Ultimately, this article evidences the importance television series might have in impacting societal views on crime, justice and law enforcement, particularly on who should be in charge of keeping everyone's safe.

The two subsequent articles focus on another important theme of this thematic issue: *online crime* and violence and the existent continuum between offline and online practices. Considering the impact that the involvement of young people on social media might have on the opportunities for delinquent practices and the action of specialised courts, Maria João Leote de Carvalho delves into an exploratory analysis of qualitative information collected in courts of male and female young offenders. By looking at the use(s) of social media in the perpetration of unlawful acts as recorded in judicial proceedings in Portugal, the author concluded that less than a third of the young individuals were proven to have been involved in unlawful acts using social media. Furthermore, there is a significant overrepresentation of girls as perpetrators of unlawful acts, especially those involving a high degree of violence. Regardless of gender, the relationships established in school seem to dominate the interaction between aggressors-victims. Additionally, more than the anonymity afforded by the digital platforms, violent action is the catalyst to gain respect through the instant gratification offered by social media in an online-offline continuum, which characterises the lives of young people today. These conclusions shed light on the gender dynamics of delinquent practices when using social media, as well as the eventual challenges the justice system has in understanding and applying measures to these particular acts.

The other article focuses on online violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic. By analysing in-depth interviews with women victims/survivors of online violence during the pandemic in Portugal, Rita Basílio de Simões, Inês Amaral, Sílvia Santos and Juliana Alcantara explore how women experience the nature, prevalence, and impacts of online violence. The data enabled the identification of 10 types of dynamic and hybrid modalities of online violence against women. By exploring the particularities of the online context as a space of continuity of the dynamics of violence existing offline, this study evidences the continuum of misogyny and gender violence to which women are exposed in their daily lives. It also contributes to deepening the knowledge about the online as a space of power networks, inequalities and gender injustice in a country where online gender violence is still underexplored.

The two last articles are related to *technology and online media*, particularly how we can use these to fight crime and promote a certain social order. Paulo Victor Melo and Paulo Serra discuss the relationship between digital technologies and general security in Brazil by analysing government program proposals of the mayors of Brazilian state capitals, which mentioned keywords such as “facial recognition”, “artificial intelligence”, “surveillance”, “video surveillance”, “monitoring”, “drone”, “camera”, “video”, “data” and “technology”. The study provides important debates around the ethical, social, political, and cultural implications of adopting digital technologies for public security. This debate is especially relevant in countries marked by structural racism so that, in fighting crime and expanding protection, violence against historically discriminated groups is not perpetuated.

Lastly, Tine Munk and Juan Ahmad focus their analysis on the Ukrainian cyber war and how the use of online communication platforms to reach out to populations, within and outside the country, has been instrumental for military success. In fact, as evidenced by the authors, inventive thinking has enabled the actors to utilise the online space and develop new computing tactics to defend the country. This way, Ukrainian leadership has been able to carry out a successful speech act that has activated numerous online users and enabled a new form of online civic activism where online actors fight with the military forces. This article sheds light on the importance of online as a way of promoting a certain social order across borders and trying to surpass offline national constraints.

Finally, this thematic issue presents timely and diverse discussions that connect media studies to criminological research. This combination is not only interesting and relevant but also necessary for a broader and deeper comprehension of social and cultural processes within the criminal justice system. Considering traditional and new media, photographs and television series, from Global North challenges to Global South realities, these 10 articles offer clear contributions to the current understanding of how the media influence perceptions of criminality and security and, therefore, the way that crime is prevented, experienced and controlled.

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THEMATIC ARTICLES | ARTIGOS TEMÁTICOS 

THEY ARE REPRESENTED IN THE MEDIA; THEREFORE THEY EXIST: HONG KONG PROTESTS IN 2019 IN *CORREIO DA MANHÃ* AND *JORNAL DE NOTÍCIAS*

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ABSTRACT

This article seeks to understand how *Correio da Manhã* (CM) and *Jornal de Notícias* (JN) represent the Hong Kong protests between March 31 and November 29, 2019, by understanding the agenda surrounding their representation and identifying framings. Through content analysis, the results suggest a mainly neutral perspective of both newspapers, denoting a slight pro-government bias in JN and pro-democracy bias in CM. There is also a difference in the selection of sources: JN included sources in almost 75% of its news pieces, preferring anti-protest sources, whereas CM named sources in almost 60% of its pieces, with a tendency to select pro-protest sources. However, in both newspapers, there is a description of a violent scenario from both protesters and the government. The causes of the protests are almost entirely attributed to the government or individuals in Hong Kong, with rare attributions to external elements. Hong Kong and its citizens are also blamed for resolving the protests. There is a tendency towards a negative description of the government and, to a lesser extent, the protesters. Statistically significant associations are identified between newspaper and source; newspaper and mention of the protest causes; sources and description of protesters' behaviour; description of protesters' behaviour and mention of the protest causes.

KEYWORDS

media representation, Hong Kong protests, protest paradigm, *Correio da Manhã*, *Jornal de Notícias*

ESTÃO REPRESENTADOS MEDIATICAMENTE, LOGO EXISTEM: PROTESTOS DE HONG KONG EM 2019 NO *CORREIO DA MANHÃ* E NO *JORNAL DE NOTÍCIAS*

RESUMO

Este artigo pretende entender como o *Correio da Manhã* (CM) e o *Jornal de Notícias* (JN) representam os protestos de Hong Kong entre 31 de março e 29 de novembro de 2019, conhecendo a agenda que envolve a sua representação e identificando os enquadramentos. Recorrendo à análise de conteúdo, os resultados sugerem uma perspetiva sobretudo neutra de ambos os jornais, denotando-se ligeira inclinação pró-governo do JN e pró-democracia do CM. Também há diferença na seleção de fontes: o JN incluiu fontes em quase 75% das suas notícias, preferindo fontes anti- protesto, ao passo que o CM convocou fontes em quase 60% das suas peças, com tendência para selecionar fontes pró-protesto. Contudo, nota-se, nos dois jornais, a descrição de um cenário violento quer dos manifestantes quer do governo. As causas dos protestos são quase inteiramente atribuídas ao governo ou a indivíduos de Hong Kong, sendo raras as atribuições a elementos externos. É também atribuída a Hong Kong e aos seus cidadãos a responsabilidade pela solução dos protestos. Encontra-se uma descrição tendencialmente negativa tanto do governo como, de forma menos acentuada, dos manifestantes. Apuram-se relações estatisticamente significativas entre jornal e fonte; jornal e menção das causas do protesto; fontes e descrição do comportamento dos manifestantes; descrição do comportamento dos manifestantes e menção das causas do protesto.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE:

representação mediática, protestos de Hong Kong, paradigma do protesto, *Correio da Manhã*, *Jornal de Notícias*

1. INTRODUCTION

The number of protests around the world more than tripled between 2006 and 2020, and we are living through a period in history similar to the years around 1848, 1917 or 1968, “when large numbers of people rebelled against the way things were, demanding change” (Ortiz et al., 2022, p. 112). This crescendo of protest may be justified, as Burke mentions in Taylor’s (2021) piece, because “too many leaders in government and business are not listening” (para. 4).

The Hong Kong citizens’ protest between 2019 and 2020 is unprecedented in terms of movement length, protesters’ number, number of people arrested, mass vandalism, violence by protesters and police alleged excessive use of force (Shek, 2020). The history of protests by Hong Kong people, the protest being one of the few ways for these citizens to show their opinion, the disidentification as Chinese (Cheung & Hughes, 2019), and the protracted nature of the protests (Reuters Staff, 2020), indicating the resilience of the participants, are some of the factors that justify catapulting these protests onto the media agenda and setting them up as a study object.

According to Lee (2014), the frequency of demonstrations in the special administrative region under study makes it an attractive territory to analyse issues that are

the focus of protest media coverage. Kuah-Pearce (2009) also pointed to Hong Kong's activism importance in the form of influential action type. That is due to the freedom it has enjoyed since its decolonisation by the British Empire, a growing political consciousness derived from the fear of communism promoted by China — exacerbated by the 1989 Tiananmen massacre — and the expansion of Hong Kong's educated middle class, which have motivated greater political activity, resulting in several protests over the years.

In this context, this study focuses on the most recent protests in Hong Kong, which began on the last day of March 2019 after the Hong Kong government proposed an extradition bill. It was feared that this bill would open Hong Kong to the reach of Chinese law and that Hong Kongers would become subject to a different legal system, undermining the region's autonomy and citizens' rights. Reports of attacks on protesters, arrests of activists and communications problems during protests concerned United Nations (UN) human rights experts, who warned that “the way forward is neither repression of dissenting voices nor the use of excessive force” (ONU News, 2019, para. 6).

Thus, the starting question guiding the research is: how do *Correio da Manhã* (CM) and *Jornal de Notícias* (JN) newspapers represent the Hong Kong protests between March 31 and November 29 2019? It is intended to study how the protests were represented in CM and JN. The specific objectives are:

- to know the agenda surrounding the representation of the Hong Kong protests in CM and JN between March 31 and November 29, 2019; and
- to identify the adopted framings in the representation of the Hong Kong protests in CM and JN newspapers between March 31 and November 29, 2019.

The method used is quantitative, integrating content analysis based on the work of Du et al. (2018), which applies to the Portuguese case.

As a theoretical anchor, this research is inspired by: (a) the agenda-setting hypothesis/theory (e.g., McCombs & Shaw, 1972), which allows us to understand which components of the agenda (e.g., subject, source) are presented in the news; (b) the framing approach (Entman, 1993), which densifies the study with selected and highlighted journalistic aspects; and (c) the protest paradigm approach, by Du et al. (2018), which combines it with the framing approach to analyse the journalistic representation of the Hong Kong protests named “Occupy Central”, using a methodology that can be applied to the Portuguese example, as this research proposes.

2. THE NEWS REPRESENTATION OF THE PROTEST: A DOUBLE-EDGED BLADE

Protests are strategic forms of action designed to influence decision-making, either directly or by influencing public opinion using media, including the internet (Hanna et al., 2016). News coverage is critical to a protest's viability (Kilgo & Harlow, 2019), though, paradoxically, research suggests that the media negatively represent protests and protesters who challenge the status quo — a pattern known as the “protest paradigm”.

In Hall (2009), representation is the process by which members of a culture use language to produce meaning (pp. 60–61). That means the world's objects, people, and events (e.g., protests) do not have a fixed, final, true meaning.

Representations in the media ecosystem are often attuned to the most powerful groups' interests, ignoring smaller voices and minority representations (Prieler, 2020). For Prieler (2020), the problem with media representation is that it repeatedly reproduces stereotypes of less privileged groups. That is a problem compounded by the social impact of how certain groups are medially represented, especially when the audience has had few personal experiences with the represented groups or when the groups operate in distant geographical areas.

Representing implies framing, and framing implies selecting. The definition of framing pointed out as the most influential one is Entman's (Matthes, 2009): the author clarifies that framing is selecting some aspects of an interpreted reality and highlighting them in a communicative text in order to promote (a) problem definition — determining what a causal agent is doing, with what costs and benefits; (b) causal interpretation — identifying the forces that create the problem; (c) moral evaluation — assessing causal agents and their effects; and/or (d) solution indication - presenting and justifying solutions to problems and predicting their likely effects (Entman, 1993).

In the context of codification, the media agenda as it is “a hierarchised list of matters (themes, issues, problems), characters, actions, positions (of sources, for example), of decisions worthy of the media stage and spotlight” (Belim, 2014, p. 128), exposes representations. In this research, the media agenda that matters is the Portuguese one (CM and JN) on the Hong Kong protests in 2019. The media establish a pyramid with matters worthy of attention, consumption, and informative knowledge (Belim, 2014, p. 128), and this media agenda influences the public agenda — agenda-setting theory. Hence, media representations of a certain action (such as protest) influence the public agenda, noting that the way the protest message is interpreted by the public is beyond the protesters' control.

Public judgements about protests are shaped by journalists. Protesters rely on the media to communicate with potential supporters, broadening the conflict's scope and gaining legitimacy (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993; Lipsky, 1968). Such media attention can be a double-edged sword, as media coverage can diminish a social movement rather than strengthen it (Boykoff, 2007).

The protest paradigm is a framework that media scholars have used to understand the specific types of framing that news media often use to undermine legitimacy, obscure the social/political concerns of a protest, or both. Formulated after the study of the Golden Jubilee School protests in Hong Kong in the late 1970s, this phenomenon encompasses a pattern of news creation that focuses on the most violent aspects of protests: it describes them in a similar style used in crime news, emphasises the protesters' ignorance, characterises the protests as ineffectual, focuses on the dramatic aspects of the protests while ignoring the underlying cause, invokes public opinion against the demonstrations and prioritises sources that support the government (McLeod & Hertog, 1998). The paradigm constitutes a paradox: protests must adapt and appeal to media logic to receive coverage,

but when they do, news representation tends to demonise protesters, characterising them as threats to society, marginalising their voices and insufficiently or inadequately reporting on their grievances, demands and agendas (Kilgo & Harlow, 2019).

The research identified three approaches that journalists take when representing protests: the extent to which protest objectives and actions are (a) supported, (b) politicised, and (c) moralised within cultural boundaries (Chan & Lee, 1984). Researchers found that protest news framings imbued themselves with a newspaper's political ideology (Chan & Lee, 1984). Right-wing newspapers emphasised social order and the status quo, while left-wing newspapers favoured the protestor's perspective. However, marginalisation tactics, previously used against left-wing protests, were adopted by a left-wing cable news channel, MSNBC, to represent the Tea Party movement (Weaver & Scacco, 2013).

Many researchers have explained that social movement groups with views contrary to those of elite sources tend to receive unfavourable media coverage (e.g., Entman & Rojecki, 1993; Olien et al., 1989; Oliver & Myers, 1999; Smith et al., 2001). The American media generally serve as protectors of the status quo in cases of more disruptive protests (Chan & Lee, 1984). Research has also indicated that news media usually tend to support the status quo rather than challenge it (Donohue et al., 1995).

Support for the status quo can result from many influences that have been studied in detail, including practical factors such as journalistic practices (Gandy, 1982; Gans, 1979; McManus, 1990), media relations with elites (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993) and the influence of pre-packaged news (Turk, 1986). Moreover, while media attention is usually necessary for mobilising support for a socio-political group (Gamson & Meyer, 1996; McCarthy et al., 1996), politically "deviant" groups tend to receive disproportionately unfavourable treatment when covered (e.g., Baylor, 1996).

Media elites use "marginalising" devices to frame narratives. Coverage does not emphasise protests cause, including issues that legitimise a protest purpose, and instead emphasises the protesters themselves, especially if violence occurs. The media privileges violence to show the deviation from protest tactics (Smith et al., 2001).

Protest paradigm researchers have described a "toolbox" of media framings that journalists use to highlight deviance and/or minimise protesters' concerns, in addition to "violence" devices. Dardis (2006) identifies common tools of marginalisation focusing on protesters' appearance or mental abilities; protest events such as carnivals; public opinion and judgement; statistics, generalisations and eyewitness accounts to counter the protesters' cause; and counterdemonstrations (pp. 120–122). Journalists also tend to rely heavily on official sources, which are privileged over the protester's experience (McLeod & Detenber, 1999).

Much research has focused on media coverage of protest events and revealed that there could be delegitimisation of protesters (e.g., Hertog & McLeod, 1995; McLeod & Hertog, 1992; Murdock, 1981). For example, in Kilgo and Harlow's (2019) study, results suggest that media coverage of protests focused on racial issues (discrimination against indigenous people and anti-black racism) following more of a delegitimising pattern than

stories about protests related to immigrant rights, health and the environment. Therefore, one notes a relationship between the thematic and the delegitimisation of the protestor.

Other relationships between variables are ascertained within the protest paradigm. Lee (2014), applying content analysis to four newspapers, finds that several characteristics of the protest paradigm were more likely to emerge when protests involved radical tactics — news about these protests tended to reference violence or disruption. On this topic, Boyle et al. (2012) point to a challenge faced by protesters: news coverage helps protesters achieve their goals, but this achievement may not happen unless they resort to dramatic or even violent action.

Boyle et al. (2012) note media representation variation according to the protest's social deviance level. The authors identify, in this sense, two factors influencing the protest paradigm application: the degree of radicality of the protesting group and the type of protest. Boyle et al. (2012) note that the coverage of protests seeking moderate reform or radical change is done more critically, episodically framed and less likely to use protesters as sources. However, Lee (2014) clarifies that although news coverage of radical protests pays less attention to protesters' voices, this is not necessarily because of the media's social control function. It is due to the greater difficulties experienced by journalists in talking to protesters during radical protests: demonstrations that involve marches tend to receive more focused news coverage on the protest's perpetrators because of the convenience that marches provide for journalists who want to obtain testimonies. The author also notes that news articles that include a response from the protest's target were more likely to mention violence or social disruption in the title/lead or elsewhere in the article, share fewer testimonies from protesting sources, and provide more negative testimonies from spectators (Lee, 2014). Additionally, the author concludes that when public discontent is high, news articles contain more testimonies from protesting sources; and that the disparities between newspapers with different political positions are not totally clear but may be more evident when protests address political issues.

Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) have assembled scientific literature to describe how social movements interact with media and the effect of this interaction on both parties. They describe this interaction as a transaction between two complicated systems, each with its own intricate internal relationships. For the authors, there is an interdependence between the media and the protesters, with the latter needing the former more. This greater dependence is due to three factors: (a) mobilisation — the media are necessary for social movements because of their ability to convey a consolidated message to a segment of the public, which, through the channels available to the protest's authors, would be out of reach; (b) validation — media attention validates the importance of a social movement and is often a necessary factor for influential targets to recognise and respond to protests, so a protest without media coverage is, for the authors, a non-event; and (c) widening of parameters — making a conflict more public and involving third parties balances the power relations between protesters and protest's targets. Here, media attention matters, as does news coverage content: gaining public empathy is a protesters' need that the media can satisfy (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993).

In the opposite direction of this relationship, the media may find the opportunity for a news piece in social movements, as these involve drama, conflict, and action (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993). The asymmetry in the interdependence between the two parties gives the media greater power. This power relationship leads activists to view the media as agents of the dominant groups they protest against, being both a channel and a target (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993).

Trying to understand how journalists at *The New York Times* adopted and employed different news framings during different phases of the Occupy Wall Street protests, Gottlieb (2015) resorted to content analysis. As the movement grew, the researcher concluded that journalists focused on the economic motives behind demonstrations, such as economic inequality or bank bailouts. When the movement reached its peak, journalists focused on the increasing violence between protesters and police forces. The author suggests that confrontational protest tactics (e.g., getting arrested) increase the protest's media attention at the expense of losing control over the narrative framing in mainstream news coverage. He also notes: (a) the correlation between the number of stories about the Occupy Wall Street protests and the number of arrests; (b) arrests increase given media attention to the protest and its message and additionally increase newspapers given attention to the conflict; (c) differences in the relationship between chosen journalistic genre and subject matter: news about particular events focus more on the clashes between activists and police, while editorials consider the economic issues of the protests; (d) protesters manage to make themselves heard by escalating the conflict and being arrested, but journalists tend to focus on the conflict rather than the issues that gave rise to it, in particular when the tactics used by the protesters are not innovative, when the state or other actors repress the protest, or when public interest in the protest wanes.

On the protest paradigm performance in international news coverage, Du et al. (2018) examine, through content analysis, how protests that took place in Hong Kong in 2014, Occupy Central, were framed in the news in four regions: the United States of America, the United Kingdom, mainland China and Hong Kong. They conclude that news stories produced by media in democratic societies position themselves more in favour of the protesters and critical of the actions taken by the Hong Kong government. This evidence suggests that a dominant ideology may influence media framing of politically sensitive topics.

Focusing on the Portuguese media discourse (Lusa, newspapers, television) about police activity during major political events in 2012, Pais et al. (2015) tried to characterise it using content analysis. They found that newspapers discourses emphasis is more negative than positive, unlike the other media, giving slightly higher prevalence to police sources and pointed out that news media paid little attention to the objectives pursued with the events, with a residual mention in the news (Pais et al., 2015).

3. METHOD

In the conducted content analysis, two qualities pointed out by Bell et al. (2018) were met: objectivity and systematisation (p. 280). Objectivity means that the rules called for choosing the material for analysis (such as newspaper news) are specified a priori. Thus, the authors refer to the transparency of the procedures that guide the organisation of the analysis material into categories so that the analyst's personal bias has the least possible impact on the process. The "systematisation" means that the application of the rules is made consistently to, again, minimise bias.

The newspapers CM and JN were chosen because they are the most sold daily newspapers on newsstands (Durães, 2022). The study of the two most sold newspapers enables the analysis of how the protests were described to a considerable number of readers. In addition to this prominence, in the year of the Hong Kong protests outbreak, and therefore in the year under study, CM is the most read newspaper on the internet and JN the fifth (Correio da Manhã, 2019). Editorially, *Correio da Manhã* (2015) defends "the absolute value of news, as an essential component of democratic transparency" (para. 1), "the necessary independence (...) before all forms of power" (para. 1) and the value of pluralism, and cultivates investigative journalism "for the necessary scrutiny of public life and as a form of control by citizens against possible abuses of power, authority or dominant position" (para. 3) seeking "a Portuguese look at the continuous pulse of the Country and the World" (para. 6). In turn, JN (*Jornal de Notícias*, n.d.) defines itself as "an informative and non-doctrinaire periodical publication" (para. 1), "independent from political power (...) and economic, social and religious groups" (para. 2), "governed by criteria of pluralism, exemption and non-partisanship" (para. 2) and adopting "rigorous and competent", "balanced" and "objective" information (para. 3).

The period considered in this analysis, and reflected in the corpus, comprises the period between the first major protest on March 31, 2019, and the last day of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) police siege on November 29, 2019 (Reuters Staff, 2020). Thus, the movement's most high-profile incidents are encompassed, such as the June 9 protest that saw over half a million protesters, the first student death during the protests on November 8, and the police siege of PolyU between November 17 and 29 (Reuters Staff, 2020). The overwhelming victory of the pro-democrats in the district elections on November 31, and the defeat of the barricaded students at PolyU in the face of police forces, motivated a fading of the protests in the following months (Reuters Staff, 2020; Taylor & Zhao, 2020).

Both newspapers offer digital versions, equivalent to print editions, from which news items are obtained. The digital edition of CM includes the option of searching by keyword in a particular time range. The keyword used in the search is "Hong Kong", assuming that any article about the protests will mention Hong Kong in the news story title or body. After this search, any articles not pertinent to the study will be manually discarded (e.g., news stories that refer to mainland China's threats to countries supporting the

protests and other pieces that focus on the protests' impact on international relations rather than the protests themselves). JN does not offer such a search option, so news items were extracted by scrutinising all daily editions of the period under analysis. After the described process, the corpus comprises 71 articles from CM and 67 from JN, noting a numerical balance between the two newspapers.

The methodological inspiration for the present article's analysis is primarily based on the study by Du et al. (2018). In this study, the authors combine the concept of framing and the protest paradigm, questioning the latter's performance in international news coverage, with an opportunity to apply this study's analytical logic to the Portuguese case. The analysis unit is the item, in this case, the news article.

Kobland et al. (1992), on which Du et al. (2018) draw, point to some challenges that arise with different methodological approaches to media messages content analysis. One such approach involves applying a content analysis in which enumeration is constructed from discrete or quantifiable data, a method called into question by its assumption that frequency is a sufficient condition for drawing conclusions from the material under analysis — the result of an analysis based on data such as words or phrases can only make explicit the surface structure of terms used in the press, failing to capture more subtle semantic implications present in journalistic discourse. On the other hand, there is the approach in which the text is analysed as a whole, revealing the way events are presented throughout the text. This option may, however, enable an analysis too reliant on fleeting impressions or casual generalisations emerging from single instances (Kobland et al., 1992). The authors then suggest a thematic analysis that combines both approaches: interpreting the binary symbols offered by the text that serve to organise action by opposing “good” to “evil”, where, for example, a government presented as “resisting the protesters” is seen as “good” and a government presented as “threatening the students” is interpreted as “evil”. In relation to the actions of the protesters, they point to descriptions such as “violent”, “unruly”, “militant” (bad), or “pro-democracy”, “peaceful”, “organised” (good). The sum of these terms is then measured concerning whom they apply and in which context (Kobland et al., 1992). Through this approach, it is possible to identify, appropriately code and quantify the themes presented in the articles. The analysis includes eight variables (three are interval, and five are categorical or nominal; Table 1 and Table 2).

DESIGNATION (LEVELS)	GUIDELINES
Article's perspective (clearly anti-protest/ neutral/clearly anti-government)	It refers to which side is presented less favourably, considering the “binary symbols” analysis (the “good” vs. “evil”) present in the text proposed by Kobland et al. (1992). Examples: “violent protests cause chaos in Hong Kong” would be considered anti-protest, as it implies a violent intention (an “evil”) on the protesters’ part. On the other hand, “dozens of students injured” will be considered anti-government, as it implies that excessive force was used against defenceless protesters. In the case of symbols’ absence or numerical equality, the perspective will be considered “neutral”.
Description of government actions (peaceful/neutral/violent)	Whether the government is presented as approaching the protests peacefully or as a suppressive force vis-à-vis the protesters (Kobland et al., 1992). Examples of peaceful actions: intention to dialogue; granting the demonstrators’ demands. Examples of violent actions: police charges against protesters, protesters injured by official forces, and arrests. Example of neutral action: the government is not explicitly presented as addressing the protests in any of the above ways.
Description of protesters’ behaviour (negative/neutral/positive)	Whether demonstrators are portrayed as protesting in a peaceful, organised manner in a quest for democratic reform (positive form) or whether they are portrayed as chaotic, violent, and seeking revolution (negative form; Kobland et al., 1992). Neutral: protestants are not explicitly presented as adopting positive or negative behaviours.

Table 1 Interval variables and coding guidelines

Source. Based on Du et al. (2018); Kobland et al. (1992)

NAME	GUIDELINES
Causality (internal/external/mixed)	Cause/origin of the conflicts. An internal cause means that the conflict’s origin is attributed to the Hong Kong government or residents, while an external cause accuses the Chinese government of being at the conflict’s origin. A mixed cause refers to a split attribution of responsibility for the conflict’s origin.
Value judgement in the headline (present/absent)	Whether there is a value judgement expressed in the news headline (e.g., a headline such as “More Than 1,7 Million People on the Streets Launch Chaos in Hong Kong”, will be considered as having a value judgement present, representing the protesters as chaotic) or not (e.g., “Protests Do Not Fade Away” which is guided by the absence of a value judgement).
Responsible for the solution (individuals/Hong Kong government/ central Chinese government/ other government/institutions)	Who is assigned the responsibility for resolving conflict and easing tensions. By “institutions”, we mean organisations, parties, or other present groups.
Mention of the protest cause(s) (present/absent)	Whether the reasons that led to the protests (e.g., the new extradition law applied by China to Hong Kong or the anti-masking law) are mentioned in the news.
Sources (government only/pro- movement only/anti-movement only/equilibrium/non-existent)	Sources explicitly cited in the news: the aim is to reflect the perspective from which the news are created. Balance: the presence of at least two sources of different origins (e.g., pro-movement and anti-movement).

Table 2 Nominal variables and coding guidelines

Source. Based on Du et al. (2018)

Of the eight variables (Table 1 and Table 2), only one was not taken from the study by Du et al. (2018): the variable “mention of the protest cause(s)”. This variable was

introduced to understand whether the aspect of the protest paradigm concerning the lack of mention of the protest causes is present in the analysed newspapers. While Du et al.'s (2018) analysis incorporates a five-level scale in the interval variables, the present study considers a three-level scale to streamline the analysis and reduce the analyst's subjectivity. As in Du et al. (2018), this scale was constructed so that 0 translates as a pro-manifesto value and 2 as a pro-government value. With the variables "article's perspective", "description of government actions", and "description of protesters' behaviour" and "sources", and given the agenda composition (Belim, 2014, p. 128), it is intended to respond to objective 1. The indicator "non-existent" was added to the variable "sources" to ascertain whether or not sources were used in the newspapers under analysis. With the variables "causality", "mention of the protest cause(s)", "responsible for the solution", and "value judgement in the headline", it is intended to answer objective 2. Entman's (1993) framing approach is used, namely the four functions that framings play: problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and suggestion indication, is used to meet this objective.

Coding data were entered into SPSS software to conduct the statistical analysis. A t-test for independent samples is applied to detect differences between the newspapers in the interval variables. The chi-square test is applied for the remaining categorical variables, for it allows the analysis of the differences between groups in which the dependent variable is measured at a nominal level. This approach is similar to that used by Du et al. (2018). However, the ANOVA test the authors applied was replaced in the present study by the t-test due to the difference between the number of groups under analysis.

4. RESULTS

4.1. AGENDA INVOLVING THE REPRESENTATION OF THE HONG KONG PROTESTS IN *CORREIO DA MANHÃ* AND *JORNAL DE NOTÍCIAS* BETWEEN MARCH AND NOVEMBER 2019

In relation to the interval variables, the t-test revealed no statistically significant differences regarding the article's perspective ($p = 0.947$), government's actions description ($p = 0.155$), and protesters' behaviours description ($p = 0.176$), as shown in Table 3.

	AVERAGE		
	ARTICLE'S PERSPECTIVE	DESCRIPTION OF GOVERNMENT ACTIONS	DESCRIPTION OF PROTESTERS' BEHAVIOUR
<i>Jornal de Notícias</i> (N = 67)	0.99	1.40	0.76
<i>Correio da Manhã</i> (N = 71)	0.96	1.44	0.90
Significance	0.947	0.155	0.176

Table 3 T-Test of the interval variables

The most notorious difference suggested by the results resides in the “description of protesters’ behaviour” variable as in CM, this variable’s average is closer to 1 ($M = 0.90$), while in JN, it is mildly lower ($M = 0.76$). That suggests that JN, compared to CM, tends to describe the protesters slightly more negatively (JN: 46.3%; CM: 33.8%; Table 4).

		JORNAL DE NOTÍCIAS	CORREIO DA MANHÃ	TOTAL
Description of protesters’ behaviour	Negative	31 (46.3%)	24 (33.8%)	55 (39.9%)
	Neutral	21 (31.3%)	30 (42.3%)	51 (37.0%)
	Positive	15 (22.4%)	17 (23.9%)	32 (23.2%)
Total		67	71	138

Table 4 Description of protesters’ behaviour in Jornal de Notícias, Correio da Manhã and total

Regarding the “article’s perspective” variable, results suggest that both JN ($M = 0.99$) and CM ($M = 0.96$) rarely adopt a valued perspective, taking a neutral position. As for the “description of government actions” variable, JN ($M = 1.40$) and CM ($M = 1.44$) are also in tune, tending towards a violent description of the government’s actions (JN: 55.2%; CM: 52.1%; Table 5).

		JORNAL DE NOTÍCIAS	CORREIO DA MANHÃ	TOTAL
Description of government actions	Violent	37 (55.2%)	37 (52.1%)	74 (53.6%)
	Neutral	20 (29.9%)	28 (39.4%)	48 (34.8%)
	Peaceful	10 (14.9%)	6 (8.5%)	16 (11.6%)
Total		67	71	138

Table 5 Description of government actions in Jornal de Notícias, Correio da Manhã and total

An interpretation of the three interval variables suggests a violent scenario description on both the protesters and the government’s side by both newspapers, with CM tending to describe the protesters as less violent than JN, even though the latter describes the government’s actions as slightly less suppressive than CM.

For the “sources” variable, the chi-square test was used, with a significant statistical association ($p = 0.004$) result between the “newspaper” and “source” variables. In Table 6, the source choices by each newspaper can be observed, with JN opting more for a greater balance between sources (38.8%) and CM for the absence of sources. In the case of source presence, a preference from JN to maintain a balance is noticeable, with 38.8% of the JN articles explicitly citing at least two sources. When only one source was explicitly cited, JN preferentially opted for anti-movement sources (14.9%) and CM for pro-movement sources (21.1%). Overall, CM has a greater tendency to exclude any explicit source, with 40.8% of its articles not mentioning any source, diverging from JN, which cited sources in 74.6% of its news items. By adding the “balance” and “only pro-movement” variables, it can be observed that activists were given a voice in at least 49.2% of the JN articles and 32.4% of the CM articles.

	<i>JORNAL DE NOTÍCIAS</i>	<i>CORREIO DA MANHÃ</i>	TOTAL	
Sources	Balance	26 (38.8%)	8 (11.3%)	34 (24.6%)
	Pro-movement only	7 (10.4%)	15 (21.1%)	22 (15.9%)
	Anti-movement only	10 (14.9%)	11 (15.5%)	21 (15.2%)
	Government only	7 (10.4%)	8 (11.3%)	15 (10.9%)
	Non-existent	17 (25.4%)	29 (40.8%)	46 (33.3%)
Total	67	71	138	

Table 6 Sources in *Jornal de Notícias*, *Correio da Manhã* and total

4.2 ADOPTED FRAMES IN THE REPRESENTATION OF THE HONG KONG PROTESTS IN *CORREIO DA MANHÃ* AND *JORNAL DE NOTÍCIAS* BETWEEN MARCH AND NOVEMBER 2019

When applying the chi-square test and compared to the “causality” variable, no statistically significant relation was found ($p = 0.447$). Observing Table 7, both newspapers pointed out an internal causality in most articles (90.6%), with an external causality ascribed to only 8.7% of news items.

	<i>JORNAL DE NOTÍCIAS</i>	<i>CORREIO DA MANHÃ</i>	TOTAL	
Causality	Mixed	1 (1.5%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.7%)
	Internal	59 (88.1%)	66 (93.0%)	125 (90.6%)
	External	7 (10.4%)	5 (7.0%)	12 (8.7%)
Total	67	71	138	

Table 7 Causality in *Jornal de Notícias*, *Correio da Manhã* and total

As for the “mention of the protest cause(s)” variable, the chi-square test reveals a significant association ($p < 0.001$). Observing Table 8, we identify differences: while JN mentions protest causes in 73.1% of news items, CM mentions protest causes in less than half of the articles (32.4%).

	<i>JORNAL DE NOTÍCIAS</i>	<i>CORREIO DA MANHÃ</i>	TOTAL	
Mention of the protest cause(s)	Absent	18 (26.9%)	48 (67.6%)	66 (47.8%)
	Present	49 (73.1%)	23 (32.4%)	72 (52.2%)
Total	67	71	138	

Table 8 Mention of the protest cause(s) in *Jornal de Notícias*, *Correio da Manhã* and total

As for the “value judgement in the headline” variable, there is no statistically significant association ($p = 0.130$). Both newspapers prefer to omit value judgements in the headline, though CM presents value judgements in 19.7% of headlines, while JN only does it in 10.4% of news items (Table 9).

		<i>JORNAL DE NOTÍCIAS</i>	<i>CORREIO DA MANHÃ</i>	TOTAL
Value judgement in the headline	Absent	60 (89.6%)	57 (80.3%)	117 (84.8%)
	Present	7 (10.4%)	14 (19.7%)	21 (15.2%)
Total		67	71	138

Table 9 Value judgement in the headline in *Jornal de Notícias*, *Correio da Manhã* and total

Finally, concerning the “responsible for the solution” variable, the chi-square test does not reveal a statistically significant association ($p = 0.774$). Observing Table 10, it can be noted that, again, both newspapers agree, with the Hong Kong government being pointed out as the main responsible for the solution in both newspapers (65.9% of the total), followed by individuals (17.4%), other governments (5.1%) and, finally, institutions (2.9%).

		<i>JORNAL DE NOTÍCIAS</i>	<i>CORREIO DA MANHÃ</i>	TOTAL
Responsible for the solution	Individuals	10 (14.9 %)	14 (19.7%)	24 (17.4%)
	Hong Kong government	44 (65.7%)	47 (66.2%)	91 (65.9%)
	Chinese central government	6 (9.0%)	6 (8.5%)	12 (8.7%)
	Another government	4 (6.0%)	3 (4.2%)	7 (5.1%)
	Institutions	3 (4.5%)	1 (1.4%)	4 (2.9%)
Total		67	71	138

Table 10 Responsible for the solution in *Jornal de Notícias*, *Correio da Manhã* and total

Based on Lee’s (2014) observation that a news story including a response from the protest target is more likely to mention violence somewhere in the article, the chi-square test was applied to the “sources” and “description of protesters’ behaviour” variables. That revealed a statistically significant association between variables ($p = 0.001$).

In the presence of sources balance, the description of the protesters’ behaviour tends to be negative (52.9%). The description is, however, more positive when there are only pro-movement sources (40.9%) or when there are no sources (32.6%). Pro-movement sources predictably tend to generate positive descriptions of protesters (40.9%), noting the opposite when sources included are anti-movement only or governmental only — these lead to negative descriptions of protesters 71.4% and 53.3% of the time, respectively. There were 0% positive descriptions of activists in articles with exclusively anti-movement sources and 13.6% negative descriptions in sources exclusively pro-movement. Adding this to the negative portrayal of the protest authors when there is a balance of sources and with neutrality when there are no explicit sources, one can problematise to what extent the anti-movement sources will have a greater weight in the description of the protesters’ behaviour — Table 11.

		DESCRIPTION OF PROTESTERS' BEHAVIOUR			TOTAL
		NEGATIVE	NEUTRAL	POSITIVE	
Sources	Balance	18 (52.9%)	10 (29.4%)	6 (17.6%)	34
	Pro-movement only	3 (13.6%)	10 (45.5%)	9 (40.9%)	22
	Anti-movement only	15 (71.4%)	6 (28.6%)	0 (0.0%)	21
	Government only	8 (53.3%)	5 (33.3%)	2 (13.3%)	15
	Non-existent	11 (23.9%)	20 (43.5%)	15 (32.6%)	46
Total		55	51	32	138

Table 11 Cross-referencing between “sources” and “description of protesters' behaviour” variables in both newspapers

The chi-square test did not reveal a statistically significant association between the “sources” and “description of government actions” variables ($p = 0.190$). Regardless of sources, government actions are mostly never described as peaceful, even when the only source is the government itself (Table 10). In cases where only pro-movement sources have a voice, government actions are described as violent in 77.3% of articles. Even when only anti-movement sources are used in the news, the government is described as suppressive in more than half of the articles (57.1%). The only cases where a violent description of the government's actions is not mostly observed are when only government sources are invoked, with the government being described in a neutral way (40.0% versus 33.3% violent actions and 26.7% peaceful actions) — Table 12.

		DESCRIPTION OF GOVERNMENT ACTIONS			TOTAL
		PEACEFUL	NEUTRAL	VIOLENT	
Sources	Balance	4 (11.8%)	12 (35.3%)	18 (52.9%)	34
	Pro-movement only	2 (9.1%)	3 (13.6%)	17 (77.3%)	22
	Anti-movement only	2 (9.5%)	7 (33.3%)	12 (57.1%)	21
	Government only	4 (26.7%)	6 (40.0%)	5 (33.3%)	15
	Non-existent	4 (8.7%)	20 (43.5%)	22 (47.8%)	46
Total		16	48	74	138

Table 12 Crossing between variable “sources” and variable “description of government actions” in both newspapers

Under the observations of Lee (2014) and Boyle et al. (2012) that violent actions by activists lead to focus less on the reasons triggering demonstrations, a chi-square test was conducted on the “description of protesters' behaviour” and “mention of the protest cause(s)” variables. The test revealed a statistically significant association ($p = 0.024$).

The probability of mentioning the protests' causes is higher when protesters are described as peaceful (71.9%) — Table 13. Interestingly, in the analysed articles, the neutral description of the protesters' actions is the most related to the absence of mention of the cause of the protests (58.8%), even more than a negative description (49.1%).

		MENTION OF THE PROTEST CAUSE(S)		TOTAL
		Absent	Present	
Description of protesters' behaviour	Negative	27 (49.1%)	28 (50.9%)	55
	Neutral	30 (58.8%)	21 (41.2%)	51
	Positive	9 (28.1%)	23 (71.9%)	32
Total		66	72	138

Table 13 Cross-referencing between the “description of protesters' behaviour” and the “Mention of the protest cause(s)” variables in both newspapers

4. CONCLUSIVE DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Results overall suggest a similar representation between both newspapers, characterised by a tendentially negative description of both protesters and government actions, a characteristic of protests' description in print journalism predicted by Pais et al. (2015). We tried to understand if this similarity could be due to the news items' authorship. In this sense, making a tabulation, it is noted that, in CM, 14 are signed by journalists, and, in JN's case, nine pieces identify the nominal author. This practice indicates the dependence of national newspapers on news agencies for international news stories and may justify the similar representation between both newspapers. For example, Shaheen et al. (2021), based on the concept of media power and the theory of media imperialism, seek to find out the dependence level of three leading English newspapers in Pakistan on international news agencies regarding three central issues of the post-9/11 phase in 2001. The authors find a dependency at over 90% and provide some arguments justifying the dependency: lack of financial resources, human resources (minimum number of foreign correspondents) and scope of coverage. Also, the results of Boumans et al. (2018) study on the Dutch news landscape suggest that particularly online news (such as those under analysis in this study) is highly dependent on agency content, with the agency accounting for up to 75% of online news articles.

In either newspaper, there does not seem to be a preference for a particular perspective, as in the study on international news, by Du et al. (2018). There is, however, a slight difference in the selection of sources: JN included sources in 74.6% of its news stories — preferring anti-protest sources — whereas CM only chose sources in 59.2% of its news stories — with a tendency to select pro-protest sources. That does not necessarily suggest an ideological preference or an inherent conservatism in JN. The presence of the dominant ideology that media in democratic societies are more pro-protest and critical of the actions taken by the Hong Kong government does not seem to be expressive (Du et al., 2018).

As explained by Lee (2014), protests' coverage can be more favourable to its target and thus less favourable to the protesters if that target is willing and prepared to communicate with the media. This result is not surprising because the media tend to seek responses from protest targets (Lee, 2014), who expectedly take an anti-protest position. Regarding CM, the same can be said: counting the number of protesting sources does

not reveal how their words are represented in the news (Lee, 2014). However, we cannot forget that activists depend on the media to communicate (Gamson & Wolfsfeld 1993; Lipsky 1968), knowing that the way the media agenda sets and represents the protest influences the public apprehension of the phenomenon.

The protests' causes are almost entirely attributed to the Hong Kong government or individuals, with rarely attributed external elements. Hong Kong and its citizens are also blamed for resolving the protests. Despite the Chinese government's influence in Hong Kong, it was rarely singled out as the cause of the tension in the territory and rarely given responsibility in both newspapers for resolving it. In their study on newspapers in which the same thing happened, Du et al. (2018) suggested that the influence of mainland China's political intervention, which may have permeated the media, motivated the protests' responsibility or causality deflection. That occurred in the mainland-based newspaper, *People's Daily*, and the Hong Kong-based newspaper, *Ming Pao Daily*, the former being a Chinese government propaganda platform, and the latter, due to its proximity to mainland China, a newspaper that revealed sharing some of its ideology (Du et al., 2018). However, the analysed newspapers did not avoid a critical description of the Chinese government's actions, with the latter mentioned as applying violent measures in over half of the observed news stories. This tendency towards a negative description of both the government (Table 5) and, to a lesser extent, the protesters (Table 4), together with the neutrality of the adopted perspectives (Table 3), may indicate an attempt to address the protests impartially by both newspapers. It is also a phenomenon predicted by Boyle et al. (2012), who indicated that protests' coverage seeking reform or radical change is more critical and less likely to give voice to protesters.

Lee (2014) pointed to three characteristics of news coverage used to indicate the protest paradigm presence: (a) emphasis on violence; (b) exclusion of protesters' voices; (c) sharing of testimonies primarily critical of the protests. In this light, given the findings regarding the Chinese government and activists' actions description, some emphasis on violence can be noted when portraying the protests. As Lee (2014) noted, political protests in Hong Kong may be more likely to contain violence. As for the exclusion of protesters' voices, this can be observed in more than half of the articles in both newspapers, particularly noticeable in CM, where only 32.2% of articles contained pro-protest sources. The adoption of testimonies primarily critical of the protests can be observed above all in JN, which, choosing to give primacy to a particular source, tended to prefer anti-protest sources. Besides the three characteristics above, Lee (2014) also indicated the absence of mention of the issues that led to the protests as a factor associated with the protest paradigm. This absence was particularly seen in CM, in which 67.7% of articles did not mention the motivating causes of the protests, while JN only suppressed them in 26.9% of the articles. It was also CM that employed more value judgements in news titles.

Although none of the newspapers explicitly favoured either side of the protests, JN revealed a slight anti-protest bias suggested by its preference for anti-protest sources and a more critical description of protesters' behaviour. In contrast, CM leaned slightly

more in the pro-protest direction, giving more voice to pro-protest sources. Neither of these two trends is strong enough to be considered ideological favouritism, which aligns with the ethical stance of a journalistic organisation's impartiality.

A protest without media coverage is a non-event (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993), assuming the logic that it exists if the protest is represented in the media. Indeed, a protest's visibility depends on its media representation (Kilgo & Harlow, 2019), but this can be treacherous, as it can diminish a social movement rather than strengthen it (Boykoff, 2007). It is up to the protest organisers and journalists to reassess the intricacies of this media representation and framing to avoid contributing to distorted portrayals of reality, which do not favour the essence of the causes under protest. From the perspective of the defence of the cause, it may be recommended that protesters invest in clarifying the advocated cause with journalists, inviting their understanding and even sensitivity and that they avoid violent acts so that the protest's media representation is not overshadowed and reduced to violence, which is desirable in the news. From the social responsibility of journalists' perspective, it is recommended that these professionals, knowing the protest paradigm and the disadvantage to the causes advocated by activists, do not easily give in to the representation of violence to the detriment of the pertinence and motives of the protesting cause. That is a need of the protesters that the media can satisfy by strengthening their position (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993). Also, agencies' dominance over international news (e.g., Shaheen et al., 2021) and over online newspapers is alarming in the context of news diversity (e.g., Boumans et al., 2018), recommending the construction of original pieces that cultivate the newspaper's identity and editorial policy and foster variety in news representations, framings, and coverage. With this precaution, the protests' authors may be heard, contributing to a society that is better represented in the media, more satisfied, fairer, and more democratic.

A possibility for future studies might be to understand how the protest paradigm applies in Portuguese newspapers' representation of protests in Portugal. It would also be important to deepen studies like this and that of Du et al. (2018), which deal with Western coverage of pro-democracy protests in foreign countries.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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THE REPORTING OF CORPORATE MANSLAUGHTER IN SAMARCO AND VALE TAILINGS DAMS COLLAPSES BY BRAZILIAN WEBSITES

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ABSTRACT

One of the greatest problems regarding corporate manslaughter is its neutralization and justification by society. The media industry plays an important role in such a process because it can act as a public opinion mobilizer but also favors the suppression of such crimes from the public agenda. However, the advent of digital media brought the expectations that, with a higher number of voices disseminating content about these crimes, people would be more aware of its seriousness. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze how Brazilian news websites have approached the corporate manslaughter concept in the coverage of Samarco's and Vale's criminous tragedies. To do so, 318 news reports about these cases published on seven Brazilian websites were studied using the qualitative content analysis method. Five websites, self-classified as alternative-independent, and two mainstream media sites were studied. The study has found a high frequency of news reporting about these cases soon after the tragedies, but nowadays, they are getting lost in a spiral of silence. It was also observed that the sites are reluctant to report the cases as corporate manslaughter, framing the episodes as accidents or tragedies. The alternative-independent media appeared to be more inclined to frame it as a homicide but revealed not to have enough resources to produce their own content. In general, it was observed that the reporting approach neutralized and re-signified the crimes, favoring the companies. No effort to mobilize public opinion was observed to demand that the justice institutions punish the companies.

KEYWORDS

corporate manslaughter, agenda-setting, news framing, newsmaking

A NOTICIAÇÃO DE HOMICÍDIO CORPORATIVO NOS ROMPIMENTOS DAS BARRAGENS DA SAMARCO E DA VALE POR SITES BRASILEIROS

RESUMO

Um dos grandes problemas referentes aos homicídios corporativos é a sua neutralização e justificação perante a sociedade. A mídia tem um papel importante nesse processo, pois pode atuar tanto como mobilizadora da opinião pública, quanto favorecendo supressão desses delitos da agenda pública. O surgimento das mídias digitais fez crescer a expectativa de que, com um maior número de vozes que noticiem esse tipo de delito, haveria uma cobertura com diversidade de abordagens e pontos de vista. Nesse sentido, este artigo teve como objetivo analisar como os sites de notícias brasileiros abordaram o conceito de homicídio corporativo nas tragédias-crime da Samarco e da Vale. Para tanto, 318 matérias sobre esses casos, publicadas por sete sites brasileiros, foram estudados por meio da análise de conteúdo, sendo cinco classificados como alternativos-independentes e dois da mídia *mainstream*. Verificou-se que houve uma

grande frequência de notificação logo após os ocorridos, mas atualmente os fatos tendem a se perder na espiral do silêncio. Notou-se também uma relutância em reportar os casos como homicídio corporativo, sendo mais frequente o enquadramento como acidente ou tragédia. A mídia alternativa-independente demonstrou uma predisposição maior em enquadrar como homicídio, porém demonstrou pouca envergadura para produzir conteúdo próprio. No geral, observou-se uma abordagem que facilitou a neutralização e a ressignificação dos crimes favorecendo as empresas. Não se verificou nenhum esforço para mobilizar a opinião pública para cobrar dos órgãos de justiça a punição aos responsáveis nem a criminalização das empresas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

homicídio corporativo, *agenda-setting*, enquadramento, *newsmaking*

1. INTRODUCTION

Companies kill. Crimes committed upon the roots of business entities' activities have made many victims, deliberately or culpably. Although this is not a new issue, corporate manslaughter has gained low prominence in legal literature compared to other areas of criminology (Barak, 2016) and has been reported very timidly by news media (Barak, 2015; Cavender & Miller, 2013).

Tragédia-crime (criminal tragedy) is a neologism incorporated into Brazilian Portuguese, meaning a criminous accident involving numerous victims or damages, with broad media repercussion and high collective grief. The *criminal-tragedies* caused by the collapse of Samarco and Vale S.A. tailings dams in Minas Gerais state, Brazil, resulted in 291 fatal victims and an immeasurable environmental liability. These events are flagrant examples of a corporate activity that has prioritized profits against human lives (Ministério Público do Estado de Minas Gerais, 2022). They were both qualified as homicide by the juridical entities. However, the legal proceedings have faced turnarounds, and no one has been prosecuted until now.

One of the greatest problems concerning such crimes is the neutralization through invisibility and justification in the eyes of public opinion (Almond & Colover, 2010; Barak, 2015; Ruggiero, 2015). Mass media is partially responsible for that. Although there are many ways to be informed about what happens in the world, most people only get acquainted with some events through the media, for instance, catastrophes, wars, events, and political forums, among others. That has implications for people's routines, thoughts, and identities. Hence, the media interferes with the symbolic construction of reality. In such a process, the dominant classes manage to influence what is published and broadcast according to their interests. Maybe this explains why the media vehicles devote little effort to covering the crimes of the powerful, reducing the space given to those issues and controlling how they are reported (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

Digital media have brought the expectation of democratization of communication because the barriers to access the means of production were one of the causes of class asymmetry in such an industry. In fact, the number of content creators has increased

in cyberspace, and interactivity tools have made two-way communication possible. However, other problems have emerged, such as credibility crisis, cooptation of digital platforms by large corporations, and the focus on immediacy (Castells, 1996/2016).

Digital journalism may be considered an innovative category propitiated by such new technology. Nevertheless, from the beginning, media moguls have dominated this segment, and nowadays, it is a field disputed both by mainstream media and untrained people with no professional qualification in this area (Ferrari, 2014). In Brazil, online media is a source of information for 85% of the population, against 61% of television and 12% of press media (Carro, 2021). Therefore, this research aims to study how digital media have reported corporate manslaughter including in the alternative-independent field and the mainstream media. Taking Samarco and Vale *criminal-tragedies* as objects of study, the paper addresses the following question: how did Brazilian news websites approach the concept of corporate manslaughter in reporting these events?

In order to answer such a question, the research is focused on three specific objectives: (a) analyze the frequency of reporting of such events by the websites studied since their occurrence; (b) study the emphasis and the visibility of categories related to corporate manslaughter using a sample of reports, and (c) classify these reports' news framing. The study followed a predominantly qualitative approach under the content analysis method (Mayring, 2000).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Corporate manslaughter is the death occurred in the scope of labor or community contexts, as a consequence of a company's activity, either by ineptitude, neglect, risk assumption, or intent (Barak, 2015). It differs from individual or gang crimes, when felons act alone or in groups, eventually motivated strictly by the commitment of an offense.

Corporate crime is more than the sum of individual crimes committed within the organization because it occurs when the whole institution is engendered for its perpetration, intentionally or not. It refers to an institutional architecture that legitimates illegalities and co-opts its members to participate, or to be conniving, under penalty of sanction. In these cases, the level of legitimation may increase to the point that the whole society accepts these acts as part of a given reality, or worse still, not even perceive them as crimes (Ruggiero, 2015). Such actions are institutionalized and perpetuate themselves in the organization structure, despite the board of directors' successions. One factor contributing to its occurrence is when the corporate strategy prioritizes profits and operational goals that risk employees' and community members' safety and lives (Ruggiero, 2015). Such practices range from using low-quality inputs to deliberately annihilating individuals and people in favor of capital interests (Banerjee, 2008).

The main difficulty in defining corporate manslaughter is the determination of authorship because it can result from the failure of diffuse agencies, and it is often impossible to indict culprits (Almond & Colover, 2010). Either that, even when it is possible to find someone to apportion blame, it is necessary to prove the crime is rooted in

institutional architecture and not the result of an individual agency, an exogenous scheme (e.g., sabotage), or external agents.

In modern corporations, the “person” is a legal entity that distinguishes from the individual; it can set up contracts, raise resources, and file lawsuits against individuals or other organizations — however, the criminal responsibility for its own offenses is still a problematic issue (Barak, 2015). On the other side, such a distinction between the private individual and the legal person permits, moreover, an organization to be sued, but the staff members and stockholders, who earned the bonuses and profits obtained at the expense of misconduct, are not even publicly exposed (Barak, 2015). Or the opposite, in case there is strong collective commotion, individuals may be charged for acts that, as a rule, were institutionalized practices of the organization, and the condemnation of such executives will not prevent future crimes committed by the corporation (Almond & Colover, 2010).

Large multinational companies adopt a pyramidal ownership structure (Morck, 2010) with no major shareholder, which makes it difficult to identify who is “the owner”. Each investor intends to maximize the return on investment rate, be it a billionaire, another large corporation, a pension fund, or a small-scale saver who invests in the stock market. This system pressures the managers to earn more profits and increase the firm’s share value. Not rarely do they draw on reckless management and discretionary accounting practices to inflate performance records (Theiss et al., 2019). Such financialization is an attribute of rentier capitalism. However, this system has an internal contradiction because it can lead to a short-term orientation, stimulating risky or fraudulent management to increase the share price (Cavender & Miller, 2013). The fast turnover of staff members hinders keeping track of responsibilities in this intricate system that involves private interests and risk exposure, and once an accident occurs, those liable for it are already away.

Such a system has created a fertile ground for the appearance of necrocapitalism, which has developed upon colonialist and imperialist ideologies, resulting in the current symbiosis involving the state and the market, reframing the sovereignty of territories in line with the interests of big business conglomerates (Banerjee, 2008).

According to Zaitch and Gutiérrez-Gómez (2015), the 1980’s neoliberal reforms aimed at solving the problem of idle capital, searching for new businesses to invest in, to avoid a surplus crisis. One premise was to open the markets. Therefore, countries with abundant mineral resources were forced to implement economic policies and legislation that fostered new ventures, offering legal certainty and tax advantages. That encouraged promiscuous relationships between the state and the globalized capital, resulting in negative externalities, such as territory expropriation, tax losses, economic reprimarization, corruption, environmental degradation, harm to public health, and deaths caused by mining activities. There is evidence that mining companies follow a profitability cycle, neglecting safety and public interest (Davies & Martin, 2009).

Leighton (2013) adverts that the wealth concentration by the private sector was followed by a maldistribution of political power, reflecting on criminology theory, to whom large corporations are practically invisible. Tillman (2013) highlights that such unbalance reproduces the general idea that these companies are not only *too big to fail*, but also *too big to jail*.

Ruggiero (2015) posits that the crimes of the powerful are like “experiments”, that is, companies introduce new and more profitable forms to operate their activities, sacrificing the general welfare and spoiling the natural resources. If society does not react, entrepreneurs are encouraged to introduce new ethics, rules, and socio-political arrangements to justify their practices. The capacity to redefine what is justifiable is proportional to the power exerted by each actor in a social system that is increasingly biased, concentrated, and polarized.

Such a complex network reinforces the contradictory relation between the historical obligation to control and criminalize illicit acts by one side and, by another, the need to reproduce capital (Barak, 2016). That helps to explain why society asks for and endorses punishment for individual crimes, especially those around which there was an intense commotion and media coverage, but at the same time legitimates impunity for large corporations because the criminalization of these organizations would cause losses to many investors, including the small shareholders.

As stated by Cavender and Miller (2013), the public condemnation of corporate crimes is as severe as “street” crimes. They cause an initial upheaval, but they rarely lead to social mobilization. They are perceived as serious events only in case of human deaths and significant material damages (Borges et al., 2015). Nevertheless, the notion of criminality associated with corporate homicides is complex, and public opinion is loath to apportion blame in these cases more than for individual crimes (Almond & Colover, 2010).

In many countries, it is possible to punish corporate crimes, but generally, the legal systems are not very precise about manslaughter. The United Kingdom is one of the few countries to have a specific law regarding corporate homicide, which enables the indictment of a firm, as it considers that any death, occupational or external, is due to a “managerial failure” of executives, who are responsible, ultimately, for the operational control (Almond & Colover, 2010). Such a law came into effect in 2008, but some studies posit that the results have been frustrating, revealing punishment asymmetries, which are more severe for small firms (Hébert et al., 2019).

Where there is no specific legislation, classifying corporate crimes depends on juridical system agents’ interpretation. In Brazil, environmental crimes are punishable by law, and firms can be charged (Lei nº 9.605, 1998, Article 3). In contrast, corporate manslaughter, as stated before, does not exist explicitly in the criminal field, prevailing the interpretation that legal persons do not act of their own will. Directors and employees can be indicted for homicides because, in this case, it is possible to prove a causal nexus. Therefore they can be prosecuted for acts that result in deaths, but the firms cannot (Silva et al., 2019).

For Barak (2016), the slowness and the difficulty in the prosecution and the punishment of large corporations’ crimes, compared to less powerful firms as well as individual crimes, reveals a political economy of crime. Barak (2015) also posits that the official statistics of most countries index individual crimes, but when involving political and economic elites, large corporations, governments, and states, they are not officially counted nor reported by the media as crimes. According to the author (2015), if such offenses

were recorded, people would notice that they are more likely to become a victim of the powerful than the powerless.

As stated by Ruggiero (2015), the powerful have successfully coordinated economic, political, and symbolic resources to create the idea that they are beyond reproach, so they use such hegemonic power to escape all sorts of judgments. The author affirms that these crimes are more likely to occur in social contexts of transformations, inequalities, and changes. Therefore such transgressions are perceived as a necessary evil to achieve development, not crimes.

According to Barak (2015), in many cases, the existing laws would suffice to punish such crimes. However, the powerful escape from condemnation and stigmatization through alliances, negotiations, and justifications that undermine the moralization of their misbehaviors. Most of the rationalization of the impunity for corporate crimes arises from spurious relationships between firms and governments. For the author (2015), such adjudication of impunity is underpinned by the idea that punishment at the corporate level would be even more harmful to society than the crime itself, for instance, the extinction of job positions and fewer tax revenues.

Budó (2016) emphasizes that the conjunction of state and market has caused harm to humanity and nature beyond the juridical category of crime. The author affirms a discrepancy between the judicial-penal discourse and its practice because it simultaneously proclaims equality and justice, and the law is asymmetrically applied. Historically, she proceeds, there is an ideology of diminishing some social groups, which legitimizes the persecution and the punishment of the most vulnerable people under the discourse of order maintenance. However, this same system seems limited when judging and punishing the misbehaviors of the powerful.

Such criminalization ideology imprints on the poorer the images of transgression; they are displaced to the opposite side of correctness, justifying the exercise of an authoritarian power against them on behalf of a development project (Quijano, 1998). Under this rationale, the elite deploys methods such as aporophobia, racism, cultural supremacism, sexism, and moralism to diminish, criminalize and deride ethnic groups and underprivileged minorities. As society accepts and normalizes these conditions, it builds a path to legitimizing domination and aggression against others. Therefore, discriminated groups can be classified as lawbreakers, but the white executives cannot because they always act in favor of a legitimated system essential for development.

In a cultural criminology approach, Cavender and Miller (2013) categorize corporate crime into two levels: the *micro-politics*, where the problem is recognized as a transgression and actions are taken to remedy the damage; and the *macro-politics*, when economic, social, and political forces shape the reference frameworks to identify and to alleviate damages. Dominant ideologies and discourses at the macro-politics level interfere in the micro-politics level, affecting the perspective on the causes and solutions for the problem.

Finally, it is important to mention the concept of criminal selectivity, which unfolds into two dimensions. In primary criminalization, illicit acts are defined. Selective

criminalization begins at this point because the representation at legislative institutions is unequal, composed mostly of dominant classes (Martini, 2007). That explains, in part, why corporate manslaughter is still not considered a crime by Brazilian laws. On the other hand, secondary criminalization is the application of the criminal norm to punish the culprits. According to Baratta (2002), passionate and biased judgment by magistrates regarding the social class of defendants influences their verdict, a reason why crimes committed by the powerful are less likely to be punished because the perpetrators do not fit into the social stereotype of the transgressor.

2.1. THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN REPORTING CORPORATE HOMICIDES

Public opinion contributes to the social representation of corporate manslaughter, although the outcomes are ambiguous (Almond & Colover, 2010; Borges et al., 2015). Michel et al. (2015), studying the U.S. context, reported that groups with advantaged sociodemographic characteristics (white, higher level of education, more access to digital information technologies, non-religious, among other variables) tend to perceive the elite's transgressions as crimes. However, people with a more conservative and pro-capitalist attitude will likely perceive corporate crimes with less seriousness and justify firms' actions.

In such dispute for the signification of misdoings, the power of the big capital becomes strongly evident, deploying economic and political resources to erase their crimes from the social memory or justifying them through the creation of narratives to deviate attention or distort meanings. Staff members possess unparalleled social capital once they belong to the same field as those who establish the public agenda, including the media. Ruggiero (2015) stated that "the crimes of the powerful, following this line of analysis, may be seen as the result of proximity among actors, mutual trust, imitation, and the desire to perpetuate bonds, values and group interests" (p. 63).

One of the social and economic bonds the capitalist elite praises the most is with the media. According to McQuail (2010), media is a fundamental institution nowadays. Since it promotes the mediation between individuals and reality; many times, it is the only way to experience what happens in the world, bringing people closer to facts that are distant in time and space; moreover, it influences the construction of identities, once it provides a map of *where* and *who* people are, and which *direction* to follow. Media cannot determine public opinion but can influence it, offering an interpretative structure through how they frame the stories (Cavender & Miller, 2013).

Journalistic coverage of white-collar crimes related to frauds and corruption is frequent, but when it involves corporate homicides, mass media are still reluctant, and the space and time devoted are in inverse proportion to the size of the organizations accused of misdeeds (Slingerland et al., 2006). Although the coverage of corporate crimes has increased, the media still focuses on managers' accountability and government agents' misbehavior, not on the institutional elements that have led to the offense (Cavender & Miller, 2013). In the case of manslaughter, there is resistance to reporting these events as such, referring to them much more as tragedies or natural disasters (Katiambo, 2021).

News production is a social and political phenomenon involving many variables — culture, social behavior, technology, and economy, among others. In order to understand such processes, it is necessary to invoke an array of theories that may, broadly, be grouped in the same theoretical school, focused on the emitter and devoted to understanding what is included in the mass media agenda, how they do that and under which sociopolitical and economic conditions. Each theory has its specificity in such a framework, but overall, they propose political sociology of content production.

The gatekeeping theory is one of the first theories in such a school, addressing how the editor sets up the agenda for a specific edition. It postulates that such an actor, intentionally and following his own judgment, determines the media content and, therefore, interferes in the list of day-life events to which the audiences will have access (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Once much of the information necessary for the maintenance of a democratic society reaches the citizen through the media vehicles, such a process of gatekeeping is crucial in defining the public agenda because the society's perception of the relevance of an issue is based on its presence in the media agenda (McCombs & Reynolds, 2002).

The agenda-setting theory studies how and why such a content selection system occurs. It is the agenda-setting first level (McCombs, 2004). In this same line, Noelle-Neumann (1974) develops the spiral of silence theory. On the premise that audiences assess a subject's relevance from its salience in media, the author posits that the issues omitted in the agenda are perceived as irrelevant. Therefore people will be less encouraged to debate these matters. Consequently, these issues will fall into oblivion and will hardly be catapulted to the arenas of discussion and deliberation. For this reason, powerful actors will try to interfere in the media agenda, suppressing the contents against their interests and highlighting those favorable to their domination project.

However, the problems involving media content go beyond the existence, absence, or prominence of a subject on the agenda. They also include how such issues are presented, that is, how they are framed, which McCombs (2004) named the *second level* of agenda-setting. Framing is the process the media vehicles deploy to compose their content to distribute it as a product for their audiences, and, for this reason, they influence how people interpret reality (Linström & Marais, 2012). The sources interviewed, the details selected to appear in the news, the data and information, and the illustrative material, among others, are part of the news framing; therefore, they will give sense.

Such a process of newsmaking commences with a dispute for space and also pervades the construction of meaning. According to Retegui (2017), the newsmaking theory aims at casting light on these issues, focusing on the micro-social relations, that is, the routines of newsrooms. However, the author points out that such routines differ from those compiled in a guidebook. Once journalists are involved in a symbolic universe dominated by the big capital, they are likely to reproduce such discourse. If they try to intone a different note, they will suffer sanctions because this system controls the whole news production chain.

Mass media belong to a field where the economic dimension weighs heavily. They are for-profit organizations that have a double linkage with the market. On the one hand, they need to have revenue through selling content to the audiences (news, entertainment,

and information services). On the other hand, they serve as marketing communication channels for other organizations to advertise their products (advertisements). McManus (1994), following this rationale, alerts that productive efficiency is taken to the extreme, sometimes at the expense of content quality. The author points out that, in market-oriented journalism, the news values, which indicate the potential of events to become published news, are measured according to sales volumes, not the relevance of an event to society.

According to Oliveira (2014), big media corporations adopt large-scale production standards, making vehicles very similar because it is more economically viable to buy content than to afford in-house production. The problem is that the main Brazilian news agencies are owned by big private media conglomerates operating within the same economic framework. The news is produced for the main vehicle of the group, whose editors decide which other vehicles they will distribute the content to and what will be exclusive for their subscribers (Oliveira, 2014). This gatekeeping process is based on commercial purposes and economic and political reasons if the content concerns advertisers or allied interests.

These theories were formulated before the advent of the internet. Nevertheless, they are still useful for digital journalism. While previously, the websites trailed behind traditional media, such hierarchy no longer exists. Ndzinisa et al. (2022) remark that the mainstream media increasingly consider digital social networks as fonts of information and use these resources as channels to interact with their audiences.

However, the quality of the information circulating on the internet is problematic. The practice of journalistic looting is very common (Ferrari, 2014). It occurs when one takes news from other media vehicles, including mainstream media, “patches” these excerpts together, and publishes them as their own content. One of the issues concerning independent media is the amateur character, with irregular and low-quality coverage. However, as the audiences are included in the digital universe, they learn how to search for more reliable information (Michel et al., 2015).

An undeniable evolution provided by digital media is agility, but that has created the phenomenon of *news flashpoints*. Waisbord and Russel (2020) define such concept as the sudden and brief periods when an event gains much space in the media, causing upheaval and mobilization. Authors emphasize that this is a feature of online journalism, intensified by social networks, blurring even more the line that separates professional journalism from other forms of information. Thus, flashpoints involve not only journalistic material but also different narratives about an event through various platforms. They add that this is a chaotic process, as the forms of information diffusion are intertwined and feed each other. There are many voices, but they are more like “noise” than the expression of diversity because there is no commitment to news quality or the truth.

Waisbord and Russel (2020) point out that news flashpoints have many causes. The first one is news values. The problem with such a metric is that it considers the level of the audience an event can generate, not its importance to society. Therefore, an issue that is

relevant to society but not considered noticeable by the media will not receive much journalistic coverage. The second cause is the news cycle, which differs from the cycle of social problems. In general, the public interest in an issue decreases before its solution. The internet is making this cycle go around even faster. The third factor is the emphasis the media devote to a subject depending on the editorial line of the vehicle, which is determined by the owners' political position. The last factor is the phenomenon of market-oriented journalism, which favors amenities and sensationalism (McManus, 1994).

3. METHOD

The study follows a qualitative approach, exploratory-descriptive type, designed as content analysis research. As defined by Mayring (2000), content analysis is a controlled process of studying the material's manifest content, the formal aspects, and the latent meanings under a hermeneutic approach. Such technique is not limited to frequency, that is, counting how many times a category appears in the material, but also includes the comprehension of meanings.

The corpus of analysis consisted of 318 news reports published online. Of these, 137 were about Samarco's criminal tragedy, and 180 were about Vale's. They were selected from 3,121 news reports. Some 1,512 were about the Samarco case, and 1,619 were about the Vale case. In the case of Samarco, they were published from November 5th, 2015, the day of the criminal tragedy, to December 7th, 2016, just after the Federal Justice accepted the accusation presented by the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office (FPPO). In the case of Vale, the period ranges from January 25th, 2019, when the tailings dam collapsed, until February 5th, 2022, soon after the Minas Gerais State Public Prosecutor's Office appealed to the Superior Court of Justice, who transferred the proceedings to the federal level, returning the process to "square one".

The material was collected from seven Brazilian news websites. Five are self-defined as alternative-independent and suggested by an expert in Brazilian digital journalism (Brasil 247, CartaCapital, Conversa Afada, Nexo, and Tijolaço). Two are among the biggest media vehicles in Brazil, thus representing the mainstream media (Globo.com and UOL/Folha de S. Paulo). The search tools of the websites were used to find the reports by typing the terms: "Samarco", "Mariana", and "barragem" (dam; combined and separately), and "Vale", "Brumadinho" and "barragem" (also combined and separately). The 3,121 search results were numbered using a simple random sampling, and 375 were selected, with a 90% confidence interval and an error margin of 4%. Only the reports with the crimes as the main subject were considered. Also, texts with identical content were discarded, denoted as copies of reports produced by news agencies, yet published by different sites. So, the sample summed up to 318 reports.

Table 1 displays the number of reports analyzed, distributed by the websites, and their classification (alternative-independent or mainstream).

	ALTERNATIVE-INDEPENDENT				MAINSTREAM		TOTAL	
	Brasil 247	CartaCapital	Conversa Afiada	Nexo	Tijolaço	Globo.com		UOL/Folha de S. Paulo
Samarco/Mariana	30	5	7	3	6	44	42	137
Vale/Brumadinho	38	13	8	8	3	35	76	181
Total	68	18	15	11	9	79	118	318

Table 1 Number of reports analyzed per website

Initially, each text was divided into content analytical units (Mayring, 2000). The units devised were: headlines, illustrations (such as photographs, drawings, and graphics), illustration captions, subheadings, leads, and the rest of the report.

Next, the categories of study were defined. They constitute the core aspects of interpretation and classification. This study uses the deductive category approach, which previously defined categories, usually based on the theoretical framework (Mayring, 2000). Therefore, for this paper, the categories were the explicit mention (or related terms) of corporate manslaughter, human fatalities, names of the companies involved, and negative externalities of mining.

In order to classify the news framing, the analysis considered the most recurrent expressions in each analytical unit, the information used to compose the report, the sources interviewed and the images portrayed in illustrations. One other researcher was asked to classify the material, and classification was compared with that of this paper's author to ensure validity. They disagreed on 8% of the total. The divergences were resolved after the argumentation of both sides. Those cases in which the framing remained inconclusive were discarded from the analysis.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Samarco is a privately held company owned by Australian group BHP and the Brazilian group Vale, two world giants of mining commodities, steel industry, and logistics. In 2015, Samarco was Brazil's second biggest iron ore producer (Departamento Nacional de Produção Mineral, 2016).

The FPPO (Ministério Público Federal, n.d.) classifies the collapse of the Fundão tailings dam, near the historical city of Mariana, as the world's biggest accident involving mining rejects. It killed 19 people and contaminated the Doce River riverbed with toxic mud, reaching the Atlantic Ocean. In January 2016, the Federal Police indicted Samarco, Vale, and Vogbr (the contractor to inspect the dam safety) for crimes. In October of the same year, the FPPO accused 21 executives of willful manslaughter and environmental crime, as well as Samarco, Vale, and BHP for environmental crime. The following month, the Federal Justice accepted the denunciation and established judicial proceedings. Until now, no one has been judged — from the 22 accused by the FPPO, only seven remain defendants in the lawsuit.

Meanwhile, Vale is the world's biggest iron ore producer, operating in around 30 countries (Vale, n.d.). It is an organization that adopts a pyramidal ownership structure (Morck, 2010), having no majority shareholder to whom people could associate the company's image. Only six investors hold shares above 5%, and none own more than 8% of stocks.

On January 25th, 2019, the Vale mining waste dam of Mina do Córrego do Feijão collapsed in the municipality of Brumadinho, also in the Minas Gerais state, destroying some of the company's facilities and nearby farm properties and killing 272 people. Vale and the German safety certification provider, TÜV Süd, were held liable for the accident. On January 21th, 2020, the Minas Gerais State Public Prosecutor's Office (Ministério Público do Estado de Minas Gerais, 2022) started investigating the crimes and filed a complaint against 16 persons. The following month, the State Court accepted the accusation and began the legal proceedings. However, in October 2021, the Superior Court of Justice dismissed the case, which was running at the state level, because judges considered that the proceeding should run at the federal level. The Minas Gerais State Public Prosecutor's Office then appealed this decision at the beginning of 2022, and in June of that year, the Federal Supreme Court accepted the request, and the proceedings continued at the state level. In November 2021, Vale S.A., TÜV Süd, and 19 executives were indicted by the Federal Police, reinforcing the supposed authorship and materiality of a criminal offense.

These two events resulted in a large social commotion and intense media coverage. The following content analysis is structured along three axes according to the specific objectives declared in the introduction of this paper: frequency of reporting, visibility of the categories of study, and news framing.

4.1. FREQUENCY OF REPORTING

The frequency was calculated considering the number of weekly reports published by the websites analyzed. Graphs (Figure 1 and Figure 2) display the frequency of reporting about the Samarco and Vale cases.

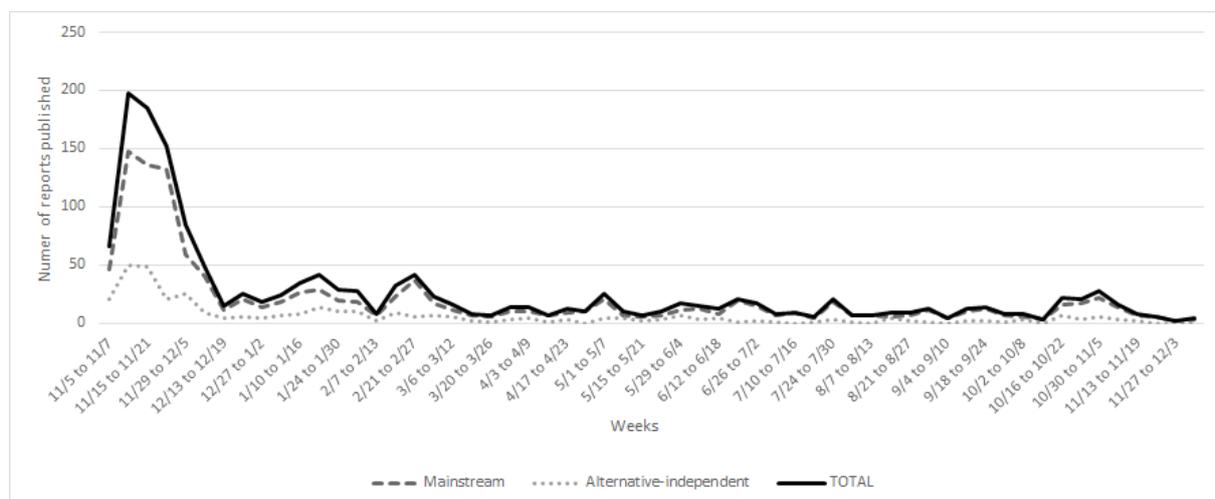


Figure 1 Weekly frequency of reports – Samarco/Mariana (11/5/2015 to 12/7/2016)

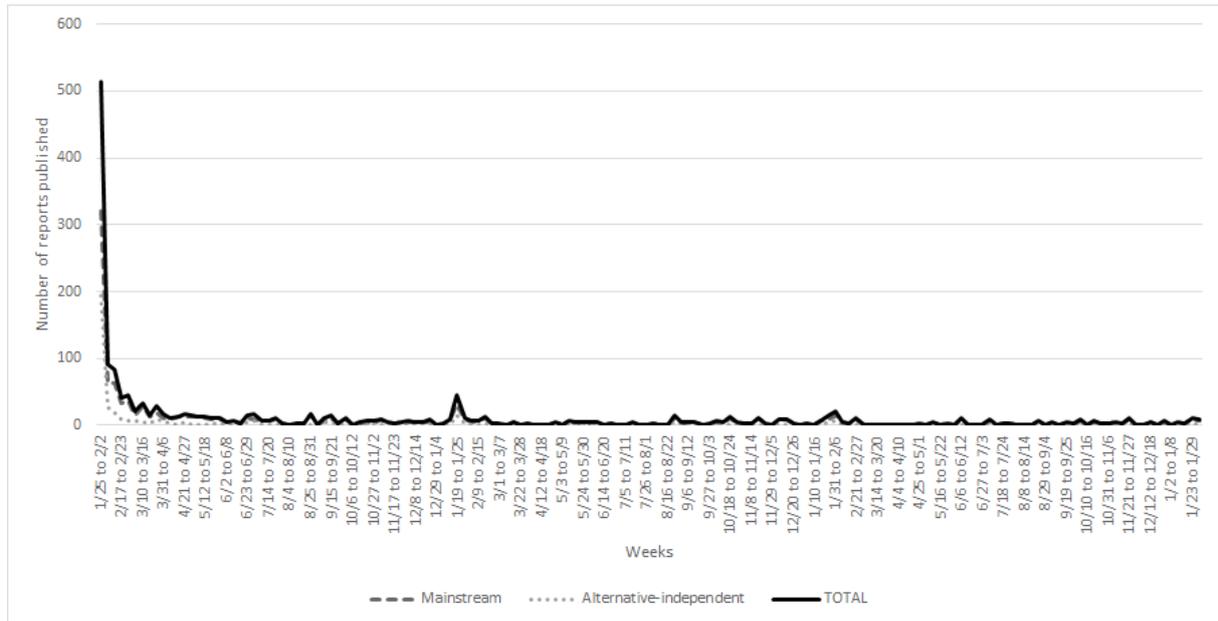


Figure 2 Weekly frequency of reports – Vale/Brumadinho (1/25/2019 to 2/5/2022)

The data may differ from the actual frequency, depending on the search terms used and the indexation criteria adopted by the websites analyzed. Nevertheless, the graph shows a coverage concentration on the day the events occurred and the subsequent weeks, and after that, a steep drop in the reporting frequency can be observed, indicating the news flashpoints phenomenon (Waisbord & Russel, 2020). Secondary peaks are noted. In the Samarco case, they occur between mid-January and mid-February 2016, which coincides with the indictment of the culprits by the Federal Police and the denunciation by the FPPO and its acceptance by the federal judicial authorities between mid-October and mid-November 2016. Regarding the Vale case, these peaks are not related to the proceedings calendar but to the anniversaries of the criminal tragedy, when media vehicles publish news stories with sensationalist elements.

That supports the theory that preconizes that news chronological patterns differ from the judicial and business cycles (Waisbord & Russel, 2020). Newsworthy events must be impactful and bring updated information at a pace that neither the judicial court routines nor the business decision agenda can match. Intentionally or not, this feature may favor the spiral of silence phenomenon in covering such crimes (Noelle-Neumann, 1974).

4.2. EMPHASIS AND VISIBILITY OF CORPORATE CRIME

To accomplish such objective, the reports were firstly organized in a cross-table by content analytical unit and categories of study. The results are displayed in Tables 2 and 3. The numbers represent the frequency that each category of study (rows) appears under each content analytical unit (columns). The numbers out of the parentheses represent the subtotal in each unit. Regarding the numbers within the parentheses, the

first refers to alternative-independent media, and the second to mainstream media. For instance, in the first row and the first column of Table 2, the number 4 indicates that the category “manslaughter” was cited four times in the news headings, thrice by alternative-independent vehicles and once by a mainstream vehicle.

	HEADING	ILLUSTRATION	ILLUSTRATION CAPTIONS	LEAD, SUBHEADING	REST OF THE TEXT
Manslaughter	4 (3/1)	—	3 (2/1)	13 (6/7)	22 (11/11)
Human fatalities	3 (2/1)	1 (0/1)	7 (6/1)	13 (6/7)	80 (21/59)
Name of the company	60 (25/35)	11 (5/6)	44 (26/18)	13 (6/7)	131 (45/86)
Externalities of mining	4 (3/1)	—	—	13 (6/7)	19 (12/7)

Table 2 *Emphasis and visibility of the categories of study – Samarco/Mariana*

	HEADING	ILLUSTRATION	ILLUSTRATION CAPTIONS	LEAD, SUBHEADING	REST OF THE TEXT
Manslaughter	8 (5/3)	2 (2/0)	4 (4/0)	21 (14/7)	40 (20/20)
Human fatalities	9 (3/6)	4 (1/3)	15 (3/12)	51 (23/28)	103 (38/65)
Name of the company	110 (39/71)	21 (11/10)	52 (25/27)	141 (52/89)	146 (53/93)
Externalities of mining	3 (3/0)	1 (1/0)	3 (3/0)	8 (7/1)	27 (18/9)

Table 3 *Emphasis and visibility of the categories of study – Vale/Brumadinho*

In both cases, a significantly smaller frequency of categories “manslaughter”, “human fatalities”, and “externalities of mining” can be noted. Regardless of the offenses classified as homicides by the judicial authorities, such expression appears timidly in the reports. It is noteworthy, however, that the alternative-independent media are more inclined to report the facts as homicides, as the frequency count demonstrates. The number of human fatalities is the second most cited category, but such information is included in a less visible part of the report (the rest of the text), as the names of the companies have greater exposure in all analytical units of content. Whether purposeful or not, it suggests the neutralization of the crimes and their outcomes (Almond & Colover, 2010; Barak, 2015; Ruggiero, 2015).

The category “externalities of mining” is the major absence, supporting the thesis that structural issues do not have news value or their coverage conflicts with the interests of the big capital (Waisbord & Russel, 2020). Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that such a category is more cited by the alternative-independent websites, reinforcing the importance of a media system with a broad diversity of voices.

Regarding the analytical unity “illustration”, the absence of images that report homicides or human fatalities is reasonable since these are sensitive contents. However, it can be noticed that the names of the companies appear in this analytical unity with a greater frequency. The qualitative observation revealed that reports including the names

of the companies do not mention the categories “manslaughter” nor “human fatalities”, making it difficult to associate the brands with the criminal acts.

However, most reports mentioning the names of the companies emphasize remedy actions, stock market values, and the impact on local economies. In more visible analytical categories, like the “heading”, the names of the companies are dissociated from the criminal tragedies through many writing tricks. For example, to report that the Federal Justice authorities have accepted the denunciations provided by the FPPO, UOL/Folha de S. Paulo, on November 18th, 2016, used the following heading: “Justiça Acata Denúncia Contra 22 pessoas por Desastre em Mariana” (Court Accepts Complaint Against 22 People for the Disaster in Mariana).

The companies’ names are not mentioned in the headings or leads, which are the parts of a news report with higher visibility. They are mostly mentioned in the rest of the text. One of the reports published an illustration that is worth mentioning — an infographic highlighted by the heading: “*Mariana* no Tribunal [emphasis added]” (Mariana Taken to Court) as if the “town” were being judged, not the company responsible for the criminal tragedy.

Other similar examples are: “Lama de *Mariana* (MG) Avança e Provoca Matança de Peixes [emphasis added]” (Mud of Mariana [MG] Spreads and Kills Fishes; UOL/Folha de S. Paulo, November 16th, 2015); “Lama de *Brumadinho* Deve Alcançar Bacia do São Francisco em 15 Dias [emphasis added]” (Mud of Brumadinho May Reach São Francisco River Basin in 15 Days; Brasil 247, January 30th, 2019).

In both cases, the readers may interpret that the “mud” belongs to the towns and are not the consequence of the companies’ crimes.

Another point to be mentioned regards the sources heard. Approximately 59% are the companies’ voices against 22% of the victims, whose lines almost always narrated personal losses or other predicaments caused by the tailings dams bursts. Only one report, published by alternative-independent Brasil 247, gives voice to the Movement of People Affected by Dams, a group that advocates for the solution of the structural consequences of mining.

4.3. FRAMING THE CONTENT: NEWS FRAMING AND NEWSMAKING

Regarding the journalistic genre, the most common style was the *short report* (an average of 294 words and 1.7 sources cited), with a frequency of 267, considering the two cases combined. The genre *opinion (op-ed)* appeared 29 times in total, of which the alternative-independent media published 22. The *short notice* appeared 18 times. The more elaborated genres were scarce, like *interviews* (three times) and *news stories* (once). It is important to point out that less elaborated genres were more common in alternative-independent media. For instance, the website Brasil 247 alone dedicated 38 reports to the Vale/Brumadinho case, of which 16 consisted of material bought from news agencies. In addition, the other websites, including the mainstream, resorted to stories from other vehicles, citing them as “sources”, “patched” these pieces together, and published

as if they were their own content, denoting the practice of “journalistic looting” (Ferrari, 2014). Such features indicate a kind of journalism more focused on immediatism than on high-quality standards.

Concerning news framing, the frequency count is displayed in Tables 4 and 5.

FRAMING	ALTERNATIVE/ INDEPENDENT	MAINSTREAM	TOTAL
Incident	2	4	6
Accident	25	64	89
Tragedy	16	10	26
Environmental crime	1	1	2
Manslaughter	6	8	14

Table 4 News framing – Samarco/Mariana

FRAMING	ALTERNATIVE/ INDEPENDENT	MAINSTREAM	TOTAL
Incident	2	9	11
Accident	29	57	86
Tragedy	5	34	39
Environmental crime	2	1	3
Manslaughter	27	11	38

Table 5 News framing – Vale/Brumadinho

It can be noted that the predominant framing is an *accident*. In these cases, even mentioning the occurrence of fatal victims and citing the offenders, there is no explicit allusion to homicide. This finding raises some concerns. Differently from individual crimes, especially manslaughter, when the fact is reported as such, even before the identification of the suspect, in the case of corporate crimes, there is some prudence and reluctance in reporting this way (Slingerland et al., 2006). Usually, the terms accident, tragedy, or disaster are preferred (Machin & Mayr, 2012). There is no mention of words like accused, culprit, or suspect. In both cases studied, even after the Public Prosecutor’s Office provided the accusation, the Court accepted, and the media refused to use such terms. When an individual murder occurs, such classification is nearly automatic.

The websites studied, in the few times they mention crime or manslaughter, do that through the voice of third parties: “Colocar Refeitório na Rota da Lama Mostra Falta de Gestão de Risco, Diz Ex-ministra do Ambiente [emphasis added]” (Locating the Cafeteria in the Route of the Mud Flow Denotes Flaws in Risk Management, Says Former Environment Minister; UOL/Folha de S. Paulo, January 28th, 2019); “Lula Sobre Crime da Vale: ‘Quando as Pessoas Só Pensam em Lucro, Elas Permitem Genocídios Como o que Ocorreu em Brumadinho’ [emphasis added]” (Lula on Vale’s Crime: ‘When People Only Think About Profits, They Allow Genocides Like the One Occurred in Brumadinho’; Brasil 247, January 25th, 2020).

It is also important to mention the framing as *tragedy*, with no explicit allusion to corporate manslaughter. There were 65 reports classified as tragedies in both cases. UOL/Folha de S. Paulo deserves a particular mention once 24 out of 76 reports about the Vale/Brumadinho case adopt the storytelling style, narrating victims' miseries, with no mention of corporate crime suspicion or the negative externalities of mining.

Lastly, it was observed that many vehicles frame the stories giving voice to the companies, particularly in the most visible parts, like the heading and the lead. In the sample analyzed, there were 49 occurrences of such kind, 48 in mainstream media. For example: "BHP Billiton Lamenta 'Tragédias' em Encontro Anual da Empresa" (BHP regrets the 'tragedies' in annual company meeting; Globo.com, November 19th, 2015); "Vale Tem que Ser Preservada, Diz Diretor da Companhia" (Vale Must Be Preserved, Says Company Chief Executive Officer; UOL/Folha de S. Paulo, January 28th, 2019).

These results point to the connections between media and big corporations and how important it is to discuss the impartiality issue.

5. FINAL REMARKS

The objective of this study was to analyze how the Brazilian news websites have approached the concept of corporate manslaughter in the criminal tragedies of Samarco and Vale. In sum, results indicate that the media have adopted an approach that enabled the neutralization and re-signification of the crimes, favoring the companies. There was no consistent effort toward public opinion mobilization and demanding judicial authorities to punish the culprits. It can be said that the framing, in general, has varied from neutral to the companies' perspectives. It is worth mentioning that the defendants have not yet been judged and never even complied with the determination to compensate for the damages.

The victims of the criminal tragedies were given no voice in the media studied. They are mostly poor peasants and traditional communities, whose image is normally associated with backwardness and a hindrance to economic development. That reinforces the ideas of Quijano (1998) and Cavender and Miller (2013) about the need to develop cultural criminology studies focused on the victims. Society and the media, as they fail in criminalizing the corporations responsible for the criminal tragedies, in fact, shift the blame to the victims, as if the ultimate responsibility for their social condition lies exclusively on them, not the consequence of an economic model chosen by the state, which is subjugated by the market.

As Machin and Mayr (2012) posit, the criminal in society, is seen as the transgressor of the values held by society. This image does not fit the representation of an executive who incorporates the values of capitalism, or the big corporation, whose function is to profit for the shareholder and then spin up the economy. Therefore, the media is reluctant to report the transgressions of corporations and alert the citizens about the negative effects of an economic model that puts the big capital interests above the common good.

The media's role, in such context, may be explained by the words of Ruggiero (2015). According to the author, in ancient Greece, the term "idiotes" described someone who chose to live in total privacy, avoiding taking part in public sphere activities. Nowadays, this term refers to those who earn gains from any activity — licit or illicit — thinking this will turn into benefits for all. Unfortunately, the evolution of the public sphere has led to the rise of more political actors that fit in such a new definition. "*Idiotes*, in this case, will proliferate, and with them the justifications of the crimes of the powerful" (Ruggiero, 2015, p. 71).

Translation: Gilmar José dos Santos

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THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE NEWS: MELODRAMA AND FACTUAL RECORD

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ABSTRACT

The controversial establishment of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in Portugal was the subject of many news reports during the 1990s, in which accusations of serious crimes — from charlatanism to connections to drug trafficking and child abduction — filled the pages of newspapers (G. M. Dias, 2006; R. A. S. Dias, 2016; Farias, 1999; Farias & Santos, 1999; Júnior, 2013; Machado, 2003). Many of these news reports linked the Church with stereotypes about Brazil and Brazilians and referenced Brazilian soap operas, which were quite popular in the country at the time. To observe whether these characteristics have been maintained over the years, the author analysed reports published by the influential newspapers *Público* and *Expresso* from the early 21st century (2001 and 2002), in 2010 and 2017, respectively. Inspired by critical discourse analysis and framing analysis, and with the theoretical support of the theory of social representations, such analyses allowed the author to conclude that the characteristics identified in the 1990s remained, although the Church's media presence has since reduced. In turn, the reference to soap operas manifests in the fabric of journalistic discourse, with a hybridisation formed between the melodramatic and informational genres.

KEYWORDS

social representations, journalism, Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, melodrama, soap operas

A IGREJA UNIVERSAL DO REINO DE DEUS EM NOTÍCIA: MELODRAMA E REGISTO FACTUAL

RESUMO

O polémico estabelecimento da Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus em Portugal deu ensejo a uma cobertura jornalística durante a década de 1990, em que acusações de crimes graves — de charlatanismo a ligações com o narcotráfico e o rapto de crianças — preencheram as páginas dos jornais (G. M. Dias, 2006; R. A. S. Dias, 2016; Farias, 1999; Farias & Santos, 1999; Júnior, 2013; Machado, 2003). Também se observou no discurso jornalístico do período a associação da Igreja a estereótipos sobre o Brasil e os brasileiros e a referência às telenovelas brasileiras, então bastante populares no país. Com o objetivo de observar se estas características se mantiveram ao longo dos anos, analisámos peças publicadas pelos jornais de referência *Público* e *Expresso* no início do século XXI (2001 e 2002), em 2010 e em 2017. Inspirada pela análise crítica do discurso e a análise de enquadramentos, e com o suporte teórico da teoria das representações sociais, tal análise permitiu-nos concluir que se mantém as características identificadas nos anos 1990 na cobertura da Igreja, embora a sua presença mediática se tenha atenuado. Por sua vez, a

referência às telenovelas revela-se na tessitura do discurso jornalístico, com uma hibridez entre os géneros melodrama e informativo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

representações sociais, jornalismo, Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus, melodrama, telenovelas

1. INTRODUCTION

Founded in Brazil in 1977, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) began its internationalisation in Portugal, establishing its presence in the country 12 years later. That was not smooth and caused some conflicts, which were widely reported by the media. Two facts can be referred to as significant events of the arrival of the Church in the country: the purchase of the Coliseu concert hall in Porto, which caused numerous protests, and the aggressive attack on worshippers who were attending a meeting in a shopping centre in Matosinhos (G. M. Dias, 2006).

The attempt to buy the Coliseu was interpreted as an offence — especially by the population of Porto, due to the history and cultural importance of the building — and generated widespread public demonstrations; the “Matosinhos case”, however, refers to the 10-hour period in which worshippers were surrounded by a crowd shouting insults and trying to physically attack them. Both events, which took place in 1995, had wide repercussions in the media and marked the moment in which news media coverage of UCKG became recurrent. However, references to the Church in newspapers date back to 1991. According to Guilherme Dias (2006), not only were accusations made against its leader, Edir Macedo, and the UCKG scrutinised by the Brazilian justice system, but descriptions of the cult also took a pejorative tone, for example, with the term “bishop” — the term used for the Church’s priests — being written in quotation marks.

Miguel Farias (1999) identifies a piece from *Correio da Manhã* newspaper as the first example of a series of increasingly common news reports about the Church printed in various media sources. Entitled “Seita ‘Suspeita’ Tem Igrejas em Portugal” (A “Suspicious” Sect Has Churches in Portugal), the news report dates from the 16th of June 1991. According to the author, given the lack of studies and research centres in Portugal on new religious movements — a fitting designation for UCKG — in the early 1990s, the press became the main opinion maker about the Church. During this period, reports on the UCKG¹ focused on two main aspects: their extravagant character and the hysteria in its meetings — which included exorcisms and miracles — as well as its income and prosperity, emphasising tithing requirements and the characterisation of its members as people with low literacy.

At this point, it should be explained that UCKG classifies itself as a neo-Pentecostal denomination by emphasising the third entity in the trinity — the Holy Spirit — through

¹ Farias (1999) analysed reports published between 1992 and 1999 by the following newspapers: *Expresso*, *Independente*, *Visão*, *Público*, *Diário de Notícias*, *Jornal de Notícias*, *Correio da Manhã*, *Capital* and *Tal & Qual*.

miraculous manifestations such as “baptism in the spirit”, speaking languages, and physical healing. A focus is also placed on the temporal world, appealing to the worldly needs of worshipers. In this approach, poverty and wealth are the practical opposite of sin and grace, respectively. Although the so-called “theology of prosperity” is not present in the entirety of the neo-Pentecostal movement, its presence in the UCKG is noticeable due to the emphasis placed on a transformation of life not only in terms of body, spirit, and life-style but also consumption patterns (Garrard-Burnett, 2011).

It was also noted that the press began to associate UCKG with Brazilian nationality in this period, as can be observed in the following excerpt written by Diana Andringa for *Público* newspaper on the 5th of August 1995:

watching just one of the UCKG’s usual television broadcasts is sufficient to provide an understanding of how its persuasive power comes, to a large extent, from its harmony with the programmes that form the mainstays of our so-called generalist televisions: the promotion of fear and irrationality, even the skilful maintenance of the Brazilian accent in soap operas... (G. M. Dias, 2006, p. 302)

The mention of the priests’ accents being the same as the characters in Brazilian soap operas implies that their emotions are not grounded in reality, like the fictional characters on television. Igor Machado (2003) mentions another moment when, in the context of the aggression against the UCKG worshippers, a reporter for the *Diário de Notícias* (the 11th of November 1995) says the following: “there is nothing worse (...) than bishop João Luís or José Carlos, speaking in a soap opera accent, giving us media lessons in civics” (p. 213)². Rafael Dias (2016) also indicates the relationship established by the newspapers between the Brazilian accent and that of soap operas and the language of the Church (pronunciation and plots) when citing excerpts such as the following in *Público* on the 27th of August 1995:

the Universal Church speaks the same language as soap operas, and similarities are not only in the accent, which is so familiar to Portuguese ears but also in the many difficult lives, many easy promises of happiness to be fulfilled right at the end of the series. (p. 272)

The author also cites another report printed in *Público* (“Igreja Universal da Rádio de Deus”; Universal Church of the Radio of God, the 24th of August 1995, p. 35), where the Brazilian accent is once again highlighted as a characteristic of the Church: “on the other end of the line, until 2:30 or even 3:00 in the morning, a voice with a Brazilian accent appeals to all who think about abandoning life. The UCKG waits for all the lost sheep” (R. A. S. Dias, 2016, p. 272). Rafael Dias (2016) concludes that associations between the UCKG and something fanciful and unreal had become common in the press during this period.

² It is believed that the author misinterpreted this reference, as, according to Rafael Dias (2016), this excerpt was written by José Leite Pereira, the then director of *Público* in Porto, and features on Page 4 of the edition printed on the 11th of November 1995.

Two social perceptions about Brazil can be observed in this media reference to the Brazilian accent: the first, which was longstanding, relates to the stereotype of trickery and the idea that Brazilian people are con artists. The other was more recent, relating to a feeling of a Brazilian cultural invasion in which soap operas emerged as a paradigmatic example. Thus, Machado (2003) proposes that while the pair sex and trickery represented one of the main ways in which Brazil and Brazilians were perceived in Portugal, the way soap operas were linked to the UCKG led to the idea that the former promoted new ways of dealing with sexuality and the Church as a “trambique” (scam)³.

These current images of Brazil and Brazilians — periodically updated by inserting new elements, such as the Church’s arrival in the country — originate from the Portuguese imperial experience. Beyond the peculiarities of this experience in the Portuguese context, and the specific relationship between Portugal and Brazil during the colonial period, it is possible to understand the perpetuity of these images and their association with the UCKG phenomenon from a decolonial perspective (Quijano, 1992). Understanding coloniality as the persistence of the hegemonic paradigm of modern colonial rationality, where the ways of producing knowledge, the systems of meaning and the like of the colonised peoples “were [remain] enclosed in the category of the ‘exotic’” (Quijano, 1992, p. 13), we identify the presence of such a perspective in the journalistic coverage of the UCKG during the 1990s⁴.

As Farias (1999) indicates, in light of this new phenomenon, the newspaper’s analysis sought to identify “exotic” elements (a term used by the author) in the services, discourse, and actions of the UCKG. The underlying defence of rational values and European cultural heritage can also be observed in articles such as the following, published by *Jornal de Notícias* newspaper on the 30th of May 1999 (“Temas Especiais: Viagem Pelo Reino da Crendice Profunda”; Special Issue: A Journey Through the Realm of Deep Belief):

and when Bishop Marcelo Breyner, referring to the incidents in Matosinhos, says that “that’s good for the world to see what Portugal is like”, we always feel like saying “Amen!”... in fact, it is good that the World can realise that this corner of Europe is not a “banana republic”. (Farias, 1999, para. 55)

Also, from a decolonial/postcolonial perspective, in line with Boaventura Sousa Santos’s (2001) thesis about Portugal historically asserting itself as a coloniser while

³ The image of an exalted sensuality is historically associated with Brazilians (especially Brazilian women). Hence we may wonder how this image clashed with establishing a Brazilian Church in Portugal. In her ethnographic work in the country, Clara Mafra (2002) observed that the stereotypes of masculinity and sensuality were also associated with Brazilian priests — who did not shy away from mentioning sexual themes during meetings, even in a veiled and jocular tone — which curiously served to endorse their competence within Portugal. The author even says that the priests’ style was reminiscent of the “heartthrobs in Brazilian soap operas” (p. 193). However, no work or the analysed pieces mentioned such a connection drawn by the journalistic discourse.

⁴ Paradoxically, an expression of coloniality can be identified in the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God’s approach, especially in its fierce criticism of Afro-Brazilian religions. As Mafra (2002) points out, priests in Portugal taught that Brazil was the land of Umbanda and Candomblé, where the devil was incorporated and an object of worship. To convey the message, they described some rites practised in these religions during the rites, emphasising aspects of impurity, danger, and cruelty.

also being somewhat colonised, Farias (1999) interprets this excerpt as evidencing the opposite of what it tries to express: “a certain feeling of inferiority compared to Europe, trying to transfigure itself into a false strength of character” (para. 56).

2. THE “BRAZILIAN INVASION”

The feeling of Brazilian invasion is largely explained by the fact that soap operas introduced in Portugal formed the basis of the main transformations seen in the Portuguese television market. As Catarina Burnay (2005) exemplifies, the broadcasting of *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* (Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon) in 1977 led to Portuguese people changing their routines and behaviour during the period in which it was broadcast, including the time of sessions held in the National Parliament. The consequence of this intense presence of Brazilian soap operas was the consolidated consumption of Brazilian cultural products they advertised. Books, music, theatre, and cinema were considered “best-sellers” whenever they were related to soap operas (Ferreira, 2014).

Despite its enormous popularity with audiences, the widespread presence of Brazilian soap operas and related cultural products triggered social criticism about the so-called “Brazilian invasion” — mainly by the press. Paulo Gracino Júnior (2013) indicates a piece published in 1981 by *Jornal de Notícias* newspaper that pointed to the “attempt at Brazilian colonisation through soap operas” (p. 196). The preponderance of a double concern can be observed in this criticism by the press: a presumptive popularisation of the “Brazilian” accent, and approval of customs and habits, especially relating to sexuality.

Where the latter is concerned, the social impact of Brazilian soap operas must be understood in the context of over 4 decades of conservative dictatorship (which ended in 1974), which imposed a strong sense of morality regarding sexuality (Pais, 2010). As Isabel Ferin Cunha (2005) notes, Brazilian soap operas were then not perceived as conveying emancipatory models of womanhood but as examples of cultural and sexual transgression.

As an artistic genre, soap opera is ranked below other genres such as theatre, cinema, and literature in the assessment hierarchies created and maintained by the press and their critics. By routinely employing techniques of affective involvement, appealing to everyday life, repeatability, and redundancy, these same characteristics link soap operas to television, which is “seen as a manipulator of consciences; the result of a ‘cultural industry’ that turns everything it touches into a product” (Burnay, 2005, p. 108).

Thus, the establishment of the UCKG in Portugal, as the dentist controversy in the mid-1990s and that of sex workers in the early 21st century⁵, had a notable influence on updating Brazil and Brazilians’ image in the country. In these two cases, the stereotypes of trickery and extreme sexuality were associated, respectively, with Brazilian dentists and

⁵ In 1991, the Portuguese Professional Association of Dentists began to denounce Brazilian dentists acting illegally in the country since, as the official body responsible for regulating the profession, it was deemed the only body capable of granting the equivalence of diplomas that allowed Brazilian dentists to practise their profession (Machado, 2003). Regarding the issue of Brazilian sex workers, this was marked by the eruption of the highly mediatised case “Mothers of Bragança” in 2003, concerning the petition established by women from the Northern Portuguese city to expel Brazilian women for, supposedly, seducing their husbands (Pais, 2010).

Brazilian prostitutes; the UCKG identified as something “new” from Brazil was seen from an interpretative viewpoint interrelating images of trickery, corruption, and easy profit (Machado, 2003).

Thus, the establishment of the UCKG was experienced both as a threat to the catholic pillars of Portuguese society and as a surge in irrationalism. It opposed the current process of modernisation that began with Portugal’s accession to the European Economic Community in 1986. In this context, the media played a leading role in combining the aspirations of various segments of society with the conflicts in which the UCKG was involved (Júnior, 2013).

A few years after its arrival in the country, the UCKG was already registering frequent appearances in newspapers with a particular type of coverage, being characterised less as a religious institution and more as a criminal association (Farias, 1999). As Guilherme Dias (2006) notes, the name of the Church was linked to crimes numerous times — the accusations ranged from charlatanism to links to Colombian drug trafficking and child abduction, though these were rarely confirmed.

Although the events of 1995 boosted this recurrent news coverage of the UCKG, its media presence diminished from 1999 onwards. One hypothesis to explain this reduction was the replacement of Bishop João Luís, who was then responsible for the Church in the country, with one of Portuguese origin. Thus, “calm came from the diacritical signs of ‘Brazilianness’ no longer being so strongly present in the figure of the new bishop” (Dias, 2006, p. 313).

3. METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

Some news reports published by *Público* and *Expresso* newspapers were then analysed to discuss the journalistic coverage of the UCKG over the years following this initial turbulent period. The first two reports date from 2001 and 2002, corresponding to the period in which the Church media presence would have been reduced. The other four news items refer to two situations that occurred in 2010 and 2017 concerning the inauguration of the first UCKG cathedrals in Portugal, and the denunciation of an illegal adoption scheme by the Church, respectively.

To verify whether the characteristics observed in the media coverage of the Church in the 1990s were maintained in the following years, all editions published by *Público* and *Expresso* were assessed between 2000 and 2005 and from 2010 to 2015. The reason for selecting these two periods is that while the first interval concerns the period in which the Church’s presence in the newspapers would have declined, it also coincides with the second wave of Brazilian immigration to Portugal. As Jorge Malheiros (2007) indicated, the Brazilian community had constantly increased since the 1980s. However, it experienced a vertiginous growth from 1999 onwards, with a notably younger stream of arrivals, more women with lower levels of education. That contrasted with the first wave, composed mostly of skilled workers. The selection of the second period of analysis corresponds to an interest in verifying the presence of the UCKG in the newspapers at

a time during which the foreign community as a whole decreased in Portugal due to the economic crisis⁶.

Considering that throughout the 1990s, and especially after the events of 1995, news reports about the Church were largely guided by social perceptions about Brazil and Brazilians, an investigation of journalistic coverage is justified not only during a less turbulent period for the UCKG but also for a period that was decisive for the migratory flow between Portugal and Brazil. It is worth highlighting that the second wave of Brazilian immigration was more closely linked with discrimination and xenophobia due to the immigrant's characteristics (Malheiros, 2007).

When hard copy editions of the newspapers printed between 2000 and 2005 were analysed, only two news reports about the Church, one from *Expresso* and the other from *Público*, were identified. Regarding the two news items from 2010, both refer to the same fact: the inauguration of the first UCKG cathedrals in Portugal. The two 2017 news reports refer to an alleged illegal adoption scheme first broadcast by TV channel TVI. The significant repercussions of this case determined its integration into this analysis. News reports were selected from the newspapers' websites by searching for the keywords "IURD" (UCKG) and "adoção" (adoption).

An analysis of the texts allows for the assessment of the relationships between the Church and Brazilian soap operas. They transcended mere references to prototypical signs of Brazilianness and the connotative sense of generating deceitful emotions spreading in journalistic discourse. This is noticeable through observation of the topics selected and highlighted in each news item (for example, when they are positioned in more prominent places on the page or repeated throughout the text) and how they are associated with cultural symbols familiar to a Portuguese audience. As Robert Entman (1993) points out, the sociocultural dimension is inseparable from the action of framing because a certain way of perceiving and understanding reality always relies on common sense and the perception of a given society for background. So, "culture might be defined as the empirically demonstrable set of common frames exhibited in the discourse and thinking of most people in a social grouping" (Entman, 1993, p. 53).

Therefore, the hybridisation of one type of discourse can be identified — one that has a more factual and analytical profile typical of journalism, with another of a fictitious character, closer to what would be defined as popular literature. Thus, the understanding presented by Anatol Rosenfeld (2005) can be employed in which fictional characters are not the only or even the most relevant distinctive feature of literature, with aesthetic evaluation criteria bearing a particularly significant weight for this determination⁷. Therefore, the verification of the fictional character of a text is independent of such value criteria, referring instead to ontological, logical, and epistemological problems.

⁶ As can be verified in the annual statistical reports produced by the Portuguese Immigration and Border Service (Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras, n.d.).

⁷ It should be emphasised that this kind of fictional contamination in the coverage of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God is not like so-called "literary journalism". Without disregarding the ethical issues intrinsic to journalistic activity, literary journalism affirms itself as imbued with a moral purpose. Thus, it appeals to the importance of journalists' interpretations and the use of literary techniques responsible for revealing deep truths about human behaviour to readers and giving meaning to "real stories" (Pauly, 2014).

Considering the continuation of characteristics identified in the 1990s in the news reports analysed, such as linking the UCKG to serious accusations and the rhetorical, stylistic, and syntactic aspects of the discourse, it is understood that coverage of the Church in *Público* and *Expresso* is similar to the macro genre of melodrama, in which the patterns of fairy tales are sometimes applied to situations that correspond to the reality of daily life. This can be affirmed because “the same patterns that work very well in the demoniac-magical world of the fairy tale turn out to be false and caricatured when applied to the representation of the profane universe of our current society” (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 19).

Given the impossibility of including all the media coverage on UCKG, it was decided to limit this study to the newspapers mentioned due to their influential nature in Portugal. This type of newspaper is commonly cited by other media and has wider access to prominent sources, thus influencing not only the field of media but also public opinion on various topics (Noelle-Neumann, 1991). It should be recalled that during the 1990s, the media were the main opinion-makers about new religious movements, including UCKG (Farias, 1999). Therefore, the interest in verifying this coverage later in newspapers as closely related to the establishment of public opinion is reasonable. It was also noted that the dramatic matrix of journalism is more present in the popular press than the rational-illuminist matrix, both in terms of newsworthiness criteria and in the structure of the news. Although any newspaper is the univocal expression of a unique matrix (Amaral, 2007), an interest arose in comprehending whether the dramatic matrix remained in the coverage of the UCKG in influential newspapers.

A hypothesis that the Church’s presence in other types and formats of media also presents a discourse in which the fictional and the informative genres overlap is presented here. As observed by Carla Baptista (2018), the title of the television news series *O Segredo dos Deuses* (The Secret of the Gods) — about the alleged illegal adoption scheme — evokes ideas of soap operas and police operations. However, the fact that a long, 10-episode series was created, which was far from justified in the complexity of the facts and the necessity of adding relevant details, resulted in scenes considered to be remarkable being shown time and again, which added emphasis but not information.

One interesting point is that the news television coverage of the case “Mães de Bragança” (Mothers of Bragança) was also influenced by melodrama. As Ferin Cunha (2005) points out, “in the images of prostitution, the object of desire [was] presented in a veiled way, through technical and scenic resources that hid the characters and displayed the most desired parts of the body” (p. 550). This form of exposition suggested the influence of soap operas on the Portuguese perception of Brazilian immigrant women and, in addition, the perception of the phenomenon of UCKG.

Such coverage opposes the Church’s public strategy, seeking to accentuate polarisation and explore the exotic and the spectacular. In contrast, the journalistic discourse works with the social imagination about the Brazilian invasion and current stereotypes about Brazil and Brazilians. So, considering the journalistic discourse linked the UCKG to prototypical signs of Brazilianness, a theory of social representations has been employed as a theoretical basis throughout the article.

4. SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS

First developed by Serge Moscovici (1988), the theory of social representations proposes to explain how and why thoughts and feelings are generally disseminated among many people or most individuals in a society. The concept of social representations is established as “thoughts in motion”, in which they circulate through media communications and dialogic communications between groups and people to understand how these thoughts and feelings converge and allow the individual to become social. Social representations play a fundamental role in familiarising us with the unknown (a new fact or phenomenon) according to the categories of our culture.

According to Moscovici (1988), a theory is expressed simultaneously as a way of observing social phenomena and a system that describes and explains them. Thus, the author argues that a diversity of methodological approaches must be developed within the scope of the theory of social representations proposed herein to analyse journalistic content⁸. Birgitta Hoijer (2011) also advocates using social representation theory in the design of media research, identifying it as a suitable theoretical basis for studying how the media and individuals represent social and political issues in society.

Social representations shape our relationship with society and, as a result, become a component of social organisation. Social reality is dependent on social representations in the sense that various representations of a phenomenon engender different understandings of it (and thus change social reality). Moscovici (1988) cites the distinct views on motivations for drug use — genetic impairment, family disruption, and cultural tradition, among others — to exemplify this process, which can also be understood in terms of attitudes to the UCKG in Portugal. As Farias (1999) comprehends it, journalistic discourse about the Church in the 1990s came very close to the images shared by an anti-sect ideology, while researchers such as him and Virginia Garrad-Burnett (2011) sought to understand this new phenomenon of religiosity from a more neutral, scientific perspective.

In establishing a social representation, two socio-cognitive mechanisms are identified: *anchoring* and *objectification*. The former concerns the process of associating a new and unknown phenomenon with older but similar social representations, and the latter relates to the action of turning this unknown into something concrete — usually an image. Once established, social representations acquire an inherent character, although individuals retain the ability to rework their cognitions. This means that social representations are not always logical and coherent despite their correspondence with widespread patterns of thought. Instead, they denote the complex, heterogeneous character of social thought.

With the controversial arrival of the UCKG in Portugal, it is believed that an anchoring process was at work when hegemonic social representations about Brazil and Brazilians were mobilised to give meaning to an unknown phenomenon. As exemplified in the journalistic coverage of the period, in which references were made to Brazilian soap operas

⁸ While the communication devices proposed by the theory of social representations are difficult to use directly as conceptual tools for empirical analysis, the same does not apply to the theoretical-methodological approaches of framing analysis and critical discourse analysis. However, combining these with the theory of social representations would help overcome what is identified as one of its greatest shortcomings: the absence of a more in-depth discussion about the ideological aspects and power relations that surround social representations (Hoijer, 2011).

and their emotions, providing plentiful images of corruption and easy profit, this anchoring process was fed by the immense flow of images that continued to reaffirm the representation of a wild, exotic country — one propagated since colonial times (Bosco, 2017).

The anchoring process takes place through various communication mechanisms, such as naming, in which a new phenomenon is associated with an older social representation through the act of naming, inserting it in a common frame of reference. An example is when the UCKG is called a sect, as referenced in the first news report published in Portugal (“Seita ‘Suspeita’ Tem Igrejas em Portugal”). As we know, the term “sect” has strong negative connotations and is generally associated with the image of segregated religious groups with unusual and extreme customs and beliefs. Thus, this anchorage by naming can be understood as closely related to stereotyping processes, as described by Walter Lippmann (1922/1998).

Also relevant is anchoring through metaphors, as identified in the context of the aggression against the worshippers, when the UCKG emerged from Fernando Marques’ commentary in *Público*, on the 11th of November 1995, as being dangerous to Portuguese society:

the UCKG does not pay much heed to the way in which it spreads its message or benefits from the weaknesses of those who adhere to its promises of divine healing. So, it is natural that it generates antibodies within a mostly catholic population. (G. M. Dias, 2006, p. 307)

According to Guilherme Dias (2006), the news reports that covered the UCKG settling in Portugal generally sought to represent the Church as a virus infiltrating Portuguese culture and the Lusophone space. Júnior (2013) also observes that reports about the Church published between 1995 and 1996 almost always featured beside reports about the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) epidemic. Whether a coincidence or not, some of these pieces associated the advance of AIDS in Portugal with a higher rate of migration⁹.

Despite this common association of the UCKG with negative stereotypes about Brazil and Brazilians, its installation in Portugal was quite successful (Mafra, 2002), which also explains the media attention focused on it. This success intensified the feeling of a “Brazilian invasion”, voiced mainly by the press. The transnational flow in which the Church was included when it arrived in Portugal can also be noted, the transposition of an institutional novelty coming from the “periphery” and invading the “centre”, thus reversing the trend of the traffic of know-how in the globalised economy. Combined with this inversion was also the presence of agents who were not well qualified in terms of “erudite culture”, who arrived in the country with the mission of re-educating — albeit in strictly religious terms — a society with higher educational standards.

It should be recalled that Europe ensured that its regime of representation prevailed over its colonised subjects, positioning them as the “other” of the dominant discourse

⁹ As the author (Júnior, 2013) also recalls, during the controversy surrounding Brazilian dentists in the 1990s, the statements made by members of the Professional Association of Dentists of Portugal about how Brazilian dentists could transmit acquired immunodeficiency syndrome to patients.

(Hall, 1990). Though this regime has been constantly updated, it remains potent to this day, making it easy to comprehend the negative impact of the successful installation of the UCKG in Portugal, not only on its intellectual elite but also on the section of the population closest to catholic tradition. Because “when it comes to the implantation of these religious movements on European soil, what was once ‘good news’, a breath of modernity for Latin hearts, becomes something threatening, capable of corrupting the solid pillars of European modernity” (Junior, 2013, p. 188).

5. THE POSITIONING STRATEGY IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Mafra (2002) points out the union established between the Church and the mass media when UCKG arrived in Portugal, as this had been in preparation in Brazil during the 1970s. Therefore, its implantation in Portugal was linked with the emergence of not only physical churches but also radios.

Beyond the promotion of radio programs and the acquisition of radio stations, the UCKG established a heterodox but quite successful relationship with the media, positioning itself as follows: it composed messages in line with the logic of polarised opinions, took advantage of the exotic and the spectacular, and it always looked for opportunities to recreate them. An example of this strategy is the 1995 case known as “Chute na Santa” (literally, “Kick the Saint”), in which a priest kicked an image of Nossa Senhora da Aparecida, patron saint of Brazil, whose national holiday was celebrated on that day, during a TV programme, criticising what the Church sees as a false symbol of Catholicism.

Interestingly, this strategy of highlighting contrasting and contentious opinions was established somehow by accident. According to the myth of origin, the union between the Church and the mass media took place in the year of its foundation, when a worshipper who was healed funded a short programme on a radio station in São Paulo. This programme, coincidentally, came after another one presented by a *mãe-de-santo*¹⁰, which allowed Edir Macedo to contrast the religious responses of the two cults and create a style that was well-received by the audience. Whether it developed by accident or not, the fact is that UCKG has a particularly aggressive approach towards other religions and cults, especially Umbanda and Candomblé — which are considered diabolical or satanic — as well as the Catholic Church (Farias, 1999).

This positioning on the public scene generated two situations: the wide propagation of the Church’s opinions and the tendency to form dichotomous poles about itself, with the public divided between passionate opponents and tenacious sympathisers. The former is explained by the violent nature of the positions taken by the UCKG, of strong opposition to certain social consensuses, which allows them to express themselves intensely; and the latter is because this form of communication gave rise to the establishment of controversial social representations, which emerged from the intense antagonism towards certain societal segments. As Moscovici (1988) explains, this type

¹⁰ The name used to refer to the priestesses of the following Brazilian religions of African origin: Candomblé, Umbanda, or Quimbanda.

of representation is often expressed in terms of a dialogue with an imaginary interlocutor, something noticeable in the position of the UCKG that, despite addressing specific interlocutors, in general terms, asserts itself in opposition to — and with a mission to rescue — a society degenerated by diabolic forces disguised as a false Christianity. As Edir Macedo stated in an interview with Brazilian magazine *Veja* on the 6th of December 1995: “the problem is the Catholic Church. They’re responsible for all the misery and disgrace of Brazil and the rest of the world. (...) Everything it teaches is against the people” (Farias, 1999, para. 8).

Therefore, “given that the Church ends up opposing publicly established institutions, those ‘non-conformists’ with the *status quo* tend towards a more sympathetic position” (Mafrá, 2002, p. 111). Thus, events such as the attempt to buy the Coliseu, which was seen as a critical moment, are part of the planned set of actions on the public scene. They are constructed as dense dramas employed to mobilise public opinion, and the positioning of the Church always encompasses an explanation with persecutory content¹¹.

6. ANALYSIS OF THE NEWS

The journalistic discourse emerges from a socio-cognitive process, which takes place within a shared culture and is based on established social roles. When framed in a certain way, a news piece delimits the cognitive parameters through which it will be read. However, this interpretation always corresponds to an autonomous action by audience members.

In the texts analysed, it was observed that the framing device used most often was the rhetorical structure of the discourse, considering that metaphors, catchphrases, and visual representations were used recurrently. This can be observed in “Crime na Igreja” (Crime in the Church; *A Revista do Expresso*, the 6th of January 2001, pp. 40–53), concerning a long interview with a former Portuguese priest who made serious accusations about the Church, revealing what would be its criminal ramifications.

With a front-page headline in the edition of the newspaper printed that day and the reference to the interview filling the front page of *A Revista do Expresso*, one can conclude the importance placed on the accusation by *Expresso*. In the interview, João Coelho made accusations involving the Church with prostitution, drugs, arms trafficking and the like. In addition to highlighting it on the front page of its magazine — displaying a drawing of a wall with the symbol and name of the Church and some bricks fallen on the ground — *Expresso* also mentioned the interview on the front page of the newspaper with the headline “Armas e Droga na IURD” (Guns and Drugs in the UCKG), printed just below the title in the privileged upper central position of the page.

The image employed on the magazine’s first page allows the association between this and what different authors previously identified in reports about the UCKG in the

¹¹As Farias (1999) points out, even before the Coliseu controversy, journalists were attacked in April 1995 by members of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God while reporting in Vila Nova de Famalicão. In July of the same year, in Póvoa do Varzim, members of the Church also disturbed the catholic feast of Our Lady of Bethlehem by stepping on some typical decorative flower carpets (although it is worth emphasising that the author does not indicate the source of these statements).

1990s: its portrayal as an institution whose actions sought to keep it in obscurity, but which the accusation of a former priest brought into the light, thus knocking down the bricks that made up its fortress, as proposed in the metaphor contained within the image. In contrast, the headline on the front page of the newspaper highlights some sentences about the former priest in bold and displays a drawing in which two men remove tranches of money from a safe.

In the interview, Coelho's image is not shown, despite his name and surname being exposed. The only photos that illustrate it correspond to the image of the former priest's back, contemplating what appears to be a photo of a cult, and another photo of his baptism, exposed on the last page and occupying the part of the wall drawing where the bricks are fallen. The rest of the text is composed of illustrations corresponding to the narrated facts, such as baptism scenes, grooming of worshipers, theft of a safe, or driving illegal goods... All very graphically, the mockery and irony of the characters are certainly not lost, almost as if readers were reading a comic book in which these are the villains.

Before starting the interview, the text narrated what Coelho claimed was a recent attempt by the Church to murder him. Corresponding to the tone revealed by the illustrations, the report takes on a melodramatic style in excerpts such as the following:

at first, the boy's face seems to frame the boxer's expression in mid-fight.
The hard gaze is fixed on the interlocutor; it is permanently on guard. (...)
He still has a swollen face, and the scars around his eyes accentuate his coldness. (*A Revista do Expresso*, the 6th of January 2001, p. 40)

Considering that this style is identified in the illustrations and content of the interview, it is important to discuss what defines fiction. In the structure of any text, whether fictional or not, the only layer with ontic autonomy is that composed of typographic signs printed on paper or digitised on a screen, with others — formed by clauses and significant units of various degrees — are already considered unreal because they must be materialised by the appropriate appreciator. After all, these significant units can project certain “objectual contexts” by attributing relationships between objects and their qualities — for example, “the rose is red” — only through certain logical operations undertaken by the reader. “Thanks to the objectual contexts, an intermediate layer of certain ‘schematic aspects’ is constituted. When they are specially prepared, the schematic aspects determine specific realisations by the reader” (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 13).

Such schematised aspects must be specially crafted in fictional works because it is through them that the reader's imagination is able to concretise ideas. In the excerpt highlighted above, it can be observed that the characterisation of the ex-priest goes beyond what would be readily presented to an external observer, thus spelling out what could have been cast as mere inferences. Examples include mention of coldness in his eyes, which are permanently watchful. As such schematised aspects are presented to the reader in this excerpt, without demanding elaborate realisations on their part, it can be concluded that the reader is induced to develop a broader realisation of what can be described as the UCKG's universe.

After a brief account of the attempted murder, the text briefly presents what will be detailed in the interview: the early rise of the young man in the Church hierarchy and his consequent involvement in shady deals. What captures the most attention in this passage is the way the text seeks to justify the entry of, then a teenager, into the UCKG: “but, as he was a skilled kid, at the age of 14 he was already wondering why a man would work himself to the bone to get ahead in life”. And how it ironically classifies the crimes with which the Church was involved: “auspicious” (*A Revista do Expresso*, the 6th of January 2001, pp. 40–53).

The structure of fictional sentences does not differ much from that of other texts, as they all seem to correspond to judgments. What differentiates a fictional text from a journalistic text is its intention because while the former stops at purely intentional, objectual contexts without seeking to veer towards any autonomous objects, the latter seeks exactly that. Even when the fictitious character of a text is not clearly revealed, it is evidenced by the effort made to particularise objectual contexts via the preparation of schematised aspects and the profusion of circumstantial details. Where the excerpts of the interview are concerned, this effort is observed in highlighting insignificant information, such as the coldness felt in the boy’s eyes and the causality of events, evident in the justification presented for his admission to the UCKG. Though such a strategy presents itself as aesthetically poor, as characters and situations are introduced almost without nuances — the unscrupulous Church that does everything it can to get money or the ambitious young man who became vigilant after suffering physical attacks, among others.

As Márcia Amaral (2007) explains, melodrama is revealed in journalistic discourse when it restricts itself to presenting the singularity of facts to the greatest extent possible. From the point of view of an influential press, in which *Expresso* is included, the publication of accusations such as that issued by the ex-priest is comprehensible, as it involved a relevant institution in Portugal and had the potential to generate developments within the scope of a criminal investigation¹². Nevertheless, by sentimentalising the narrated facts — through the description of Coelho’s face and by explaining in the caption that he was “sorry” — and not providing any context about the neo-Pentecostal profile of the Church, the interview ends up being another reductionist mechanism used to particularise the phenomenon of the UCKG.

While the association between the UCKG and Brazilian identity was not evident in this text, the same cannot be said for the report “Fé e Dinheiro na ‘Ilha de Deus’” (Faith and Money on “God’s Island”; *Público*, the 12th of August 2002, pp. 2–3), which describes two mega-meetings put on by the Church in Lisbon and Porto in celebration of its 25th anniversary. Given a suggestive title, the sensationalist character of the meetings is described in the article — “there are no constraints, people shout, applaud, sing, faint, cry” — and it also highlights the words spoken by the Brazilian priests: “right, amen, it’s over, that’s it!!!”, “can ya believe that?”, “the suffering’s over; that’s why you feel relieved. See, guys?”.

¹² Coelho’s account is not counterposed to any position of members of Universal Church of the Kingdom of God or statements from the police, although it is stated that the case was already under investigation. As we could not find any further references to this case, we think the denunciation has been shelved.

It is worth noting that Portuguese newspapers would often adapt quotations by Brazilian speakers to European Portuguese. However, this report maintained direct quotes, using the words enunciated by the priests in a noticeable colloquial style in which grammatical rules were not always observed. Such an occurrence is common in everyday life and does not necessarily indicate a lack of knowledge of the correct use of the Portuguese language by the speaker. However, the intention implicit in exposing the priests' words without adapting them can be assumed to have been to suggest a low level of education.

It was also observed that the characteristics identified in the 1990s were maintained. In addition to the considerable space given to the report — its headline, “faith and money mania over 25 years of the UCKG” and accompanying photo occupy almost a third of the first page — the three images used to illustrate it are composed of: a worshiper in a trance with his hand on his chest and a person holding his head; what appears to be a priest wearing a tie, with both hands pressed over a woman's head; and a hand in the air, holding a wallet and a cheque. Such photographs emerge from the report as an objectification of the phenomenon that is the UCKG. They enhance the cult image commonly associated with the Church (along with all the negative connotations of the term) by employing images that would represent the supposed character of hysteria present in its cults and the financial exploitation of worshippers.

Also, in the “questions and answers” section about the Church (a section of the report), it is highlighted that the Church “is the largest Brazilian multinational corporation”. A notable fact is that the answers to questions such as “what are the most important rituals in the UCKG's meetings?” and “is the tithe the Church's only source of income?” are not assigned to specialists, raising doubts about the origin of the information provided.

An opening is, however, provided in the journalistic discourse to give a voice to the Church's worshipers in the form of published quotes. It can be observed that, in exposing them, the journalist seeks to uncover the possible factors behind the success of a neo-Pentecostal Church in Portugal:

the Catholic priests are not missed; “they don't push the congregation like we do here. In the Catholic religion, faith is not stirred, and dead faith is of no use”. (...) In his opinion, the Catholic Church announces something that does not exist. “It's hypocritical in its actions. There's no Saint Mary in the Bible, and Fátima was never mentioned in the Bible”, he said before Edir Macedo arrived. “I'm here looking for miracles that only God knows how to perform”, he assured. (*Público*, the 12th of August 2002, p. 3)

On the 6th of March 2010, *Expresso* published the report “Chegou o Tempo das Catedrais” (The Age of Cathedrals Has Come; p. 28), the caption of which informs that in the year of the UCKG's 20th anniversary in Portugal¹³, its first cathedral would be inaugurated in Porto and a second in Lisbon. As the text tries to emphasise at various points,

¹³ Although the first Universal Church of the Kingdom of God temple was inaugurated in Lisbon in 1989, the Church was only officially founded in the following year.

cathedrals refer to the first UCKG temples that would be built from scratch in Portugal. The term also employed by Church leaders, the use of the term “cathedral”, refers to the capacity of this type of building to accommodate many people, as explained in the text.

This relationship is also indirectly established because not only were the dimensions of the new cathedral in Porto described in the second paragraph, but the caption of the photo used to illustrate the report also stated that “nowadays, the Church amasses 60,000 worshipers”. A box with the title “Dimensão” (Size) presents the following information: in 2010, the UCKG had 5,000 temples around the world and 15,000,000 worshippers and was present in 177 countries. It can be concluded that the featuring of this kind of information, combined with the description of the first cathedral, serves to endorse the idea that the inauguration of cathedrals corresponds to the pinnacle of what is presented as a successful trajectory. This observation is reinforced in the following answer given by the priest interviewed: “we have been checking some places out, but it will be in a central location and of a size greater than or equal to that North’. Built from scratch. ‘The São Jorge Cinema? No! It’s too small, that would mean backtracking. Now we are building cathedrals’”.

Expresso also made a subtle reference to the classic book *The Age of the Cathedrals* in the title. In this work, Georges Duby (1976/1993) dedicates his explanation to the forms of art — monasteries, cathedrals, and palaces — created during the middle ages in close proximity to the power and universe of high culture. Therefore, the mimesis identified in the title was employed as more of an ironic artifice since, considering the UCKG’s profile, it is clear that its cathedrals do not resemble the narrow universe of high culture in which gothic cathedrals were constructed in the least. The use of this rhetorical device seeks to emphasise the aesthetic and intellectual aridity of the Church, contrasting with its economic strength and “mass of worshippers”.

The tone of moral condemnation implicit in the description of the Church’s activities was maintained when describing the profile of Bishop Fernandes, for example. The report says he resembled a businessman because he wore a full suit and tie, concluding “one can say he ‘deals’ in faith and miracles”. Following van Dijk’s (2002) perspective, we analyse the semantic dimension of the passage in terms of its local coherence, noting that the relationship established between the two propositions is of a consequential nature, in the sense that wearing a suit and tie emerges as a consequence of the priest’s position in dealing with faith and miracles. This observation leads to another of the semantic notions described by the author: “implication”; because a consequential relationship being established by the text seeks to lead readers to the idea that UCKG operates from a commercial perspective.

Associations between the Church and Brazilian nationality are reduced here, punctuated only once when it is stated that the priest’s Brazilian accent is deceptive, as a Portuguese man who acquired a Brazilian accent after 3 years spent evangelising in Curitiba. Notwithstanding, it can be considered that this relationship is surreptitiously established through the stereotype of trickery commonly associated with Brazilians when the discourse connects the religious realm — “faith” and “miracles” — to the commercial

realm with the use of the verb “to negotiate” (Portuguese, “negociar”). As has been ascertained, the establishment of such a relationship has negative connotations, it being present in the bible in the passage about the cleansing of the temple (*Almeida Revista e Corrigida*, 2009, João, 2:13–16).

This moderate tone does, however, end up being put aside at the end of the report. Under the title “Fé Puxada a Água Luso” (Faith Brought About by Luso Water), a criticism of the UCKG’s performance emerges more explicitly in a text that explains that sacred water was distributed during religious meetings, though the word “Luso” (the name of a brand of commercialised water) is presented in brackets. As the text states, both water (Luso) and consecrated roses (from Morocco) were used as “lighters of faith”.

In the article “IURD Entrou na Era das Catedrais” (“The UCKG Now in the Age of Cathedrals”, the 8th of August 2010, pp. 7–9), it can be noted that *Público* also references Duby’s (1976/1993) work in the title, although this report is broader, both in terms of length and in the number of sources consulted. Under the umbrella of “religion”, the report exposes the new projects run by the UCKG in Portugal through quotations from two sources introduced as experts on the Church: Brazilians Claudia Swatowski and Clara Mafra. These researchers emerge as specialists in the phenomenon of the Church, in the use of their titles and academic affiliation.

Such quotes contrast with statements made by Bishop Fernandes, in which he justifies the new cathedrals as follows: “we serve a God who is great, and we do not accept anything small”. It can be observed that quotations are often used to legitimise journalistic discourse. However, this dependence on legitimate sources results in the exposition of a worldview of the establishment (Teo, 2000), as common people, as a general rule, can only voice their experiences, not their opinions.

Although the two women are painted as legitimate sources of information on the UCKG, their claims cannot be said to correspond to an established view of the UCKG in Portugal. In fact, much of what they say contradicts views already entrenched in Portugal about the Church. For example, Mafra answers as follows the question, “can we say that UCKG is also a business phenomenon?”:

in order to assert itself as a benevolent Church, donating goods to collective organisations, the UCKG must have its own capital. Without financial autonomy, the Church would not be able to break through the ceiling of established elites, such as those in Brazil, which are mostly Catholic. In Portugal, the elites also have long secularising and catholic traditions. (*Público*, the 8th of August 2010, p. 8)

7. THE COMEBACK TO THE PUBLIC SCENE

In late 2017, TVI began broadcasting the report *O Segredo dos Deuses*, detailing the illegal adoption of children by the highest echelons of the UCKG. In 10 episodes, the report was broadcast after *Jornal das 8* (8 O’Clock News). The report — which contained

serious accusations and concerned one of the most controversial institutions in Portugal — being broadcast in prime time over several consecutive days produced huge public repercussions.

The accusation that children were “stolen” by members of the UCKG and taken out of the country resonated with fears similar to those raised during the Coliseu controversy when the Church was seen as an outside threat that sought to destroy the catholic foundations of Portuguese society. Such fears were rekindled as the alleged illegal adoption of children in the absence of their biological parents constituted a notorious example of an attack against the social representation of Western Christian morality: the family. The result was a group of “mothers”, as they were called by Lusa piece reproduced by *Público* on the 19th of December of the same year (“Mães Manifestam-se em Seis Cidades Contra Adopções na IURD” (Mothers Demonstrate in Six Cities Against UCKG Adoptions), mobilised to “demand answers” from the institutions of power.

Two reports printed in different newspapers were analysed, which contained the same information: an investigation of the denunciation by the Portuguese Public Prosecutor’s Office. Both were published on the 11th of December 2017, before the first episode was broadcast, but the case was already generating repercussions as the report had been presented to the press by the channel’s journalism department. In “Ministério Público Investiga Rede de Adoção Ilegal de Crianças Montada Pela IURD” (Prosecutor’s Office Investigates Illegal Child Adoption Network Run by the UCKG; *Expresso*), it should be noted that the title presents the accusation as a fact. The position taken is continued in the subtitle: “TVI report reveals that at least a dozen Portuguese children were illegally taken from their parents and taken out of the country by Universal Church of the Kingdom of God priests”.

As observed in the previous news reports, this one also reproduces information that seems unlikely. For example, when explaining the origins of the international illegal adoption network, it says that in the 1990s, Edir Macedo “forced the Church’s bishops and priests to undergo vasectomies to prevent them from having biological children, later ordering them to adopt children”. It also mentions a newborn taken from its mother while still in the maternity ward and that three children of one woman, wrongly labelled as a drug addict and HIV positive, were adopted by the daughter of the leader of the UCKG. In fact, the illegitimacy of the ties between the Church leader and his grandchildren are implicitly underlined in the title of a news report by Lusa, also printed by *Expresso* on the same day: “Investigação da TVI Diz que ‘Netos’ de Líder da IURD Foram Roubados em Portugal” (TVI Investigation Says that the UCKG’s Leader’s ‘Grandchildren’ Were Stolen From Portugal).

The *Público* news report, “MP [Ministério Público] Investiga Rede de Adoção Ilegal de Crianças” (Prosecutor’s Office Investigates Illegal Child Adoption Network; the 11th of December 2010) takes a less vehement tone of condemnation by employing a future-tense verb in the subtitle: “TVI report reveals that Edir Macedo, leader of the UCKG, will have been involved in an international illegal child adoption network”. The newspaper did not, however, shy away from sharing the exhortation of Sérgio Figueiredo — then director of information for TVI — at the end of the presentation of the report to the press: “the State was not entirely blameless here, but it is never too late to restore the truth”.

It should be noted that a little over 1 year after the series was broadcast, the Prosecutor's Office filed the denunciation because the investigation conducted denied the claims of the biological parents, among other factors. In early 2020, a deliberation issued by the Regulatory Media Entity forced TVI to display the UCKG's "right of reply" for 9 days.

8. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The establishment of the genre of melodrama is closely related to the developments of the French revolution, the terrible scenes that stimulated the imagination of the popular masses, who began to allow themselves to act out their emotions. By asserting itself as representing the morality of the revolution, melodrama is characterised by the narratives of conspiracies and justice, the innocent victims of which triumph while the villains are duly punished for their betrayals in the end. As Jesús Martín-Barbero (1997) points out, this emotional intensity definitely fits the genre of melodrama by placing it alongside the popular, in a period when bourgeois education began to veer in the opposite direction, by valuing the control of feelings and restricting these to the "private scene".

Over the centuries, in its path from *feuilleton* to TV soap operas, melodrama has adapted to correspond to distinct audience profiles. In Latin America, it established itself as an eminently audio-visual genre, while in Brazil, its most popular format — soap opera — also began to cover more realistic themes, thus approaching daily life in the country (Silva, 2013).

As has been discussed, soap operas were extraordinarily well-received by Portuguese audiences. These products were added to pre-existing Portuguese perceptions of Brazil and Brazilians, established during centuries of contact between both countries. As Júnior (2013) notes when citing an opinion poll published by *Diário de Lisboa* newspaper in 1990, entitled: "Os Portugueses Confundem Telenovela com a Realidade" (Portuguese People Confuse Soap Operas with Reality), soap operas became the faithful image of Brazil and Brazilians in the Portuguese imagination.

When a Church that acts differently from its counterparts arrives in a country, bringing with it rationale and rites that emphasise the exotic and spectacular, a subtle anchoring process takes place in which the actions of the UCKG are linked to common plots across soap operas. This is identified in journalistic discourse in which the alleged criminal actions of the Church are framed under a melodramatic bias. Nevertheless, it is recalled that the melodramatic matrix can also be detected in newsworthiness criteria (Amaral, 2007). As such, in the publication of an interview such as "Crime na Igreja", or in the coverage and repercussions surrounding the accusations of illegal adoption in 2017, criteria can be noted that are less guided by the robust nature of accusations and more by their ability to rouse strong feelings.

Nevertheless, this approach is not always identified. Occasionally, an effort to print a more analytical profile of the UCKG can be observed. As Guilherme Dias (2006) notes, the complexity of the presence of the UCKG in Portugal cannot be reduced to its unique association with current images of Brazil and Brazilians. Nevertheless, as was observed

in the analysis conducted of news reports, newspapers generally relied on these social representations for their stories, especially in connection with the imagination instigated by soap operas, to frame the phenomenon of the UCKG.

Farias (1999) mentions “theological misinterpretations” in journalistic coverage of the UCKG in the 1990s and then defends that academia employed this determination to provide a more balanced understanding of the Church. Nevertheless, as the author argues in another context (Farias & Santos, 1999), a clearly negative image of the Church was crystallised in Portuguese public opinion, which already seemed irrefutable. The analysis of *Público* and *Expresso* news pieces also follows this line of understanding, despite the exceptions mentioned above. Although the current presence of the Church in the media is less pronounced, cases such as the 2017 (*O Segredo dos Deuses*) suggest that this emphasis on melodrama in coverage of the Church remains and may come, once again, to be associated with contexts of xenophobia and religious intolerance.

Translation: Stativa – Text Works

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POLITICAL APPEARANCES OF EXTRA ACTORS SUBJECTS IN PHOTOJOURNALISTIC IMAGES OF MASSACRES IN TWO FAVELAS OF RIO DE JANEIRO

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ABSTRACT

Based on theoretical-critical arguments from the field of communication and aesthetic experience, this text analyzes a set of journalistic photographs about two police operations in Rio de Janeiro, one at Complexo da Maré in 2014 and the other at Jacarezinho in 2021. In all the images, we noted that the residents appear as extras in the field of action of security agents in operations generally mediatized. The analysis exercise observed that apparitions of the extra end up destabilizing the biopolitical frameworks of photojournalism, which try to prevent the perception and apprehension of subjects and ways of life disregarded by hierarchical and asymmetric recognition conditions. Thus, we reflect on how the visibility conditions of the journalistic context can be altered by the presence and apparitions of ordinary people in photographic images, coming from the presence of bodies and people in their daily chores, through gestures and glances, and unpredicted reactions which, once registered, interfere in the images' enunciative regime. Finally, the text reveals how the political and aesthetic power of the appearances in the figurations can highlight the nuances between the visible and the readable, allowing the opening of a fracture in the devices activated to read a certain situation, corporealities, and gestures in the images.

KEYWORDS

photojournalism, extra actors, political appearance, police operation, Brazilian favelas

APARIÇÕES POLÍTICAS DE SUJEITOS FIGURANTES EM IMAGENS FOTOJORNALÍSTICAS DE CHACINAS EM DUAS FAVELAS DO RIO DE JANEIRO

RESUMO

A partir de argumentos teórico-críticos advindos do campo da comunicação e da experiência estética, este texto privilegia a análise de um conjunto de fotografias jornalísticas sobre duas operações policiais realizadas no Rio de Janeiro: uma, no Complexo da Maré, em 2014, e a outra, no Jacarezinho, em 2021. Em todas as imagens notamos que os moradores aparecem como figurantes que atravessam o campo de ação dos agentes de segurança em operações, em geral, midiaticizadas. O exercício de análise observa que as aparições dos figurantes acabam por desestabilizar os enquadramentos biopolíticos do fotojornalismo que tentam impedir a percepção e apreensão de sujeitos e formas de vida desconsideradas por condições de reconhecimento hierarquizantes e assimétricas. Assim, refletimos como as condições de visibilidade do contexto jornalístico podem ser alteradas pela presença e pelas aparições de pessoas comuns na imagem fotográfica, advindas pela própria presença dos corpos e das pessoas em seus afazeres cotidianos, pelos gestos e olhares, pelas reações não previstas e que, uma vez registradas, interferem no regime enunciativo das imagens. O texto revela, por fim, como a potência política e estética das aparições nas figurações pode ressaltar as nuances entre o visível e legível, permitindo a abertura de uma fratura nos dispositivos acionados para ler uma determinada situação, corporeidades e gestualidades nas imagens.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

fotojornalismo, figurantes, aparição política, operação policial, favelas brasileiras

1. INTRODUCTION

In this text, we dedicate ourselves to thinking about the condition of visibility and figuration of vulnerable lives in photojournalistic images that record police operations in Brazilian communities, specifically those followed by civilian deaths described as massacres, which we understand as part of media-covered conflicts with police involvement, which happened in peripheral urban areas. To this end, we observed the photojournalistic images produced in police operations in two favelas in Rio de Janeiro in 2014 and 2021.

The representation of vulnerable lives in these images leads us to understand that the core of the debate is not in the display of the image itself but in the media coverage of the conflicts which it reports (Hjarvard & Mortensen, 2015). This is because media coverage sets in motion new dynamics that are founded and updated, including those related to human fabulation. Technologies and apparatuses permeate and interfere in these procedural actions and in the possibility of exclusion from a narrative created. On the other hand, there are more voices, more room for counter-discourses, for subversions and attempts (Rosa, 2020).

In this text, the police operations carried out in communities of Rio de Janeiro were marked by images and instituted by media processes. Their dynamics were constituted by operations of a paradoxical nature of showing/erasing, valuing/excluding, circulating/

repeating, and fixing/restricting. Thus, it is no longer restricted to practical actions but to the plan of mass media coverage of a fantasy that is woven between a life that is not worth living and a life that is not worth being seen. We further argue that visibility conditions can also be altered by the presence and appearance of ordinary people in the photographic image. So these conditions are changed by the very presence of bodies and people in their daily activities, gestures and looks, and unanticipated reactions that, once recorded, interfere with the enunciative regime of images.

In our view, the appearance of extras in the images of police operations can act as a form of counter-agency, creating intervals and fractures in the necropolitical discourse¹ for the emergence of more reflective, slower, critical ways of looking. As viewers of this kind of imagery, we are urged to ask: who are these people? Are they not afraid of such exposure to violence? How do they survive in such conditions? That is because we observe that the extras have a concrete presence in the images they make up a scene itself: they oscillate between the scripting that drives their action and the capture of a given moment of their routine disturbed by police brutality. Thus, the choice of appearances with political power deserves to be highlighted in a work of analysis that puts these photographs in the foreground.

In the images, “seeing” the extras on the scene involves catching the gestural, bodily and gaze glimpses configured in a fraction of a second and recorded in the photos, often unintentionally. We assume that such appearances (*mises en scène*) allow different realities (lived and photographed) to collide, and they break certain frameworks of photojournalism, often of a biopolitical nature, which try to prevent the perception and apprehension of subjects and forms of life disregarded by hierarchical, asymmetric conditions of recognition. Lastly, such appearances “undermine normative schemes and challenge hegemonies” (Butler, 2009/2015, p. 167).

The political/aesthetic power of the extras lies in their different forms of appearance and the power of the figurations — and disfigurations — produced by traditional journalistic frames and their pre-established meanings. The political and aesthetic power of the appearances in the figurations can highlight the nuances between the visible and the readable, readability being linked to the devices activated to read a certain situation, bodies and gestures in the images.

Based on theoretical-critical arguments from the field of communication and aesthetic experience, the text focuses on the analysis of a set of journalistic photographs about two police operations in Rio de Janeiro: one in which police officers from the Coordination of Special Resources of the Civil Police act ostensibly in Complexo da Maré when the Pacifying Police Units were implemented in that area, in 2014. The other took place in the community of Jacarezinho, in Rio de Janeiro, in May 2021. The photographs were produced by professionals from major international news agencies, such as

¹ We understand “necropolitical discourse” as that which reveals a small place intended for life as opposed to death; that which ascribes a place of control to the human body, especially the violated, wounded, massacred and guarded body. As Achille Mbembe (2018, p. 11) pointed out, the relationship between politics and death reveals modes of destroying human life and the many deaths one human life can experience. Life, as opposed to death, builds on the necropolitical discourse from this opposition: from selecting those who must live and those who can and must die.

2. FIGURATION AND EXTRAS: FORMS OF RESISTANCE IN IMAGES

In the field of images, there is a vast literature that discusses photographic representation and how, generally, it offers, through its framing and classificatory schemes, an instruction provided by the works so that the viewer can experience indignation, astonishment, the confrontation of injustice, compassion or even horror (Picado, 2020; Schaeffer, 1987/1996; Tagg, 1988). Although it subscribes to a certain modern convention about the value of truth or verisimilitude of photographic practice that would restore to a context, such as the journalistic context, a certain documentary or informative *status*, the image itself often presents elements that seem to break with culturally regulated contextual norms. Although certain normative rules governed by communicational and media strategies attempt to demarcate the fields of reception of photographic images, it is often the photos themselves, in their material and concrete existence, that question and pervade the contexts in which they are placed by addressing the act of viewing as a potentialized experience.

The orders of experience that we obtain from the perception of photographs (informative, affective, plastic, narrative, among many) are not conferred by the mere physical event of printing the luminous world onto a sensitive surface: without the mediation of the conceptual and intentional structures that instantiate these same perceptual qualities in experience, there will be no human, logical or aesthetic sense from which we can say that we “see through” photographs what they contain. For those who have not understood it so far, photographic indexicality is, simply put, a phenomenon of significance and not a “natural” event. (Picado, 2020, p. 184)

According to Rancière (2003/2012), some images enable another way of apprehending reality and, therefore, questioning the gaze. For him, it is an operation of figuration, which can be thematized when the image becomes capable of interrupting the explanatory mechanism of representation that tends to a consensuality. While representation tends to immobilize and fix the subjects depicted in categories that define and submit them, figuration reveals how difficult (even impossible) it is to retain the subjects and the complexity of their experiences in an image or work.

In figuration, the subject has to escape our incessant attempt to categorize, evaluate, judge and submit everything to what is already familiar: they must remain alien, unfamiliar and, for this very reason, unsettling. Figuration escapes the assumption that there is a necessary cause-effect relationship between what the work shows and the viewer’s reception or that the artist’s intention will cause a sudden and profound change in the frames of meaning that guide the viewer’s perception of the world (Rancière, 2003/2012).

Figuration allows us to glimpse the operations that influence the interpretation of what we see, while representation hides the mechanisms that allow it to approximate one reality. A certain immediate continuity between the content linked by the work and the interpretation, previously determined by the receiver, is broken by figuration since

figuration disturbs the belief in a direct extension between the contents of a certain image and the forms of sensitive thought that are established in the reception as if there were a previously established script of reading, interpretation and positioning which we have become accustomed to following like a model.

This sequential and linear treatment of seeing, reading and interpreting images in a certain way replicates a pattern that reinforces a certain modern sensitivity still connected to the treatment of images in Westernized culture, as warned by Susan Sontag (2003/2003). She states that the profusion and circulation of photographs depicting certain subjects captured, injured, mutilated, shot or killed make up

this journalistic custom heir to the centuries-old practice of exhibiting exotic — that is, colonized — human beings: africans and denizens of remote Asian countries were displayed like zoo animals in ethnological exhibitions in London, Paris, and other European capitals from the 16th until the early 20th century. (Sontag, 2003/2003, p. 62)

What is at stake in the figuration is, on the contrary, breaking with this contextualized picture; it is the promotion of another way of structuring the “thinkable”, involving the alteration of a regime of perception, reading and listening through which diverse elements juxtapose and rub against each other to allow a displacement of position about the way we apprehend, perceive and respond to the demands of the other and the events of the world.

In this way, figuration is not confused with a copy or a reproduction of the real. Instead, it presents a way of understanding the image, the subject and the text that escapes the assumption that there is a necessary cause-effect relationship between what the image shows and the viewer’s reception or that the artist’s intention will cause a sudden and profound change in the frames of meaning that guide the perception of the spectator’s world (Rancière, 2008). Broadly speaking, it seems that Rancière (2019) is interested in how images can make us think about one repositioning of bodies, a displacement of very hasty evaluations and judgments based on prejudices: how to produce displacements, cracks and fissures in the naturalized modes of apprehension and explanation of events? A relevant question for this research is: can there be a way of analyzing images that goes beyond a quick apprehension guided by what has already been given or is commonly accepted as valid? “What kind of operation will change the distribution of the visible and the thinkable?” (Rancière, 2019, p. 50).

To dismantle the explanation machine of the visible and the thinkable, we need to slow down and shift the gaze, according to Rancière (2018). And this can happen when we fabulate with and from the image. Fabulation can be understood as the production of new utterances from activating another imaginary that challenges and questions a hegemonic imaginary, highlighting inconsistencies, excesses and injustices of hierarchical representations. Fabulation needs fiction to change how distinct temporalities are articulated, reverberating in how they are apprehended and recognized. One of the main gestures of fabulation is to question the images in a longer way, distrusting how representations tend to present, at the same time, conflicts and pacified solutions.

Figuration is central to Rancière's (2018) reflection on dismantling predictable explanations of the world. According to him, the invention that art promotes by displacing the usual ways of reading and understanding the world is the seed of the creation of another imaginary, of other keys to reading and understanding activated by the rejection of hierarchy and inequalities between times, spaces and existences. There is a fictional narrative laid out by the images that, by developing not as a chain of times but as a relationship and coexistence between places and their multiple possibilities of realization, produces a work without consensus that marks the creation of scenes of disruption.

Fictional fabulation produces figurations through a dialectization of the visibleness of images marked by interpretive conduction towards moral judgments and the reaffirmation of legitimized values. In Rancière's (2018, 2019) recent work, the operations that constitute the images are dedicated to exploring a tension between reality and "appearances", bearing in mind that appearance is not restricted to the surface but encompasses the ways of rendering readable and intelligible. By exploring this process, we can distinguish gaps and intervals that allow the reconfigurations and displacements necessary for the gaze and interpretation.

Thus, this interval operation of the images creates figurations that challenge the hierarchical mode of presentation of reality by shifting the gaze and rearranging the legibility of the utterance of the images. The tension between representative and aesthetic images is not a polarized relationship in which one must "eliminate" the other. It is not a question of eliminating representation as a work operation that gives shape to the visible, but instead of producing and maintaining a distance from the understanding of events as inert matter, waiting for something external to organize them.

An image is a compound of several heterogeneous elements which, when articulated, achieve resonance to configure other senses of the possible (Calderón, 2020). By shifting the gaze from the denotative meaning of the image, it becomes possible to look at the image and perceive the figuration of the subjects; their existence as human beings subjected to pain. Suffering and precariousness presuppose the establishment of imaginative possibilities, also achieved (although not exclusively) by colour and the presence of the human figure in the photos.

In Didi-Huberman's (2012) aesthetic approach to exposed peoples and their relationship with figuration, he discusses the opacities created by the constant location of these peoples in the play between appearance and disappearance. His reflection seeks to highlight how figuration connects with the emergence of the people as a political subject in images.

In a complementary sense to the discussion undertaken by Rancière (2018) concerning the appearance of the people, we associate Didi-Huberman's (2016a) considerations about the understanding of extras as a worthy political subject, revealing that an extra is not the only one which oscillates between overexposure and underexposure (blinding light and absence of light), nor one which deserves visibility and voice. As a political subject, an extra has the power to recreate the sensitive scene in which ways of being, seeing and saying are invented, promoting new forms of collective enunciation. It

changes the enunciative regime of the image because it appears through another lexicon, another language: the language of the self, what is lived, and experience itself.

Thus, the extra who emerges in the figuration promotes ambiguity and openness in the image. At the same time that extras are relegated or underappreciated by the narrative, they impose themselves as a plastic, performative presence, exposing one revealing corporeality of a certain context and experience, possessing, therefore, the power to destabilize the internal meaning that a certain framing previously tried to elaborate.

An extra emerges in a figuration that allows resistant appearances and critical powers in the confrontation with stereotypes and the identification/exposure of the unique characteristics and histories of the “peoples destined to disappear” (Didi-Huberman, 2012, p. 206). Therefore, it brings another lexicon of bodies, faces, gestures, grimaces, intimidating presences (figures, shadows, sick, marked, ghostly bodies), and changing languages and utterances.

In the first photograph (*Operação Policial que Matou 28 no Rio de Janeiro Desrespeitou Decisões do STF*, Consultor Jurídico, May 7, 2021)² we note that the appearance of the extras causes deviations: their presence subverts the status assigned to a people, diverts the narrative emphasis, and promotes another experience of seeing. The singularity of extras and their agency is closely linked to the body, face and unique mark of the experience of the subjects acting as extras. The sensitive apprehension of extras proposed by Didi-Huberman (2016a) considers not only the dialectics between appearing/disappearing but also seeks to see extras in their corporeality, plastic and performative presence, articulating their unique form in the image with the political power of their becoming.

Extras and their aesthetic and political agency strongly interfere in the expressive regime of the image and its power device because despite not being protagonists, they also produce agencies. It is possible to say that when ordinary people appear as extras, they often escape the script of the scene: though they are tied to the scenographic codes established by the action that unfolds situationally, they have a margin of escape, of projection of their individuality (Veras, 2017). We noted that when the caption emphasizes the action of police officers, they are the purported protagonists themselves because they perform the action and set in motion the key event emphasized by the informative context, though, in the image, they are portrayed in other static stances and expressions. On the contrary, the civilian extras (with their bodies and expressions) move the scene, arousing a certain commotion and shifting legibilities and possible interpretations of the episodes (“A Operação Policial no Rio de Janeiro e o Contexto do Tráfico de Drogas”, *The Eagle View*, May 8, 2021)³.

When thinking about the extras based on the way their faces and bodies are unique in the scene, either individually, as in the second photograph (“A Operação Policial no Rio de Janeiro e o Contexto do Tráfico de Drogas”, *The Eagle View*, May 8, 2021), or collectively, as in the first (*Operação Policial que Matou 28 no Rio de Janeiro Desrespeitou Decisões*

² See in <https://www.conjur.com.br/2021-mai-07/operacao-policial-matou-25-rio-desrespeitou-decisoes-stf>.

³ See in <https://www.theeagleview.com.br/2021/05/a-operacao-policial-no-rio-de-janeiro-e.html>.

do STF, Consultor Jurídico, May 7, 2021), we realize that an extra can be apprehended as the appearance of a body with disruptive political power that needs to be revealed and analyzed from different framings. However, one cannot understand the singularity of the appearance of extras without losing sight of the fact that the images are inserted in a narrative structure, in a different device of production and circulation. One cannot disregard the internal economy of the procedures for elaborating images, their political, aesthetic, and ethical project and gear. In this sense, each image and each news outlet will feature distinct appearances of extras, influencing how their notion is built. Thus, the appearance also follows criteria that guide the realization and ways of addressing the images.

In this context, it is important to emphasize how relevant it is to think about the mismatch between extras and the place that the image prepares for them. It is necessary to highlight the modalities of insertion of extras in fiction. This mismatch does not compromise the political power of the image since reality is always presented to us mal-adjusted, out of step with what the frames choose to show.

3. AVERT YOUR EYES, MAKE THEM SENSITIVE

We argue, with Didi-Huberman (2012), that the image can render sensible that is, it can make accessible a dimension of precarious life forms that are generally not disclosed on the surface of representative images. This proposal to “dialectify the visible”, as he calls it, aims to look at images “in another way, to introduce the division and movement associated with them, the emotion and thought conjugated. Rubbing the eyes, in short: rubbing, rubbing representation with affection, the ideal with the repressed, the sublimated with the symptomatic” (Didi-Huberman, 2016a, p. 405). Here, we are interested in this operation of dialectizing and displacing representation, asking questions to the images, lingering in their contemplation and producing, in this gesture, new framings and interpretive possibilities.

The gesture of “dialectizing the visible” highlights the “power of legibility of sensitive events” (Didi-Huberman, 2016b, p. 67) through images; the power of rendering readable the dialectics of a failure, of something that has been repressed, of a life that has been dehumanized and silenced. Such dialectics is configured because images can “make sensible and legible the flaws, places and moments by means of which peoples, when declaring their impotence, affirm at the same time what they lack and desire” (Didi-Huberman, 2016a, p. 422).

The author articulates and combines two important aesthetic-political gestures: dialectizing the visible and rendering it sensible. The latter means rendering accessible what the senses and intelligence cannot always “read” or make sense of, remaining as a trace or rest, which is generally disregarded by the eye. But to render sensible also means to begin to consider something that used to escape, especially something that was not “readable” about the life of the peoples and their history.

Thus, Rancière (2019) and Didi-Huberman (2016b, 2004/2020) share an interest in showing how images dialectically render sensible — accessible, readable and worthy

of consideration — the life and survival of the peoples while declaring the impotence of the oppressed in situations that expose them to violence, silencing and, therefore, demand forms of reception, consideration and hospitality.

Rendering sensible and dialectizing the visible are operations that the image can perform in a complementary way. Instead of discourses of causality and erasure of the subtleties and textures of experiences, these operations help find the elements of the image that allow figuration to be produced through an approximation, a more protracted approach of spectator and otherness. Images of approaching (engaging by looking directly at the lens, for example) awaken in the viewer new modes of perception of the image, of bodies and of the multiple spatialities and temporalities of the scene from which the faces that engage us appear and rise, dialectically and dissensually.

In this perspective, rendering sensible also means disarming the gaze and activating imaginative knowledge, potentiating the imagination before the “machinery of unimagination” (Didi-Huberman, 2004/2020, p. 34). The dialectization of the visible is, therefore, a process that requires a constant engagement of the viewer. It requires imagination, a contemplative gaze positioned against erasure.

According to Rancière (2003/2012, 2019), the image as an operation activates a knowledge that eludes prescription and representation until it reaches an imaginative dimension that redefines visibilities and legibilities. The fabulation of images is related to fiction and to the type of emancipated experience that emerges in the fictional narrative that mixes temporalities and spatialities in a non-hierarchical way.

As we have seen, “appearing” is an action, for Rancière (2018, 2019) and Didi-Huberman (2016a, 2016b), that has the sense of a moment of dissent, asymmetry, a shift that produces intervals and, from that, we can perceive the disparities, tensions and fractures that remained hidden under the mantle of the representative, causal and hierarchical record. If in the representative regime, efficacy was related to continuity, a narrative articulated by cause (and where the image was destined to intensify the power of this action), in the aesthetic regime, the work of the image is associated with the production of intervals, of discontinuities that make it impossible to script the experience of contact with the works (Rancière, 2003/2012). The indeterminacy, the impossibility of setting their destiny and meaning, prevents images from being the mere expression of a given situation or event (“A Ocupação da Maré”, *El País*, March 30, 2014)⁴.

To render sensible the existence of vulnerable peoples is, in our view, to represent their existence by going beyond representation aimed at giving dignity and hospitality. Representation makes extras emerge in their confrontation with death: it renders them sensible (visible, apprehensible and legible) while rendering us sensible to them, moving us from compassion to emotion. Didi-Huberman (2016a) invites us to cultivate dialectical perceptions about history and the way peoples are represented in documentary narratives. For him, the very absence of power in a people can be rendered sensible. That is, it can be thought critically through the affections that it mobilizes.

⁴ See in https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2014/03/30/album/1396205399_006677.html#foto_gal_10.

4. THE APPEARANCE OF THE FACE AS LISTENING TO THE PLEA FOR LIFE

The gaze of extras, their bodies, their faces and their presence render us sensible, affect us and, therefore, make us “responsible” for them, providing an answer to this question. We can mention the notion of face (ethical clamour, plea, voice) in Lévinas (1999) and Butler (2004, 2009/2015, 2015/2018). In Lévinas (1999), the face is not confused with the human face and is not reduced to it. Nor is it an explicit verbal dialogue, but a saying that binds us to otherness. For him, the face that gives access to the world of the other cannot be scrutinized, and it resists efforts to approach and appropriate. This author reveals the face as a power of contact with otherness. The face marks, in this perspective, a relationship of openness, a form of dialogue in which one does not possess the other nor recognizes oneself in him. Lévinas’ (1999) texts bring the face closer to the gesture of welcome, emphasizing the closeness and ethical openness to the interpellation addressed by the other.

According to Didi-Huberman’s (2016a) reading of Lévinas, the unconditional openness to the other defines the face as an encounter that exposes the difference, the impossibility of reducing the other to the same, of subjecting it to the desire to mean and name it. Quoting Lévinas, Didi-Huberman (2016a) asserts that the figuration of subjects and peoples gives them dignity and respect “from the dialectics between the ethical experience (always singular) that preserves the face; and the normative experience, of the law, which erases the plea made by the face to the moral responsibility of all” (p. 440).

Lévinas (1999) does not perceive the face as a representative image of the subject but wishes to show his “appearance”, so he asserts that the face has a visibility that is only apprehended by the gaze, in which the other who looks at me is the one who shows me. The gaze is an integral part of the manifestation and appearance of another. In this sense, the emergence of the face as a fixed image in photographs invites us to examine and look at the face and the body of the other, revealing the image as an important support to access to the other and their appearance, their coming into being.

The emergence of the face in the image shifts the viewer from a general position, from his inscribed place, to being the singular subject of this gaze. The gaze both challenges and offers itself in a different sensitivity from protocol photographs, so well inscribed in the tradition of photojournalism, to position itself as a small variation of perception in the face of what is strange or intolerable (Marques & Souza, 2018).

To the summons of this gaze, we respond and participate, albeit uncomfortably, in the movement it provokes. We share, even if briefly, the suffering that seems to afflict the subjects captured by the image. Through this look, we coexist the meantime in which an individual life faces universal precariousness. The appearance of the face in the image breaks with a certain structure that forms a kind of “expectation of seeing” linked to a visual repertoire used to present sufferers and their torments.

Rendering sensible is not restricted to visibility but implies changing forms of sensitivity that involve attention, classification and perception of the differences involved in intersubjective relationships. The appearance of the peoples involves constant negotiation around a collective imaginary, the production of a common ground, a semantics

that allows naming injustices and creating other designs for action. For Didi-Huberman (2016b), a people is defined by their agency, by the meanings we attribute to them, in such a way as to imply a collective endowed with value, normative, ethical and aesthetic worth (“A Ocupação da Maré”, *El País*, March 30, 2014)⁵.

A political subject appears through a process of dialectization, inquiry and agency that involves interfering in the political imaginaries that define common ground. The appearance of extras shows the symptoms and renders visible the Benjaminian flashes interrupting the *continuum* of a history in which the protagonists are the state powers. The flash produced by the presence of the extras in the images shows that the suffering is being erased in favour of the strategies and devices of management and control of bodies, acting against this erasure, shedding new light to render the pain of otherness sensible to the gaze. But the flashes also show resistance and responses to the violence of the image.

Civilians-extras are blurred, phantom-like, and fluid. This operation can both show the erasure of ghostly lives, devalued by the politics of death, and reaffirm the impossibility of capturing life forms: of such extras being named and imprisoned in ready-made formulas to manufacture life forms disciplined by governmental institutions. The appearance of ghosts and their constant presence in the political action of precarious peoples makes it difficult to forget, which helps fight immobilization in the spectacle of terror, prohibition and death. Thus, spectrality can be a form of consideration (“A Ocupação da Maré”, *El País*, March 30, 2014)⁶.

The people who live in the community, though their homes and territories are constantly occupied and/or invaded by the police forces, show that they are not reduced to passivity and acceptance. In the photograph featured in *ONU Se Diz ‘Perturbada’ com Chacina no Jacarezinho* (The United Nations ‘Troubled’ by Jacarezinho Massacre; Ansa Brasil, May 7, 2021)⁷, a woman in a protest turns to the camera, contrary to the direction of the sidewalk, and raises her middle finger, as shown in the photograph. While a group of residents follow the march of armed police officers, the woman turns to the photographer’s gaze and, aware of being seen, shows her dissatisfaction at the scene of the ongoing operation.

Here, we could think of the possibility that the photographed people take back their confiscated agency for a record of suffering that, according to Susa Sontag (2003/2003), tends to neutralize their sense of injustice and anger when looking back at us:

the exhibition of photographs of acts of cruelty inflicted on dark-skinned people in exotic countries continues to promote the same spectacle, oblivious of the considerations that prevent this exhibition when it comes to our own victims of violence because the other, even when they are not an enemy, is only seen as someone to be seen, and not as someone (like us) who also sees. (Sontag, 2003/2003, p. 63)

⁵ See in https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2014/03/30/album/1396205399_006677.html#foto_gal_15.

⁶ See in https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2014/03/30/album/1396205399_006677.html#foto_gal_16.

⁷ See in https://ansabrasil.com.br/brasil/noticias/americalatina/brasil/2021/05/07/onu-se-diz-perturbada-com-chacina-no-jacarezinho_849c5d83-3206-4b80-ao6f-992b62094abo.html.

The work of the image is, as Didi-Huberman (2012, 2016a) says, to represent what is repressed in traditional representations and that is not only related to invisibility but to the erasure of the symptom, the attempt to repress the flashes that reconfigure space and time, interfering with what can be seen, named and felt. According to Butler (2009/2015), “the photographic frame is not just a visual image awaiting its interpretation; it is itself interpreting, actively” (p. 110). The presence of the extras and their unscripted or unanticipated gestures interrupts the repetition of frames that confiscate utterances and enunciations from those who suffer (*ONU Se Diz ‘Perturbada’ com Chacina no Jacarezinho*, Ansa Brasil, May 7, 2021). The fabulation allowed by this deviation produces intervals from which the context of the record and the process of circulation address us regarding the game opened by the different regimes of visibility put in tension by the photograph.

5. FLASHES THAT DEPICT LIFE AND FLIRTATION WITH DEATH IN PICTURES

The flash of the extra takes its meaning from the decor of the landscape: although the body is retained under the shock of control, corporeality reverberates the gesture and sound of the lives that need to resist violence, barbarism and oblivion through the precarious construction of an embodied ethical memory. The figuration and appearance of an extra mess up probabilistic data and expectations, like an unexpected non-narrative: they can bring back the flash or even produce it. An extra can be “plucked” from historical causality between the silencing of disfigurement and the voice of the face.

This operation, which consists in pulling the extra out of the causal representation of the event, has a performativity that acts on normative imaginaries and interferes in their reconfiguration. The power of extras does something about the world legitimately perceived as ordinary and interferes with the matrix of meanings that makes some practices readable and accepted.

Portraying the extra subject and not erasing the symptom is what allows the flash to act on the definition of the intelligibility of history, of the appearances and apparitions of the peoples who declare their vulnerabilities while producing the sensitive exposure of their lives, of the failures, intervals and gaps where they cultivate possible survivals and emancipations. For this reason, even in the endless stream of lives erased by stigmatizing frameworks, it is possible to have some flashing moments in which precarious lives reach us, affect us, and move us to listen to their faces, breaking the media narrative of erasure and disfigurement.

Showing how the mechanics of readability can be discontinued and interrupted is the work of minority becoming: the invention of utterances that pierce the disfiguring narrative and images that bring back bodies from the rubble of oblivion. When we consider the political dimension of the appearance of extras, we think about how the singularity of his physical, carnal presence constitutes itself as a vector of dissonance. An extra is, above all, a minority body; he triggers a minor becoming. The syntax of the production of journalistic images imposed on the body of an extra is broken by his minority agency: a look, a gesture, a stumble, a wink, a smile, something unexpectedly said that disturbs the order of a scene.

The picture in the news article “Forças Iniciam Ocupação do Complexo da Maré no Domingo” (Forces Begin the Occupation of Complexo da Maré on Sunday, *Estado de Minas*, March 28, 2014)⁸ shows two civilians posing for the camera. A woman smiles and puts her hand on her chin, in a typical pose of celebrity selfies, where she emphasizes her face in a close-up shot. The man also looks directly at the camera and smiles. Both jokingly contrast with the serious bellicose expression of the agents who, in uniform and armed, march in a single line to perform the duty required of them. The act of posing for the camera allows us to consider how the appearance of the face in the image is related to an interpellation that calls the viewer to assume a listening gaze.

In the image, the face can precisely appear through the blurring and the trace that stands out from the scene. It is the expression of

precariousness that pervades the plasticity of the image to the point of showing that even before any decision or condition of the arrangements that allow including the other in the image, the face already disassembles the scene and distorts the image. (Ribeiro, 2019, p. 58)

The image is precisely the liminal event that actualizes the game, the ethical contact between the creator, the person depicted in the image, and the viewer. The unexpected pose of the extra, escaping the framing imagined by the photographer, produces fabulated presences of black bodies in the militarized space of the favelas, showing a kind of figuration that removes people from the oppressive violence of the police and punitive frame, producing deviations that guide an ideological elaboration that permanently constructs and reconstructs the meanings of images (Biondi & Marques, 2015).

We can establish a relationship between the extra as a minor body — in approximation to the notion of minor literature by Deleuze and Guattari (1975/2014). An extra as a minority body can be defined as an incorrect, deterritorialized syntax (Deleuze & Guattari, 1975/2014, p. 40): a syntax to shout and to give shouting a syntax. Perhaps, a syntax that connects and disconnects the extra from the main story, which operates in full light, showing what can or cannot be said. A syntax that shows the collective value of the enunciation that unites extras and people (forging the means to put a fraternal and revolutionary sensibility into practice).

At the same time, the minority syntax can be elaborated from silence, immobility (which does not mean inactivity) and concealment. The deterritorialization promoted by minor art is supposedly intended to restore sound to the silencing of everyday life and offer silence to the range of sounds that pervade our routine.

In this aspect, the singularity of the scream, the look, the smile or the silence of extras is an important performance in fighting against the constant erasing, muting and stereotyping of the peoples (Veras, 2017). This singularity acts in opposition to the scripted syntax of image production (it adds a smaller gear next to the larger gear of the image production device).

⁸ See in https://www.em.com.br/app/noticia/nacional/2014/03/28/interna_nacional,512976/forcas-iniciam-ocupacao-do-complexo-da-mare-no-domingo.shtml.

In the photograph featured in “Efeitos da Violência de Estado” (The Effects of State Violence; *IstoÉ*, November 9, 2018)⁹, while the black bodies of the community residents are put up against the wall along the street to be searched by military troops, another resident walks in the opposite direction while facing the camera. On his shirt, one can read, in large letters, the words “peace, love, surf”, a message commonly associated with a quiet and harmonious lifestyle, the very opposite of police order. The disposition and direction of the residents’ bodies, approached in contrast to those of the military agents, widens the radical opposition between the subjects and their fields; military versus civilian, agent versus local resident, function versus subject, weapon versus word, order versus life.

Extras help create a becoming-minor by presenting a minor use of language because they bring the power of experience into the image, transforming and metamorphizing the narrative. The minority becoming an extra has to do with resisting the majority models of translation and accommodation of experience, of multiplicity in action. Their becoming also shows how surviving necropolitics is a constant struggle against weapons “deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of death-worlds, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead” (Mbembe, 2018, p. 71).

The singularity of extras and their gestures approaches the conditions of minority, the process of creating passages between the molar and the molecular, establishing conditions for the transformation and experimentation of the power relations that constitute them¹⁰.

Thus, another characteristic of the political dimension that defines extras is their production of molecular assemblages of multiplicity and singularity. An extra can produce an assemblage, a gear that acts both through the individual and through a group, which prove to be two-way articulations and tensions within the scope of the device between *established elements*: codes, standards, incorporated practices (*habitus*) — rules; and *tentative elements*: invention, trial-and-error, inferences, tentative practices (experimentation) — strategies. As we said before, new gear is built next to the previous one, but when inserted into the larger gear, it can cause tears, disruption, and intervals (“A Ocupação da Maré”, *El País*, March 30, 2014)¹¹.

We know, from Deleuze and Guattari (1975/2014), that assemblages are related to the production of new utterances: they transform the purpose of the utterance, change the purpose of existing utterances, and create short circuits in the majority of gears. The production of new utterances involves subjects who risk not only expressing what they really think and feel but also remaining where they should not be, making themselves seen when they should hide themselves. Their presence and action connect to the utterance

⁹ See in <https://istoe.com.br/efeitos-da-violencia-de-estado/>.

¹⁰ For Deleuze (1981/2007), “the transformation, the becoming, the mutation is made when we install the change in the ‘between’: between the molar and the molecular, drawing a line that prevents the molar from closing in majority models, and making the molecular the source of processes of creation and subjectification. The struggles underlie the different dimensions, but from the construction of a tension between the macro and the micro, the molar and the molecular that, by calling on them, by constructing them as a problem, create the conditions for the transformation and experimentation of the power relations that constitute them” (p. 211).

¹¹ See in https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2014/03/30/album/1396205399_006677.html#foto_gal_7.

and the enunciation to create effects on others and to affect the object of the enunciation by producing a spark, a flare in the image (as Didi-Huberman, 2016a, hints, based on Benjamin's dialectic).

The appearance of extras can, in this sense, generate biopotency: their inventive and fabulatory character is worthy of note, as it generates an experience that does not bind them to cliché — they gain existence in the image without being attached to the document of suffering, of misfortune, of victimization that would reduce him to bare life. Thus, an extra is also a “capital life”, as described by Peter Pál Pelbart (2003, p. 56). For him, precarious and extreme lives can be converted into “biopolitical capital that is increasingly at one's disposal to shape the unique way of living that is theirs to invent according to what is given to them” (Pelbart, 2003, p. 56).

It is as if extras also use their lives and bodies (consciously or not) to self-value what they have experienced, what they experience. An extra who appears in the image renders sensible “their unpleasant life stories, their style, their uniqueness, their perception, indignation, causticity, way of dressing, dwelling, gesturing, protesting and rebelling, in other words, their lives” (Pelbart, 2002, p. 29). As their capital is life, it allows reinventing the coordinates of enunciation and varying its forms. Thus, they produce assemblages, react to bare life, and question the image's viewer.

When an extra looks at the camera, they not only break the fourth wall but also hit the viewer hard. Their gaze, as Picado (2011)¹² says, crosses the screen as a vector of an implication that demands another type of attention from the viewer.

6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Appearing in and through photographic images involves a delicate operation of questioning the hierarchical and consensual framework, of questioning it in search of intervals that indicate that the framework cannot accurately determine what is seen, thought, recognized and apprehended. We have seen that the figuration of vulnerable people occurs in the encounter between the photographer's gesture, the scene framed in the image (in constant operation), the circulation and the viewer's involvement in the image. This process involves the act of making sensible an approximation between viewers and the otherness present in the image that is not reduced to a moralizing judgment. The sensitive operation of the images elicits in viewers new ways of perceiving the bodies and the multiple spatialities and temporalities of the scene, in which the faces that challenge us appear and emerge — dialectically and dissensually. Images can thus make the unexpected, what was not previously perceived, perceived and felt, appear: they produce and are produced by operations that disorganize, disturb and rearrange what is given defining other possibilities, that is, other ways of rendering times, spaces, objects, bodies and experiences readable and intelligible. Images can give rise to unique and fabulatory

¹² The face, according to the author, presents a “genuine pragmatics of visual significance” (Picado, 2011, p. 63). The face, in order to exist, depends on affective and interactional experiences – the gaze of the photographed face “is directed out of the image (and, more acutely, toward this other gaze that holds it)” (Picado, 2011, p. 63).

scenes by playing the role of “small machines that refuse the already given explanation” (Rancière, 2019, p. 57).

Butler (2009/2015) states, in dialogue with Didi-Huberman (2016b), her argument about the overexposure of the peoples, whose excess of media coverage used to create stereotypical representations does not allow us to welcome the other face, its demand, and its appeal. For her, in much of the media representations, “we cannot hear the face through the face, because it masks the sounds of human suffering and the proximity that we could have with the precariousness of life” (Butler, 2009/2015, p. 27). It speaks of the possibility of Lévinas’s face operating and being represented as a face from the moment in which such a representation can vocalize or be understood as the result of a voice that expresses a lament, a sign of the precariousness of life.

We understand that the loss of the face of which Butler (2004) speaks to us is configured by the process of institutional and media framing that makes it difficult to listen to the plea of the other and, by extension, compromises the production of ethical responsibility over this fragile and vulnerable other. In our view, the appearance of extras, as seen in the images, allows us to find portions of humanity that place us in front of the face.

Through these images, the face could appear through (de)formation, blurring and trace: it would be the expression of precariousness that underlies the plasticity of the image to the point of dismantling the scene and distorting the image. Certainly, an image is not elaborated without the body, nor is its significance given outside the corporeality of the world. However, we understand that the image is the liminal event that updates the game, the sensitive contact and the ethical contract between the maker, the figure in the image and the viewer.

Thus, we note that the greatest work in these images was to open up dimensions of connections and disconnections, approximations and distinctions, fractures and recompositions that do not fulfil expectations of readability, bringing to the viewer’s gaze undecidability that renders them sensitive to aspects that would not previously be the object of contemplation or consideration. As we saw in Rancière (2019), the image produces “a type of operation that will change the distribution of the visible and the thinkable” (p. 50) since political power is both in the images, in their materiality as signs, and in the relations and operations that define them.

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“BREAK THE RULES, NOT THE LAW”: NORMALIZING BRUTALITY AND REINFORCING POLICE AUTHORITY IN US SERIES

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1950s, the institutional police series have been among the most popular productions on US television. Through the reiteration of the “us versus them” mentality, police officers are fictionalized as normative agents who uphold “goodness”, while crime is portrayed as a moral and individual flaw of the criminal. Not only do these productions recurrently ignore systemic problems in US society, which are used to explain crime in the real world, but they also reinforce the authority of the institution as the force capable of maintaining the status quo. From the perspective that these series act in the construction and mediation of meaning about the role played by real-world police institutions and their members in society, we structure the text around two main arguments: (a) TV series reinforce the police institution’s authority, treating its actions as unquestionable and, most importantly, allowing real-world institutions to interfere in their fictionalization processes; (b) TV series normalize police brutality, with narratives often justifying violent acts as an efficient investigative tool, illustrating norms and bureaucracies as major impediments to the police officer’s work. By framing ethical and human rights violations as efficient and necessary acts, these series contribute to normalizing some of the dirtiest aspects of the profession.

KEYWORDS

television, fictional institutions, police series, police brutality

“QUEBRE AS REGRAS, NÃO A LEI”: A NORMALIZAÇÃO DA BRUTALIDADE E O REFORÇO DA AUTORIDADE POLICIAL NAS SÉRIES ESTADUNIDENSES

RESUMO

Desde a década de 1950, as séries institucionais policiais estão entre as produções mais populares da televisão estadunidense. Por meio da reiteração da mentalidade do “nós versus eles”, policiais são ficcionalizados como agentes normativos que defendem o “bem”, enquanto o crime é retratado como uma falha moral e individual do criminoso. Além dessas produções

recorrentemente ignorarem problemas sistêmicos da sociedade estadunidense que são utilizados para explicar a criminalidade no mundo real, elas também reforçam a autoridade da instituição como detentora da força para manutenção do status quo. Partindo da perspectiva que essas séries atuam na construção e mediação de sentido sobre o papel desempenhado pelas instituições policiais do mundo real e de seus membros na sociedade, estruturamos o texto em torno de dois principais argumentos: (a) as séries reforçam a autoridade da instituição policial, tratando suas ações como inquestionáveis e, mais importante, abrindo espaço para intervenções das instituições policiais do mundo real nos processos de ficcionalização das mesmas; (b) as séries normalizam a brutalidade policial, com narrativas frequentemente justificando atos violentos como uma ferramenta investigativa eficiente, ilustrando normas e burocracias como grandes empecilhos ao trabalho do policial. Ao enquadrar as violações éticas e de direitos humanos como atos eficientes e necessários essas séries contribuem para normalizar alguns dos aspectos mais sujos da profissão.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

televisão, instituições ficcionais, séries policiais, brutalidade policial

1. INTRODUCTION

On May 25, 2020, the brutality of the police action that led to the death of George Perry Floyd Jr. in the city of Minneapolis, Minnesota, stunned people around the world. Floyd, a Black man, was murdered by a white police officer who knelt over his neck, suffocating him. Floyd's death provoked hundreds of protests in the US, with the population demanding reforms in the nation's police institution, such as the Defund the Police campaign, which proposes to reduce the funds directed to the institution (Andrew, 2020). Society's backlash to the video that captured Floyd's death was problematized in journalistic stories (Grady, 2020; Zeitchik, 2020) that disputed the role of the media in general and television in particular in glorifying police action, for example, the reality show *COPS* (Langley & Barbour, 1989–present). Meanwhile, fictional scripted series have been questioned for presenting police officers as society's heroes and representing only these professionals' views of law, crime, and justice. The incident has put the fictionalization of the police institution in TV series under the spotlight (Siegel, 2020; Thorne, 2020).

Here, it is necessary to highlight the popularity of police series on US television. Brooks and Marsh (2007) identified that approximately 300 productions have aired since 1949. To this day, these series are among the most watched in the country. For the 2020–2021 season, Nielsen listed five institutional police series in the top 10 most-watched productions (Schneider, 2021): *NCIS* (Bellisario et al., 2003–present), *FBI* (Wolf et al., 2018–present), *Blue Bloods* (Goldberg et al., 2010–present), *9-1-1* (Murphy et al., 2018–present), *Chicago P.D.* (Wolf et al., 2014–present). Although they might vary, police series reproduce the same formula where a criminal act disrupts an ordered world, and police officers and detectives strive to restore order (Meimaridis, 2021; Sparks, 1992; Turnbull, 2014), an institution-imposed status quo. At the same time, these productions tend to reproduce narratives centered on the binarism of “good” versus “evil”. In other words,

they present stories where the police work hard to safeguard society while criminals fulfill the role of a threat to be thwarted by the police.

In this article, we lead from the discussions proposed by Meimaridis (2021) about the significant role that television fiction accomplishes in mediating and constructing meaning about social institutions. The researcher proposes the term "institutional series" to refer to fictional productions "focused on the daily functioning of social institutions. Police, legal and medical series are its main models" (p. 15). Regarding the fictionalization of the police institution, we contend that institutional police series normalize the brutality of police action as the means for obtaining justice by constructing stories around myths and framing the use of excessive force by the police as justifiable. In this process, these productions reinforce the institution's authoritative role in maintaining order in society. Thus, we problematize the processes of fictionalizing the police institution in TV series from the US. Considering that these TV products are largely exported to the rest of the world (Moran & Malbon, 2006), this mediation is not limited to local audiences. It travels through transnational television flows, creating meanings that can be reflected in different cultural perspectives, influencing understandings about the authority and credibility of police institutions in the US at a global level.

First, we briefly present an overview of institutional police series in the US in order to contextualize these productions. Then, we address how the police institution is fictionalized in these TV series and which elements characterize this process. Finally, we focus on two significant constructions: (a) authority reinforcement, and (b) normalization of police brutality. We contend that, in the face of the crisis that this institution currently faces in the US (Cobbina-Dungy & Jones-Brown, 2021; Hudácskó, 2017), institutional police series become attractive and powerful objects in legitimizing the real-world police institution, especially by allowing the institution to regulate fiction's discourses about itself. Police series are, then, part of a larger problem since they legitimize and glorify police actions.

2. OVERVIEW OF POLICE SERIES FROM THE US

The first US television series to represent the police universe is from 1949, entitled *Stand By For Crime* (Garrison, 1949). The drama presented the killer's point of view while a detective investigated the crime. Before the episode ended, the audience was asked to call in and guess the killer's identity (Dowler, 2016). Between 1949 and 1951, other police series appeared. Among them, the most important was *Dragnet* (Webb, 1951–1959). Centered on the work of Sergeant Joe Friday (Jack Webb), the production focused on weekly crime solving. To make the production, Jack Webb approached William H. Parker, the controversial head of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) in the early 1950s, and traded creative control of the series for access to department resources (police cars, badges, etc.). This proximity to the actual institution enabled *Dragnet* to become a powerful propaganda tool in favor of the institution (Sharrett, 2012). Over the course of its 276 episodes, the series reproduced a simple formula in which every case was resolved by the end of the episode. According to Mittell (2004):

the conservative ideology that *Dragnet* articulated to the police genre is not an idealized vision of society as presented in idyllic sitcoms but the authenticated and unswerving belief in the system to continually discipline offenders and protect the innocent by reacting to ever-present threats and manifestations of crime. *Dragnet* reassures audiences that the police system functions efficiently by positioning viewers as allied with the police, invisible observers of authentic procedures as they happen. (p. 139)

Therefore, despite the criminal action that drove the episodes each week, the police in *Dragnet* were presented as an institution that fulfilled its duty in society.

Between 1960 and 1970, a new wave of successful police productions emerged and dominated primetime television schedules, such as *Starsky and Hutch* (Spelling & Goldberg, 1975–1979). Alternatively, TV series presenting other law enforcement institutions began to appear, such as agents belonging to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in *The F.B.I.* (Martin & Saltzman, 1965–1974). On the other hand, institutional police series in the 1970s were influenced by two distinct processes. On the one hand, they began incorporating demands for more diverse racial and gender representation¹. On the other, they started to present the judicial system as more bureaucratic and, in many cases, inefficient (Dowler, 2016). In light of this, a more violent police officer/detective was needed, one that was hungry for justice in the fight against criminals (Stark, 1987). The protagonist of the drama *Kojak* (Mann et al., 1973–1978) was precisely this “new” type of cop, tougher, more violent, fighting both crime and the institution’s bureaucratic inefficiency.

It was in the 1980s that the institutional police series began to further complexify the constructions of the institution. The productions of the decade marked a significant process of framing crime as a national problem (Donziger, 1996; Males, 1999), and television was responsible for portraying it as a problem that affected everyone. The most important police drama of the time was *Hill Street Blues* (Bochco et al., 1981–1987). The series featured the chaotic routine of a police station in a major urban center and introduced troubled cops and detectives who broke institutional rules and norms in favor of obtaining justice.

After the great success of *Hill Street Blues*, the 1990s saw the proliferation of new police dramas. While *NYPD Blue* (Bochco et al., 1993–2005) continued to feature police officers with moral and conduct shortcomings, *Law & Order* (Wolf et al., 1990–2010) reflected on the more punitive dimensions of the New York justice system. The series presented prosecutors and detectives as heroes fighting evil, represented in the figure of

¹ The demand for greater participation of female characters in police series is related to the federal legislation that enabled increased gender representation in police institutions between the 1960s and 1970s. However, Dowler (2016) points out that, upon entering the institution at the time, most women were given “specialized duties” (p. 13). Some were secretaries, while others were assigned to the Vice Squad, where many disguised themselves as prostitutes to get important information and apprehend criminals. Although this same logic was reproduced in fiction, one exception was *Police Woman* (Gerber, 1981–1987), a drama about the work of Sergeant Pepper Anderson (Angie Dickenson) in the LAPD’s criminal conspiracy unit. It wasn’t until the 1980s that female characters in police series were more prominently featured. The drama *Cagney & Lacey* (Rosenzweig, 1981–1988) presented detectives who not only solved crimes but also fought against sexism. The production addressed several issues that moved the liberal feminist debate of the decade. In many ways, the series challenged the male hegemony ingrained in the police genre (D’acci, 1994).

criminals and the lawyers who defended them. Another significant production of the decade was *Homicide: Life on the Streets* (Finnerty et al., 1993–1999), which endorsed a more realistic view of the work of Baltimore's homicide division detectives and desensitized death by presenting it as a routine part of the profession. Unlike the clear-cut resolutions of *Law & Order*, many episodes of *Homicide* ended with unsolved cases.

In the early 2000s, other crime series began to gain even more airtime on broadcast television, many introducing elements of forensic science and profiling techniques in the apprehension of criminals, such as *CSI* (Zuiker et al., 2000–2015), *NCIS*, and *Criminal Minds* (Gordon et al., 2000–2015). These productions have become some of the most enduring series on US television and replicate the procedural model in which most episodes end with cops successfully arresting criminals and the narrative returning to the status quo. At the same time, cable television has also begun to fictionalize the police institution, as in *The Shield* (Ryan et al., 2002–2008) and *The Wire* (Simon et al., 2002–2008). While broadcast television productions often highlighted the central role of police institutions in maintaining order, cable TV series constructed a more flawed view of the institution with morally ambiguous professionals and, in some cases, an institution weakened by bureaucratic inefficiency. The serialized nature of cable television series was essential for plots where police officers would face some kind of consequences for their actions.

Contemporary productions keep reproducing established genre formulas with minor variations, many featuring the procedural format. Institutional police series from the 2010s, such as *Chicago P.D.*, *Blue Bloods*, and *The Rookie* (Hawley et al., 2018–present), present transgressions by police officers and detectives as routine and often as harmless and justifiable actions. These series generally frame conduct violations as the means for certain ends to be achieved, notably apprehending the criminal and obtaining justice. But it is not necessarily about obtaining legal justice; the fictional police institution presents professionals who seek moral justice (Meimaridis, 2021). That is because the police institution, when fictionalized, traditionally approaches the ideological spectrum of conservatism, illustrating a worldview from the perspective of the status quo. To understand this process, we need to grasp the role of this institution in US society and examine its fictionalization process in TV series.

3. THE POLICE INSTITUTION AND ITS FICTIONALIZATION IN US SERIES

The first police departments in the US emerged in the 19th century, many under pressure from the bourgeois class who, as they rose economically, sought a force to secure and protect "order" and "private property" (Mitriani, 2013). Inspired by the London model of the metropolitan police, police departments in large urban centers such as New York and Chicago reproduced a militarized command structure. Initially, police work was more concerned with regulating the behavior of the working classes and maintaining order in various spheres, both moral and social, than with arresting criminals. However, as cities developed, social inequality increased, and violence intensified, the police became a symbol of the fight against crime.

Often, the work carried out by members of the police institution is related to the concept of "dirty work" (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Cummins & King, 2015; Dick, 2005). The concept, proposed by Everett Hughes (1950), addresses occupations that are socially perceived as degrading or disgusting. They are, therefore, occupations that involve some kind of "moral, physical, or social" taint (Hughes, 1958, p. 122). For Ashforth and Kreiner (1999), moral taint refers to occupations of sinful or dubious morals (e.g., casino manager). Physical taint relates to occupations associated with dirt or death (e.g., firefighters), and social taint concerns occupations that deal with stigmatized individuals (e.g., public defenders) or that have a certain relationship of servitude (e.g., janitors).

Police officers present a combination of all three types of taint. They work under harmful conditions and risk their lives on a daily basis (*physical taint*). They also use questionable methods (*undercover police*) to do their jobs (*moral taint*). At the same time, they deal directly with "contaminated" people like prostitutes, homeless people, and especially criminals (*social taint*). This combination ultimately threatens the moral status of the professional. For Waddington (1999), members of the police institution perform dirty work since the police act in ways that are otherwise "exceptional, exceptionable or illegal" (p. 299). We emphasize, however, that society bestows authority upon the police institution. That is, "instituting a police force entails the general population licensing a specific occupational group to exercise authority over them – to intrude into their privacy, interfere in their conduct and ultimately to use force against them" (Waddington, 1999, p. 298). To cope with the profession's stigma, members of the police institution reproduce a strong group identity based on the logic of "us" (police officers) versus "them" (criminals; Cummins & King, 2015). In this process, police officers cultivate an "occupational self-image of crime-fighter" (Cummins & King, 2015, pp. 2–3), which is closely related to the construction of the police officer as a hero.

The dimension of police officers' dirty work emerges mostly through an officer who is tortured by his/her day-to-day duties in institutional police series. By dealing with the "worst" of mankind, this officer is tainted and recurrently seeks refuge in a bar, as in *Chicago P.D.*, *NYPD Blue*, and *Hill Street Blues*. Alternatively, the dirty work dimension is also present in the everyday risks that policemen and detectives encounter in the exercise of their profession. Fictional series, then, lend themselves well to reinforcing the image of the hero cop. For Sparks (1992), these television productions are like morality tales that society reproduces as a way of reassuring itself. They serve a desire to see punishment imposed upon a particular group in society. To do this, they tend to villainize the criminal who "deserves" to be punished (Marc, 1984). In this way, these productions are focused on a criminal action and an institution's response (such as punishment; Raney & Bryant, 2002). For Marc (1984), the attraction of this formula lies in its "ritual affirmation of the potency of law and order" (p. 69). It is precisely the opposition of binaries, such as "good" versus "evil", "law" versus "crime", "action" versus "punishment", and "order" versus "chaos", that enable institutional police series to reinforce the image of the policeman as a crime fighter and feed specific national myths (Mittell, 2004).

Police institutional series are ideologically connected with conservative beliefs by portraying the officer as a hero and the civilian as a potential opponent. These productions illustrate the moral and legal facets of the police institution's actions. The narrative presents a conflict between two adversaries: police officers on one side and criminals who are predetermined to be wicked on the other. In this process, the ability to reinforce the conservative discourse becomes distinct since these productions justify the police's actions against criminals (Meimaridis, 2021). However, many police series reduce crime and poverty to the moral sphere rather than attributing them to sociological and structural issues in US society (Buxton, 1990). That is, the underlying causes of crime in the real world, institutional shortcomings or economic inequities, are underrepresented. The racial component is also frequently overlooked. In this way, these productions minimize the social and economic dimensions of crime. In fact, very few series explore the social conditions that contribute to crime, such as *Hill Street Blues*, *Homicide: Life on the Streets*, and *The Wire*. In these productions, the police authority is succumbing to lawlessness. We again stress that these works are exceptional examples and that, in some cases, they exhibit an ambiguous ideological alignment that may be both conservative and progressive, as in the case of *Hill Street Blues*.

Meimaridis (2021) established two separate dimensions of conservatism in police institutional series that are directly tied to institutional regulation. The first manifests itself in productions based on police personnel carrying out their tasks in society and characterized by strict institutional regulation, such as *Dragnet*. The second dimension involves law enforcement officers breaking the law and acting as agents of "moral justice" in society. Institutional police series encourage the notion that police officers can use excessive force to apprehend a criminal by reiterating a utilitarian rationale. These professionals ultimately abuse their authority and foster a conservative "us versus them" mentality as a result of their actions. We contend that this framing of unethical behavior and human rights abuse as heroic deeds contributes to normalizing the profession's dirtiest aspects.

Taking this into account, in the next part, we will emphasize two significant roles that US police institutional series play in legitimizing the real-world police institution: (a) authority reinforcement, and (b) normalization of police brutality.

4. AUTHORITY REINFORCEMENT

The disclaimer "the story you are about to see is true. Only the names have been changed to protect the innocent" displayed at the beginning of each episode of *Dragnet* is emblematic of assuming that the truth lies in the policeman's point of view, whom the viewer will follow throughout the episode. In general, modern US police series continue to follow the formula established in *Dragnet*, with the hero officer committed to solving the "case of the week" and apprehending the villainized perpetrator. After restoring normality, the production is ready to repeat a variation of the formula the following week. Ultimately, the narrative movement toward resolution solidifies the cop's moral victory.

In this way, institutional police series tend to prioritize the police officers' victories and efforts. Thus, these productions concretize the institution's and its members' authority in upholding social order.

The fact that some real-world institutions already take part in their fictionalization processes makes the capacity of institutional police series to strengthen police authority even more blatant (Jenkins, 2016; Sharrett, 2012). They often justify this interference as a way to ensure that the representations are more "accurate" (Jenkins, 2016). However, this justification only serves to camouflage the institution's real interest: the need for positive portrayals of law enforcement personnel in television series.

Consider, for example, the success rates — solving the crime and apprehending the criminal — of US police series. Although the number of homicides in these productions is higher than in the reality of the country's major urban centers (Brown, 2001; Deutsch & Cavender, 2008; Donavan & Klahm IV, 2005), professionals consistently prevail through their expertise. Eschholz et al. (2004) observed that the success rate of professionals in police dramas was much higher than in reality. The authors examined episodes of *Law & Order* and *NYPD Blue* aired between 1999 and 2000 and identified that the conviction rate in the former was 61%, and the arrest rate in the latter was 78%. Yet, the New York City police department's success rate for violent crimes was 29% during the same timeframe. This finding has been corroborated by other investigations, including Britto et al. (2007).

Naturally, the favorable fictionalization of the police force is fraught with controversy. One of the most emblematic cases refers to the "CSI effect" (Cole & Dioso-Villa, 2007). The phenomenon, defined as "the belief that watching television shows such as *CSI* can actually cause a viewer to have heightened expectations of what science can do" (Harvey & Derksen, 2009, p. 5), has been addressed by both the academic literature and the media. Although several works indicate the non-existence of such a phenomenon (Maeder & Corbett, 2015; Podlas, 2006; Schweitzer & Saks, 2007), Brewer and Ley (2010) found that regular viewers of *CSI* tended to believe more in the reliability of forensic science than individuals who did not consume this television drama. As a result, we believe that the focus of the debate over the *CSI* effect has shifted the attention away from the simple fact that series like *CSI* depict a technical reality of the police institution that most people do not have access to. In this way, these productions are able to attribute legitimacy and authority to real-world police institutions and forensic science (Deutsch & Cavender, 2008).

However, it is not just *CSI* and forensic science. Institutional police series as a whole revolve around systems of specialized expertise (Meimaridis, 2021), such as federal intelligence agencies (FBI, Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], National Security Agency [NSA]), police and criminal investigative forces (New York City Police Department, LAPD), specialized squads (Special Weapons and Tactics, SWAT), among others. All these systems rely on experts' knowledge (police officers, detectives, forensic scientists, analysts, field agents, etc.). Science, in this way, is used as a form of symbolic action to find and construct the truth, approximating police work to one rationality that satisfies the criteria of acceptability (Ericson & Shearing, 1986). Thus, we perceive the police as an important

expert system (Giddens, 1991) that relies on the subjects' trust. Ordinary people do not need to grasp all aspects of the police institution, its organization, or the technical knowledge associated with this system since they trust the expert system. By constructing favorable visions of the performance of the police force in US society, many institutional television series present skilled professionals who routinely perform their duties based on their specialized knowledge. These productions, in this process, reinforce the police institution's conduct in the people's daily life.

Considering that real-world police institutions participate and/or interfere in their fictionalization processes, we defend that institutions like the LAPD and FBI use television series to regulate the discourses produced by fiction about themselves. A fundamental component of this process is the reinforcement of the police's authority and trust in this expert system. The proximity of these institutions to serialized fiction, we believe, lends legitimacy to these productions. On the other hand, police series, when they frame the police institution as being "strong" and "orderly" — as in *FBI* and *Law & Order* — contribute to reinforcing trust in experts. That is only possible because society constantly reminds individuals that these systems work through various mechanisms, which, in the end, promote trust in expert systems (Giddens, 1991). Consequently, we propose that institutional police series can serve as one of these mechanisms by fostering societal trust in a variety of real-world police institutions.

5. NORMALIZING POLICE BRUTALITY

The saying "break the rules, not the law" is the tagline of the institutional drama *Chicago P.D.* centered on the actions of uniformed police officers and detectives of the intelligence unit of the 21st district of the Chicago police department. Of course, the statement is pure rhetoric since the professionals violate various human rights, not just the institution's "rules" of conduct, to solve the cases of the week. By framing methods of police brutality — torture, kidnapping, physical threats — as the means of obtaining relevant information, as in "Wrong Side of the Bars" (Brandt, Haas, & Chapelle, 2014, Season 1, Episode 2) and "Don't Bury This Case" (Brandt, Haas, & Nowlan, 2017, Season 4, Episode 9), and apprehending criminals, as in "8:30 P.M." (Brandt, Haas, & Tinker, 2014, Season 1, Episode 12) and "Emotional Proximity" (Brandt, Haas, & Tabrizi, 2017, Season 4, Episode 16), the series portrays illegal behavior by police officers as routine, if not vital, to the job. Although questionable, the abusive actions and violations employed by professionals in *Chicago P.D.* are often portrayed as effective, which minimizes the issue of police brutality and promotes misconceptions about the police institution's real role. Here we understand police brutality as the illegal exercise of excessive force (Skolnick & Fyfe, 1994), yet the legal boundaries between authorized and exaggerated police aggression are traditionally difficult to draw. Controlling violence is the profession's great humanitarian dilemma, and professional boundaries are not well clarified in US law (Chevigny, 1995).

The drama *Chicago P.D.* should not be regarded as an exception among US institutional police series but rather as part of a model of fictionalization of the police institution that normalizes police violence. In January 2020, the non-profit organization Color of Change did an extensive study on representations of crime, race, and justice in US police series (Color of Change, n.d.). The organization analyzed 26 productions that aired between 2017 and 2018. The results pointed out that in the fictional world, actions such as the abuse of force, similar to that employed by Floyd's killer, are not only normalized but portrayed as efficient and even necessary. In the analysis, out of 353 illegal actions committed by police officers, only 13 (3.7%) were investigated. Of these 353 actions, only six discussed any reform in the police system. Excessive force, when it appeared, was framed as rare and unusual. The report concluded that the US police institutional series glorify, justify, and ultimately normalize systematic violence committed by the police, especially against minorities.

These series present the police as the normative power, authorized to use excessive force to restore order and harmony in society. They are positioned as the armed branch of the state. Situated as the "good", the police function in relation to the "other", the criminals, whose perspective will only be shown when their criminal actions are investigated. These actions are the result of the criminals' individual failures. In institutional police series, the criminal is typically an individual with moral deviations, and the evils inflicted on society result from his/her dishonesty, disdain for norms, or even sadism. The offender is portrayed as dangerous and capable of carrying out his/her illegal actions again if they escape arrest. There is a need for an immediate response, which the police deliver since its use of force is authorized as a necessary measure for the protection of ordinary citizens. Criminals are dehumanized for their transgressions and shown as people who have rightfully lost their civil rights as a result of their immoral deeds.

In an effort to normalize police violence, police institutional series began in the 1980s to foster the perception that bureaucracy was impeding professionals from doing their jobs effectively. Constitutional constraints, human and civil rights, laws, and chain of command are portrayed as obstacles; their role as institutional safeguards of order and the rule of law often being downplayed. Order is forged by the individuality of police officers willing to break the law to apprehend criminals. We underline that this construction has a conservative bias and glorifies the role of the police officer as an anti-establishment figure who disregards civil rights and bypasses institutions to do "good", in this case, saving a life or protecting a community.

Let us consider, for example, the pilot episode of *The Shield* (Ryan & Johnson, 2002, Season 1, Episode 1). The narrative follows the questionable acts of a group of police officers in the LAPD. In the episode, a division of the LAPD fails to elicit information about the whereabouts of a victim from a pedophile. The criminal is legally supported by lawyers and manages to resist charges. The bureaucratic process is shown to be a burden in an urgent situation, and the cops solicit the assistance of Vic Mackey (Michael Chiklis) to unmask the pedophile: he shuts off the cameras in the investigation room, refuses

the criminal's demands for his lawyer, and physically tortures him into divulging the whereabouts of the kid, who is ultimately saved. That is just one example of the brutality depicted in *The Shield* as a means to an end.

Although institutional police series occasionally question the abuse of force, their portrayal is more generally favorable and efficient (Bandes, 2021). Corrupt and violent police officers who fail to succeed in investigations are rarely featured in US fictional television. Brutality, then, is almost always rewarded. Excessive force is also depicted as an individual trait of some law enforcers, in contrast to their systematic nature in the actual world. The series *Justified* (Leonard et al., 2010–2015) is a good example. The drama embodies the issues in its title: "justified", a predicament that Raylan Givens (Tymothy Olyphant) attempts to thrust himself into in order to justify the execution of criminals. A Western movie-style gunman, the cop begins the series reprimanded for the execution of a criminal and transferred from a prestigious police unit in Miami to his small hometown. There, Givens continues to follow his code: induce the criminal to draw first, guaranteeing him self-defense. Internal police divisions, interested in investigating the officer's inappropriate behaviors, are also shown as hindrances (Yost & Werner, 2012). Givens also agrees to extortion, strikes deals with criminals, and uses physical torture to extract information.

Erasing the racial factor is another process undertaken to normalize police violence. As the well-known US cases from Rodney King (1992) to George Floyd (2020) show, race is one of the main factors behind real-world police brutality (Graham et al., 2020; Holmes & Smith, 2008). Police series from the US tend to depict crimes committed by Caucasians in an exaggerated way, trying to avoid racial controversies that could alienate their audiences. In 1995, for example, 79% of the convicted criminals in *Law & Order* were Caucasian, while in real life, only 9% of those arrested in New York City were white (Selepak & Cain, 2015). African Americans (9% in the series, 55% in the real world) and Hispanics (12% in the series, 30% in real life), on the other hand, were underrepresented (Selepak & Cain, 2015).

Increasing exposure to Caucasian criminals has formerly been advocated academically as an acceptable strategy for addressing racism (Dixon, 2006). However, in reality, this criminal "affirmative action" leads to further erasing the racial issue in these works. By effectively removing the debate about race, these series have ignored systemic problems and framed crime as a moral and individual problem. In the institutional police series, racism is not fought but rather overlooked. If, on the one hand, news reports depict a more realistic portrayal of crime while failing to criticize the systemic issues that contribute to it, fictional series, in order to avoid controversy, whitewash crime, which contributes to disconnecting these actions from the real world and stifling any critical discussion (Doyle, 2003).

Among the many productions normalizing police brutality, *24* (Surnow et al., 2001–2010) is the most evocative, with its depiction of torture so problematic that its makers were chastised by military and FBI operatives (Mayer, 2007). Despite the fact that its first

season aired before the 9/11 events, the series became synonymous with the war on terror era, when concern over terrorism made domestic surveillance, sadism, and torture, common topics on television, whether the material was fictional or not (Hall, 2013). Like its title and real-time narrative structure, the series put its protagonists in "the ticking bomb scenario", a hypothetical circumstance in which horrific means of physical torture would be ethically justifiable owing to the urgency of finding a device that would kill millions. The production revolved around anti-terrorism agent Jack Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland), a member of a fictitious government division called the Counter Terrorism Unit (CTU). Because the CTU's methods were frequently framed as ineffectual, it was up to Bauer to act independently of his superiors (and the law) to avert tragedy, which often included torture and other cruel tactics².

The violence in *24* is portrayed as regrettable but essential to maintain the status quo, which also reflects the "us" against "them" mentality of the actual world as expressed by the words of then-President George W. Bush: "you are either with us, or with the terrorists". Torture is directly shown as legitimate, despite being a "last resort". In a society where police legitimacy is lacking to achieve results, Bauer acts this way and is framed as efficient (Kearns & Young, 2017). "If we don't do this, millions and millions of Americans will die", the characters in the series often reiterate. The brutality was not only related to a "vigilante" police officer but also happened in an institutionalized way, with the CTU having an agent (the character Rick Burke [Martin Papazian]) and a room dedicated to sophisticated torture methods. Significantly, the narrative framed traditional peaceful investigation and interrogation procedures as ineffectual (Kearns & Young, 2017).

Currently, the crises experienced by the police institution, especially regarding police brutality, have also appeared in police institutional series. However, criticism directed at the institution is rare. As we mentioned before, some productions reinforce the rhetoric of exceptionality, and the misbehaving police officer suffers consequences for his actions. Yet, in other productions, the victim of police brutality is unmasked for having lied or committed some offense that would have warranted police action, clearing the professional of culpability, as in the episode "Excessive Force" (Burns & Zakrzewski, 2014, Season 5, Episode 4) of *Blue Bloods* and in the episode "Justice" (Brandt et al., 2016, Season 3, Episode 21) of *Chicago P.D.* We find this image, with a pro-establishment tone, disturbing, in which police violence, particularly against minorities, is condoned and injustice is normalized by belittling the victims.

6. CONCLUSION

In this article, we seek to contribute to the discussions about the fictionalization of justice and crime by institutional police series from the US. We demonstrate the creation of an imaginary in which law enforcement characters are primarily portrayed as heroic and unassailable. At the same time, these productions justify the abuse of authority by

² There were 67 torture scenes in the first five seasons alone (Miller, 2007).

these professionals and frame police violence and conduct infractions as a “necessary” evil essential to prevent something even “worse”, the criminal’s deed. The perception that using excessive force is a legitimate and useful tactic contrasts sharply with the institution’s crisis in the real world, where incidents involving police violence, such as those of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, emerge with frightening frequency. Recognizing that these depictions and framings of the police and criminals foster expectations and perceptions about real-world violence, we contend that these productions have failed to sufficiently educate the public about the complexities of crime and, more significantly, the roles of police institutions. An overabundance of decontextualized images alienates a more realistic and nuanced perspective of police work, with these productions dangerously being the closest representation of this reality that most people have access to (Mclaughlin & Murji, 1999).

By legitimizing the brutality of real-world institutions in the face of US society, police series collude with these entities by fulfilling a subservient role to them. Alternatively, by reverting to the status quo on a regular basis, these shows address a core audience demand: the need to see justice achieved promptly in an increasingly complex, bureaucratic society with weakened institutions. Hence, it is a fantasy about institutional protection of the populace based on conservatism and the hollow struggle between “good” and “evil”. This thirst is demonstrated by the popularity and duration of these shows, which continue to air on television for decades, integrating a substantial part of the population’s daily lives. Television, in general, and its serialized fiction, in particular, protect these erroneous and even broken institutions in a kind of quid pro quo in exchange for the legitimization of its products. They accomplish this by romanticizing the day-to-day lives of these professionals, mostly omitting the internal and deep-seated issues that the police, in particular, face, as well as a propensity for violence aimed toward minorities. We reiterate, then, that by shielding the audience from the institution’s failures, fictional television series contribute to the institutional crisis faced by the police, who simply cannot sustain the fantasy in their everyday lives. Therefore, it is crucial that we analyze not just how the media fictionalizes the police but also how real-world institutions regulate the discourses created by fiction about themselves.

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CRIME, HOODED CRUSADERS, AND (PRIVATE) JUSTICE: ARROW AND THE EXONERATION OF VIGILANTISM IN CONTEMPORARY POPULAR MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

As a form of extralegal crimefighting, vigilantism involves relevant questions about crime, justice, and law enforcement, and it is a staple of popular media. In the 1980s, several popular culture products took a critical approach to vigilantism as a part of the deconstruction of the superhero genre, which included a critical reflection on the psychological and political implications of the motivations behind private justice enforcers' behavior. In this context, this paper focuses on the representation of vigilantism within the popular television show *Arrow*, and analyzes how it depicts, rationalizes, and ultimately exonerates vigilantism as a response to criminal activity. The empirical analysis focuses on the various rhetorical strategies used by *Arrow* to justify vigilantism, such as the representation of legal and governmental institutions as corrupt and inefficient, the multiple rationales whereby vigilantism is practiced, and the sanctioning of private crimefighting by institutions. The analysis indicates that the show delivers an apology for the vigilante ethos: *Arrow* mirrors superheroes' dark turn in the 1980s and their reflection of societal fears about crime. However, in the show's worldview, these fears can only be appeased by private vigilantes. By portraying the state as inefficient and/or corrupt, the show boosts ideologies of individualism and anti-government neoliberalism.

KEYWORDS

crime, justice, vigilantism, *Arrow*

CRIME, CRUZADOS ENCAPUZADOS E JUSTIÇA (PRIVADA): ARROW E A EXONERAÇÃO DO VIGILANTISMO NOS MÉDIA POPULARES CONTEMPORÂNEOS

RESUMO

Como uma forma de combate extrajudicial ao crime, o vigilantismo envolve questões relevantes sobre crime, justiça e o cumprimento da lei, tornando-se um elemento básico dos média populares. Na década de 1980, diversos produtos da cultura popular adotaram uma abordagem crítica ao vigilantismo, como parte da desconstrução do gênero de super-herói, que incluiu uma reflexão crítica sobre as implicações psicológicas e políticas das motivações por detrás do

comportamento dos executores da justiça privada. Nesse contexto, este artigo concentra-se na representação do vigilantismo no conhecido programa de televisão *Arrow* (Flecha) e analisa a maneira como ele retrata, racionaliza e, em última análise, exonera o vigilantismo como uma resposta justificável à atividade criminosa. A análise empírica se concentra nas várias estratégias retóricas usadas por *Arrow* para justificar o vigilantismo, como a representação de instituições legais e governamentais como corruptas e ineficientes, as múltiplas razões pelas quais o vigilantismo é praticado e a sanção do combate ao crime privado pelas instituições. Os resultados indicam que o programa oferece uma apologia do éthos do vigilante: *Arrow* herda a virada sombria dos super-heróis na década de 1980 e o reflexo dos medos da sociedade sobre o crime, no entanto, na visão de mundo do programa, esses medos só podem ser aplacados por vigilantes privados. Ao retratar o estado como ineficiente e/ou corrupto, o espetáculo potencializa ideologias do individualismo e do neoliberalismo antigovernamental.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

crime, justiça, vigilantismo, *Arrow*

1. INTRODUCTION

Vigilantism involves relevant questions about crime, justice, and law enforcement, as it consists of premeditated activity focused on crime control performed by autonomous citizens (Dumsday, 2009). Vigilantism is defined as “the extralegal prevention, investigation, or punishment of offenses” (Bateson, 2021, p. 926), be it crimes or violations of authoritative standards, by citizens that usurp state authority, thus moving in the same direction as the law, but exceeding its scope or severity. Politically, vigilantism is an essentially conservative phenomenon that aims “to suppress, or even eradicate, any threat to the status quo” (Rosenbaum & Sederberg, 1974, p. 559); vigilantes may break “from state-led justice-seeking, but they are not aberrant social actors in the political context of their activities. Rather, they are often self-appointed guardians of a particular social order” (Favarel-Garrigues et al., 2020, p. 191). Moreover, ruling elites can encourage vigilantism as a form of law enforcement and a counterinsurgency strategy (Yonucu, 2018). From the viewpoint of procedure, vigilante activities are grounded in a rugged individualist ethos whereby the pursuit of justice is paramount:

what is required for vigilantism is simply a concern on the part of the vigilante for what he or she sees as justice or the good of society, whether those values pertain to the attempted enforcement of positive law, natural law, societal custom, or all three. (Dumsday, 2009, pp. 55–56)

The theory of vigilantism is based on real-world behavior and policies. In the context of the global neoliberal turn (which took place from the 1970s onwards), a new type of poverty was generated, in which urban neighborhoods of the racialized poor gradually became no-go areas, and social problems were reduced to security issues, justifying increased policing. More specifically, in the United States, Brazil, and other urban contexts,

poor and crime-ridden areas have been mostly left to their own devices to police themselves unless they threaten middle and upper-class citizens (Yonucu, 2018). In addition to ghettoization and exclusionary zoning, rising crime rates (another issue that characterized the 1980s) imply police brutality, vigilantism, and illiberal draconian laws (Katz, 2011). Vigilantism also relates to zoning insofar as the vigilante myth entails the use of controlled violence to create ideal suburbs in a context in which the use of security forces has always played a relevant role in protecting the American upper classes in their estates (Cawelti, 1975). Vigilantism is also linked to the individualization of security, which makes individuals and groups responsible for risk management, implying new technologies of control that operate through the instrumentalization of freedom (Rose, 2004). This is connected to broader trends of neoliberal transfer of responsibilities from the state, such as policing, to individuals and the private sector, which reflects empirically, for example, in statements by British governments in the 1980s and 1990s that the state cannot do everything in the area of security, so citizens must assume responsibility. An individualization that widens social gaps, as not everyone has the means to take responsibility through the choice of a neighborhood or the acquisition of private security (Hache, 2007). Moreover, in the 1980s, Americans participated in increasing numbers in self-defense against crime, with neighborhood-watch committees expanding significantly and 19,000,000 to 20,000,000 Americans being involved in community crime prevention. Not by coincidence, it has been indicated that there was, at times, a fine line between self-defense and vigilantism (Busch, 2001). In this line, the 1980s provided the case of Bernard Goetz, “the subway vigilante”, who became a symbol of the individual taking control and bringing order in the context of a narrative that dovetailed with Ronald Reagan’s anti-government promotion of individualism (Johnson, 2012).

Besides the real-world factors and implications of extralegal crimefighting, vigilantes are also “major figures in popular culture” (Dumsday, 2009, p. 49), a staple of genres such as the Western (Robinson & Wagner, 2022), whose rationale is persistent in popular cinema (Grant, 2020). In addition to the hordes of superhero vigilantes provided by the fictional cinematic universes of Marvel Comics and DC Comics, the contemporary media context is populated by television shows that deal with vigilantism, such as *Dexter* (Showtime, 2006–2013) and *The Boys* (Amazon, 2019–). The relevance of vigilantism in contemporary media has also been enhanced through the concept of digital vigilantism, that is, citizens’ response and retaliation against offenses on digital media platforms (Favarel-Garrigues et al., 2020).

In this context, the television series *Arrow* (The CW, 2012–2020) offers a particularly interesting representation of vigilantism that relies on its comic-book source: DC Comics’ archer superhero Oliver Queen, aka Green Arrow. Robinson and Wagner (2022) point out that The CW shows “have dared to define a new kind of superhero formula, one that opens up new themes on television regarding difficult issues with the intersection of justice, legitimacy, and accountability” (p. 172), on which *Arrow*, as the flagship of The CW’s “Arrowverse”, proposes enticing debates. This paper focuses on the scope and limits of

contemporary vigilantism representations and reflects on how *Arrow* depicts, rationalizes, and ultimately exonerates vigilante behavior as a justifiable response to criminal activity.

2. VIGILANTISM IN CONTEMPORARY POPULAR CULTURE: THE CASE OF ARROW

2.1. CRIMEFIGHTERS, SUPERHEROES, AND THE DECONSTRUCTION OF VIGILANTISM

The fictional portrayal of vigilantism is an ingredient in American popular culture — and thus global culture — that has perennially fascinated audiences. So much so that it constitutes a genre in itself whose origins date back to narratives about frontiersmen able to overcome both the natives and the wilderness thanks to their capacity for violence (Hoppenstand, 1992). Interestingly enough, among the frontiersman's descendants is the superhero (Coogan, 2006), a figure that has overflowed the comics medium where it was born to enjoy virtual ubiquity in the panorama of contemporary audiovisual media. Nye (1970) described the pioneering Superman as “the supernaturally endowed hero who was judge, jury, and executioner” (p. 238). In fact, superheroes are so impregnated with vigilantism in general (Robinson & Wagner, 2022) that vigilante justice has been considered “the genre's core principle” (Klock, 2008, p. 38), as most superheroes are private individuals who decide that they can act as judge and jury against crime.

Personal revenge is prominent among the wide variety of reasons that can motivate fictional vigilantism, as in the classic case of Batman, within the superhero genre, and most of the numerous antiheroes that emerged during the golden age of vigilante films in the 1970s and 1980s. In the same context debuted the quintessential vigilante of the Marvel superhero universe, The Punisher, that has thrived to this day in comic books, movies, and television series. Indeed, vigilantism has also been an enduring theme in American television (Fitzgerald, 2013), to the extent that it has not been limited to crime shows designed for adult audiences but has manifested itself in examples of supposedly family-friendly entertainment, such as *Knight Rider* (NBC, 1982–1986) and *The A-Team* (NBC, 1983–1987). By contrast, also in the 1980s, other popular culture products took a critical approach to the phenomenon of vigilantism as a part of the deconstruction of the superhero genre. In this regard, a highly influential work is Alan Moore and artist Dave Gibbons' *Watchmen* (DC Comics, 1986–1987), a rationalist de-mythification of superheroes that depicts them as individuals motivated by sexual violence, erectile dysfunction, megalomania, or craving for publicity. In particular, Moore establishes a parallelism between vigilantes and serial killers through the unhinged Rorschach, an extreme form of vigilante partly inspired by David Berkowitz, aka Son of Sam (Berlatsky, 2012). Thus, *Watchmen* is not only a step forward in depicting vigilante violence but also a critical reflection on the psychological and political implications of the acts carried out by private justice enforcers. In this respect, *Watchmen* stands as a turning point in the genre's evolution, as it shows that “superheroes acting as vigilantes should be terrifying, not

emboldening, and justifies efforts to put them under the state’s authority” (Spanakos, 2009, p. 35). Among subsequent additions to the vast corpus of superhero narratives, some have taken an even more starkly de-mythifying and openly hostile approach to the genre, such as Pat Mills and Kevin O’Neill’s *Marshal Law* (Epic/Dark Horse, 1987–) and Garth Ennis and Darick Robertson’s *The Boys* (DC/Dynamite, 2006–), which depict “superheroes” as not just undesirable but downright depraved.

2.2. GREEN ARROW: FROM COMICS TO TELEVISION

Green Arrow, the Emerald Archer, first appeared in *More Fun Comics* #73 (November 1941) as a Batman clone in the form of a modern Robin Hood. Probably, the two defining characteristics of Robin Hood are his bowmanship and his struggle against a corrupt ruling class. However, for some decades, only the legendary archer’s dexterity was an ingredient of Green Arrow’s adventures. In fact, during that time, he conformed to the pattern of the millionaire playboy by day, masked vigilante by night, in common with Batman, who had inherited it from a long tradition of pulp and dime novel characters. This is the so-called archetype of the “hidden master of the city”, which goes back at least as far as Eugène Sue’s *Les Mystères de Paris* (The Mysteries of Paris, 1842–1843):

Sue created, through his Paris, the archetypal version of the city in need of a hidden master, and created, in the character of [Rodolphe von] Gerolstein, the hidden urban ruler, the one true king-but in disguise-of the city. (...) His function is to provide an effective de facto ruler to a city whose de jure ruler(s) are hapless or helpless or corrupt. (Nevins, 2017, p. 104)

Thus it is an archetype directly related to vigilantism and updated in the *Arrow* television series. Back to the comic books, it was not until the early 1970s that writer Denny O’Neil (1983) reinvented the character as a “hot-tempered anarchist” in a series of stories co-starring Green Lantern, where the two heroes “dealt with slumlords, racism, environmental pollution, sexism, and the legal justice system” (Lopes, 2009, p. 68). However, not even the most left-wing of the vigilantes up to that time could escape the rightward shift that superhero comics underwent in the 1980s: Mike Grell’s influential miniseries *Green Arrow: The Longbow Hunters* (1987) depicts an Emerald Archer with little respect for criminals’ rights, setting the course for the character over the next decade. In the early 2000s, the progressive version of Green Arrow would return thanks to a new comic-book series by Kevin Smith, thus recovering a canon that remains in later stories, such as the Andy Diggle-penned 2007 miniseries *Green Arrow Year One*.

According to *Arrow* showrunner Greg Berlanti, one of the reasons he chose Green Arrow to develop the series was precisely because this character is “a crusader for social justice, which you kind of knew in the DNA of the show” (The Paley Center for Media, 2013, 00:01:48). On that basis, the *Arrow* story begins with the return to Starling City — renamed Star City in Season 4, in honor of superhero billionaire Ray Palmer, aka The

Atom — of former spoiled rich boy Oliver Queen, presumed dead since the wreck of his yacht 5 years earlier. In reality, Oliver has spent that time surviving in conditions of such extreme violence and hardship that he has transformed himself into a formidable fighter with a penchant for archery. Once settled in, the young man secretly dedicates his talent for violence to a private crusade to bring justice and protect his city from crime and corruption, under a disguise for which he becomes known as the Hood, then the Arrow, and finally the Green Arrow. Oliver's mission does not remain solitary for long as he is soon joined by allies, who also adopt a dual identity: bodyguard and ex-soldier John Diggle (Spartan), hacker Felicity Smoak (Overwatch), reformed small-time criminal Roy Harper (Arsenal), former assassin Sara Lance (Canary), Oliver's sister Thea (Speedy), and former girlfriend, Laurel Lance (Black Canary). Subsequent additions to the so-called Team Arrow include tech expert Curtis Holt (Mr. Terrific), the only survivor of a terrorist attack Rory Regan (Ragman), street vigilante Rene Ramirez (Wild Dog), and ex-cops Dinah Drake (Black Canary II) and Quentin Lance.

Season 1 of the show is politically left-wing, with the hooded hero hunting and punishing the villainous plutocrats that aim to destroy a crime-ridden neighborhood. Season 2 focuses more on personal relationships, the addition of characters drawn from the DC Universe, and Oliver's double life as CEO of Queen Consolidated and as the vigilante now known as the Arrow; his main antagonists are super-mercenary Slade Wilson and murderous politician Sebastian Blood. Season 3 begins with the Starling City Police Department (SCPD) recognizing Arrow's efforts to lower urban crime rates. However, throughout the episodes, the city becomes a veritable hotbed of violent individuals and groups, including new vigilantes, villains, and a sect of assassins. In Season 4, Oliver adopts the moniker "Green Arrow" in an attempt to reinvent himself as a unifying symbol of hope for the despondent population of a city mired in general misrule. Season 5 focuses on Oliver's political activity as mayor while moonlighting as the Green Arrow and fighting new criminal menaces such as Tobias Church and Prometheus. In Season 6, Green Arrow fights genius hacktivist turned criminal mastermind Cayden James and drug kingpin Ricardo "The Dragon" Diaz; also, Diggle takes on the mantle of Green Arrow for a few episodes, and several family-related storylines are addressed; by the end of the season, the FBI arrests Oliver. Season 7 deals with Oliver's stay in jail, his later joining of SCPD, and the birth of Oliver and Felicity's daughter, Mia, as well as the appearance of a new Green Arrow, Emiko Queen, Oliver's illegitimate half-sister; plus a storyline set in the future involving Oliver and Felicity's children becoming part of a new generation of heroes. Finally, Season 8 focuses on Oliver's new cosmic mission and leans much more toward the supernatural and science fiction.

2.3. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The academic literature on *Arrow* points out that the early seasons of the show capture the spirit of Green Arrow's ideological canon, thus offering an uncommon example

of a superhero narrative framed by left-wing sensibilities, social issues, and a critical view of some economic realities (Pineda & Jiménez-Varea, 2017). In the same vein, it has been noted that The CW decided to “politically charge” the narratives of the Arrowverse, with *Arrow* itself being the most explicit in its depiction of “a fragmented society, leading to unequal urban development, insecurity and ghettoization” (Joseph, 2018, p. 42). As for the relationship between vigilantism and the law, it has been indicated that the behavior of Arrow’s characters violates some basic tenets of liberal political theory, such as the government’s monopoly on violence and constitutional rights and liberties (Robinson & Wagner, 2022). Thus, there is an interesting paradox in that *Arrow* — as his model, Batman — manages to seduce the leading representatives of law enforcement within his fictional city toward his own brand of extralegal justice (Marazi, 2015).

There is, however, a research gap regarding *Arrow*’s addressing of the motivations behind crimefighting and justice-seeking. In a context where some popular comics have brought to light the violent nature of vigilantes, and because vigilantism implies that “worthy ends can justify transgressive means” (Bateson, 2021, p. 932), superhero narratives should display motivations and rationales worthy enough to justify vigilantes’ extralegal and criminal behavior. Hence our first research question (RQ):

RQ1. What rationales are offered by Arrow in order to justify extralegal crimefighting?

Vigilantism, as organized violence by private citizens, takes place in open opposition to the state (Dumsday, 2009). Therefore, in popular fiction, vigilantism is performed against the backdrop of the law and, more specifically, against the background of the inefficiency of public institutions and government (Grant, 2020), which works as an additional justification for extralegal violence. Moreover, it must be taken into account that the state may support or tolerate vigilante practices (Favarel-Garrigues et al., 2020). All this suggests a second RQ:

RQ2. How does Arrow depict the role of the state pertaining to vigilantism and crimefighting?

3. EMPIRICAL STUDY

3.1. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This paper takes a qualitative approach to the study of the fictional representation of vigilantism in the series *Arrow* in order to answer the previous research questions. The observation process is based on the assumption that commercial audiovisual narratives are typically structured on question-answer networks that function as engines of both thematic and plot developments, operating from a micro level to a macro level that can span from narrative beats to entire seasons or even the series’ whole run. This is a widely supported notion, both from professional practice (Landau, 2022) and from narrative theory, where it is worth noting the erotetic model proposed by the philosopher of art Noël Carroll

(2010, 2019). The erotetic model (from the Greek “pertaining to questioning”) attempts to explain several aspects related to typical mass-market audiovisual narratives: how they capture the audience’s attention; how viewers are able to follow their development; how such narratives can come to be perceived as a whole; and how they generate a sense of closure. Such narratives are driven by question-and-answer structures that arouse the viewer’s curiosity and make him or her interested in following the plot to find the corresponding answer at some point in the story. These question-answer pairs exist in different orders of magnitude — both regarding the temporal distance between the first and the second and their relevance — within the narrative. To understand this in the case of the series at hand, *Arrow*, we can speak of a question that dominates the entire series from the beginning of the first season to the end of the last: “who is Oliver Queen?” (Howe, 2017, p. 105), thus explicitly formulated by the executive producers themselves. The series finale offers the ultimate answer by balancing the protagonist character’s transformations from lethal vigilante to savior hero. In a lower order, each season proposes a question that runs through all the episodes that compose it until it is answered in some way at the end of that season, always reflected in the protagonist’s evolution in his quest for justice. There are also question-answer structures at the episodic level that are posed and answered within the same episode, again mainly in relation to justice and crime fighting, which are the basic concerns of Team Arrow. Continuing this zoom-in, erotetic structures are also found at increasingly micro-plot levels, from sequences to scenes and even what the screenwriters call narrative beats.

For our article, we have assumed as a theoretical presupposition the validity of Carroll’s (2010, 2019) erotetic model in that *Arrow* is a typical mass-market audiovisual narrative driven by question-answer structures at different levels. Likewise, we have worked from the intuition, confirmed by subsequent systematic observation, that to a large extent, such questions and answers have to do, both thematically and plot-wise, with crime, the inability of public authorities to fight it, and the justification of vigilantism. In that sense, we have considered that *Arrow* develops a complex discourse on these issues taking as its axis the evolution of the main character, and we have approached it through a qualitative text analysis aimed at locating how this question-driven narrative presents statements on our topic. For its observation, we have operationalized this topic, concretizing and breaking it down into four main situations:

- crime as the milieu for vigilantism;
- justification(s) for vigilantism;
- state’s inability to fight crime;
- institutional sanctioning of vigilantism.

This analytical construct has been applied to a corpus consisting of the universe of units that make up the series *Arrow*, that is, the eight seasons totaling 170 episodes that The CW originally aired between 2012 and 2020, which have been accessed for this study through the on-demand platform Netflix. The authors viewed and analyzed the

series between December 2021 and March 2022. Methodologically, although the authors were acquainted with the series since 2013, the fact that the whole show was viewed and analyzed in a limited period makes our study transversal. Moreover, the study typology can be regarded as a case study based on purposive sampling, a non-probability form of sampling where units of analysis are chosen with a purpose in mind and on the grounds of previous knowledge. Purposive (or judgmental) sampling relates to the case-study method because it aims to select information-rich cases to perform an in-depth study (Patton, 1990). In our case, the authors' previous knowledge of vigilantism, popular culture, and *Arrow* implied that the latter was an optimal choice to fulfill the research aims and offer an information-rich case regarding vigilantes and their actions. As to observation and analysis implementation, notes were taken having in mind the abovementioned four narrative situations that relate to the erotetic model's specifics, as well as any statements by the characters on vigilantes and/or vigilantism; characters' actions regarding crime; and typologies of crimes and criminals, as depicted in the series. The observation results were collected in tables using qualitative summaries and critical comments. For reporting in this article, the most illustrative ones have been selected in the ad hoc approach typical of discourse analysis. The mass of empirical information obtained was later filtered and thematically ordered, as the following paragraphs indicate.

3.2. ANALYSIS

3.2.1. CRIME AS THE MILIEU FOR VIGILANTISM

The background for private crimefighting in urban vigilante narratives typically consists of a city where delinquency and violence are out of control. In this line, *Arrow* is fueled by a continuous succession of criminal threats that torment Star City and the vigilantes themselves. From the beginning, the series portrays a decaying city plagued with illegal activities, crimes, and felonies that are ubiquitous throughout the show. Besides all the white-collar crime and fraud revealed in Season 1, throughout the series, we find murder, kidnapping, aggression, robbery, taking of hostages, battery, drug dealing, torture, human trafficking, weaponized diseases, mass shootings, home invasions, jailbreak, illegal detentions, attacks with ballistic missiles, extortion, cyberattacks, homicide, weapons trafficking, prisoner abuse, genocide, bioterrorist attacks, terrorism... As Diggle/Spartan helpfully summarizes: "this is Starling City. You never have to look far to find someone engaged in illegal activity" (Season 2, Episode 2).

Arrow also presents a wide diversity of criminal characters: mobsters, drug dealers, thieves, assassins, underground casino runners, Chinese triads, serial killers, gang-bangers, bombers, criminals for hire, black marketeers, racketeers, arms dealers, shooters, hacker organizations, superhuman beings, mercenaries, former black operatives, superpowered vigilantes, crime syndicates and organizations, arsonists, evil scientists,

sponsors of terrorism, criminal CEOs, terrorist organizations, secret societies, money launderers... To this must be added main antagonists, such as billionaire sociopath Malcolm Merlyn (Season 1), super-villains Slade Wilson (Season 2) and Damien Dahrk (Season 4), the League of Assassins (Season 3), serial killer Prometheus (Season 5), and crimelords Tobias Church (Season 5) and the Dragon (Season 6).

Thus, the story set in *Arrow* is a crime-ridden scenario where a wide variety of criminal actors operate, providing the context for the crimefighter's crusade. Since the first season, the Hood repeatedly tells wrongdoers: "you have failed this city", a motto consistent with the narrative scheme of vigilantism, whereby an individual or group privately and extralegally enforce justice, preventing crime or punishing evildoers. In fact, *Arrow* addresses vigilante justice from the very first scene: "I am returning. Not the boy who was shipwrecked, but the man who will bring justice to those who have poisoned my city" (Oliver's voiceover, Season 1, Episode 1). To fulfill that mission, Oliver and his allies hide behind dual identities — a staple of the superhero genre — and establish Team Arrow as a permanent taskforce against all kinds of threats. Such an effort, however, also needs strong motivations and reasons, leading us to rationalize vigilante crimefighting.

3.2.2. JUSTIFICATION(S) FOR VIGILANTISM

The rationales behind vigilantism involve the cultural, economic, and institutional factors that shape this phenomenon (Bateson, 2021). Originally, the *raison d'être* of Oliver's vigilante behavior was grounded in a mixture of political ideology and personal reasons. Although the concept of vigilantism tends to be historically right-leaning, Season 1 depicts a left-wing sensibility whereby the hooded vigilante fights the "CEOs and crooked entrepreneurs" (Diggle, Season 1, Episode 6) that hide behind street crime. Such an anti-wealthy crusade, as well as the saving-the-city rationale, were inspired by personal reasons: according to Oliver, he became a vigilante because, before sacrificing his life for him, his father asked him to right his wrongs (Season 7, Episode 4). However, Oliver has expressed additional rationales to justify extralegal activities throughout the series, especially the argument that only the vigilantes can save the city (e.g., Season 5, Episode 1). His allies also adopt this justification, for instance, Diggle: "there are a lot of people in this city who need saving" (Season 5, Episode 18); likewise, Oliver's son William tells his sister that the vigilantes are not "the criminals you think they are, Mia. I remember them being heroes back then. They only want to save the city!". On the other hand, in Season 2, Episode 9, Oliver reveals he keeps acting as a vigilante to honor his mentors and later hallucinates that Slade Wilson tells him that his crusade is to atone for his sins. Additional reasons pertain to Oliver's beloved ones: "we fight to protect the people that we love" (Season 6, Episode 8). Thus, the number of different reasons one single character can adduce to explain vigilante behavior is quite ample.

Other rationalizations of vigilantism are political. For instance, the mayor of Starling City reflects: "wasn't our country founded on a brand of vigilantism (...)? The

revolutionaries at the Boston Tea Party were certainly choosing justice over law” (Season 2, Episode 1). Also, Laurel wields her social ideals to justify her own vigilante behavior because she considers it a way of helping people (Season 3, Episode 14). Vigilantism is also justified a posteriori based on its practical effects: “the people you care about are not suffering because of you. Their life, my life is better because you decided to become the Green Arrow”, says Felicity (Season 5, Episode 21). Other arguments are more abstract, including the notion of doing what is right (Season 2, Episode 2) or even essentialist: “I have to do this no matter what. I have to be true to who I am”, says Curtis Holt (Season 5, Episode 9). Rationales also include self-psychology: “being the Green Arrow is what makes you feel complete (...), when you put that hood on, it enables you to become the best version of yourself”, says Thea to explain why Oliver continues to be the Emerald Archer (Season 6, Episode 16). Keeping family safe is also a reason behind crimefighting (Season 2, Episode 17), as voiced by Wild Dog when he says that he became a vigilante so that her daughter would not be attacked or offered drugs in the streets (Season 7, Episode 4). Other reasons behind vigilante action are less altruistic and veer toward selfishness, such as the personal satisfaction, empowerment, and enjoyment some characters express: “when you’re out there doing it, it’s different. It feels... amazing, empowering... Almost a little inspiring”, says Holt (Season 5, Episode 9).

Notwithstanding the ample variety of justifications, the crucial point is that these rationales cover the fact that vigilantes feel entitled to fight crime above the law, as exemplified by the reasons why Drake and others form a new vigilante group (known as New Team Arrow, and also as the Outsiders): “this city needs us. And we know that, and we’re not shirking that responsibility” (Season 6, Episode 10), thus articulating that vigilantes are self-appointed “heroes” who decide that people need them.

3.2.3. STATE’S INABILITY TO FIGHT CRIME

The role and representation of the state and the legal order are crucial in vigilante narratives because vigilantism can only happen against the background of the law: “no state-established legal order, no vigilantism” (Bateson, 2021, p. 927). In the realm of vigilante fiction, governmental and police forces are commonly portrayed as inefficient and/or corrupt to justify extralegal justice.

Arrow is no exception to this rule, quite the contrary, as negative representations of law and government are ubiquitous. Overall, its first season embodies a populist desire to make a corrupt elite pay for their misdeeds in the context of an ineffective political and legal system. As a public competitor of vigilantes at crimefighting, the depiction of police is particularly pejorative. In this regard, a key theme of the show is that the SCPD’s bureaucracy and procedures hinder their efficiency in law enforcement. In Season 2, Episode 2, an angry Harper complains: “the cops rarely venture that deep into the Glades, so I guess that leaves only me!”; and Felicity says ironically to Oliver that she loves to “live in a city where the police are more interested in catching you

than the drug-stealing mobsters. Our tax dollars at work”. According to Felicity, the city has “plenty of candidates willing to compensate for our ineffectual-slash-corrupt police department” (Season 5, Episode 1). The SCPD protocols are flawed, and they are doing things “the wrong way”, according to Oliver; their information-gathering process seems outdated too (Season 7, Episode 15).

Moreover, there is plenty of corruption in the SCPD: Season 5 explicitly states that half the SCPD are corrupt (Season 5, Episode 15), while crimelord Tobias Church describes Star City as “a city where cops are afraid, or on our payroll” (Season 5, Episode 5). This state of things is also projected to the future; in a flash forward, Wild Dog’s vigilante daughter says: “the SCPD are a joke. They’d love to watch Star City go up in flames” (Season 7, Episode 8). Nevertheless, it must be noted that the police’s shortcomings relate to the crumbling and chronic underfunding of the state, which is an underlying theme in *Arrow*. In Season 4, Episode 4, Lance says that his budget has been cut, and he justifies working with supervillain Damien Dahrk: “he said he had resources, he had people, money (...) and we needed the help”. Later, Oliver says that increasing the funds of the police is one of his priorities as he is running for mayor (Season 4, Episode 7).

Not only the police but also politicians, prison guards, government officials and agencies, military officers, and mayors are frequently depicted as corrupt, evil, and/or inefficient. In Season 2, one of the main villains, Sebastian Blood, is a local alderman who becomes the city’s mayor (Season 2, Episode 21). Amanda Waller, leader of the research military group ARGUS, is a cold-blooded, ruthless killer (Season 2, Episode 16). In Season 4, Ruvé Adams — super-criminal Damien Dahrk’s wife — becomes the new mayor; in Season 5, district attorney Adrian Chase is revealed as serial killer Prometheus (Season 5, Episode 15). During Oliver’s stay in prison, some guards participate in bets regarding prisoners’ fights; other guards are at the service of Brick, an inmate and old foe of Oliver’s (Season 7, Episode 3). The worst thing is that corruption in the public sector does not seem to have any remedy, as Oliver’s son reveals that the future Star City “is a terrible place. It’s run by gangs, the cops are corrupt, politicians too” (Season 8, Episode 4). To this evidence, we could add a corrupt zoning commissioner (Season 1, Episode 19), an assistant district attorney who causes a hostage situation (Season 2, Episode 17), a United States military officer intent on releasing a deadly virus (Season 3), and a rogue United States Army unit (Season 5, Episode 2). Even the courts join the list of inefficient authorities. Regarding the victims of businessman James Holder, Oliver states: “the courts say you don’t owe your victims anything. I disagree” (Season 1, Episode 3). The problem of the courts goes beyond bleeding-heart liberalism: “I got a lot of friends at the courthouse”, says crimelord Ricardo Diaz (Season 6, Episode 20). Pertaining to the legal justice system, *Arrow* also voices a classical argument of vigilante narratives: the fact that criminals slip through the cracks of the system. Hence, we are told that a doctor performed illegal experiments and torture, but all the charges “were dropped on technicalities” (Season 7, Episode 9); in the case of Diaz, condemned to life

imprisonment twice, the state Supreme Court “overturned his convictions due to technicalities” (Season 6, Episode 6).

Precisely, the highlight of state corruption is the Diaz storyline in Season 6. According to Diggle, Diaz has “members of Star City’s entire governmental infrastructure either bought or compromised” (Season 6, Episode 20). The new police captain is on his payroll, along with Councilman Kullens and other city officials (Season 6, Episode 13; Season 6, Episode 18). Diaz himself describes Star City as a utopia for criminal organization Quadrant: “Star City is open for business. We have the police, the ports, the whole city... We got it wired. Now, you wanna run merchandise, you wanna move product, launder money, anything... Star City is the place” (Season 6, Episode 19). This storyline even contains a sequence that sums up perfectly the corruption of public law enforcement: a lot of police officers, commanded by Diaz, chasing a hooded vigilante (Season 6, Episode 18).

In light of governmental corruption and inefficiency, it should come as no surprise that vigilante forces fight crime in a much more efficient manner. For example, when vigilantism stops in the city after Oliver’s imprisonment, a young citizen encourages Wild Dog to resume his crimefighting activity because “there’s no more heroes to keep us safe (...) my family just got robbed last week. And the cops don’t care about us in the Glades. So it’s on us to protect ourselves” (Season 7, Episode 1). The vigilantes’ superior efficiency is grounded in their skills: simply put, they are much better than the police at preventing and punishing crime. For instance, in a public rally where a bomb has been planted, the vigilantes are the ones who find the detonator and catch the bomber, not the cops *at* the rally (Season 2, Episode 10). Actually, this asymmetry regarding crimefighting dexterity is another argument in support of vigilantism, as when Oliver justifies action on the basis of police inefficiency (Season 4, Episode 3).

3.2.4. THE INSTITUTIONAL SANCTIONING OF VIGILANTISM

Arrow goes beyond the typical portrayal of the state as inefficient and/or corrupt in the vigilante genre. The show commits to the basic ideological tenets of superhero action so strongly that it extends the rationalization and support for extralegal justice beyond the vigilantes’ motivations. In this regard, a key sanctioning device is a sympathy with which specific public officials and institutions address vigilantism, if not directly engage in it. The state may sometimes legalize

behaviors that were previously illegal. This is a particularly common reaction when a vigilante is viewed as heroic and enjoys a good deal of popular support, even though his or her actions went beyond what the law authorized at the time. (Bateson, 2021, p. 938)

That is precisely the reaction that presides over *Arrow*’s narrative. Thus, Lance’s daughter Laurel, an assistant district attorney, follows a narrative path from being taught a law-abiding philosophy to trusting the vigilante to become fully pro-vigilantism: “this

city needs the Arrow”, she says (Season 2, Episode 21). In Season 2, Episode 20, a doctor thanks and assists the Arrow for helping the hospital in the past. A journalist states on television that the drop in criminality indicates that the hooded vigilante “had been a positive force in this city” and describes the Hood’s actions not as vigilantism but as “the actions of a hero” (Season 1, Episode 10). Later, journalist Susan Williams tells Oliver that she will keep his secret because what he does is good for the city (Season 5, Episode 15). As to public opinion, the show veers toward public support for vigilantism: in a community meeting with the SCPD, people seem to be overwhelmingly in favor of vigilantism — as a man says, “things were better off with the vigilantes” (Season 7, Episode 4).

Moreover, the sanctioning of vigilantism also comes from the family side. The vigilantes’ relatives are also very keen and understanding about their beloveds’ nocturnal habits: for instance, Moira Queen gives Oliver a hint that she knows he is the Arrow and adds that she “could not be more proud” (Season 2, Episode 20). After watching Oliver in action, his son admiringly accepts his vigilante job: “the city needs you, and... and I get that now” (Season 6, Episode 11). Wild Dog’s daughter finds out her father is a vigilante and, like William, does not see a problem in that: “dad, this is my home. And I want you to fight for it” (Season 6, Episode 20).

However, the most powerful sanctioning of vigilantism in *Arrow* comes from the institutions that should, theoretically, chase and arrest vigilantes: the government and the police. It has been pointed out that state agents, such as police officers, mayors, or soldiers, can assist, tolerate, and authorize the activities of vigilantes or even carry out vigilantism themselves (Bateson, 2021); in the show, Policeman Quentin Lance is key regarding such assistance. In Season 1, Episode 20, Lance states that the vigilante “doesn’t have to answer to anyone but himself... that’s a very dangerous power to give to any one man”; however, by the end of Season 1, the law-abiding policeman acknowledges that the archer has been helpful on some cases, and starts to value the protection of people that the Hood aims for. As Lance asks, “what are laws, rules if they didn’t protect people? (...) I am willing to sacrifice catching [the Hood] if it means saving people’s lives”; as a result of this pro-vigilante attitude, he is suspended (Season 1, Episode 23). In Season 2, Episode 19, he has achieved an empathic understanding of the Arrow. As he tells his daughter, Laurel: “you imagine what it’s like to be him? What he has to live with day in day out?”. By Season 4, the former scourge of vigilantism can be seen, very naturally, in the vigilantes’ headquarters, where he is being protected (Season 4, Episode 14). Later, Lance ends up working in Team Arrow’s headquarters, coordinating with police officers to help Oliver (Season 5, Episode 1).

Lance is not the only policeman supporting vigilantism. For example, Felicity tells her cop boyfriend that she works for Green Arrow, and he answers that, although she is a criminal, she is doing it for a good cause: “you’re helping save the city” (Season 5, Episode 6). The city’s anti-crime unit does not arrest Green Arrow and his team when it can; on the contrary, the unit’s captain says to the hooded archer, “happy to help” after the vigilantes have fought a group of criminals (Season 5, Episode 14). What is more, the show also presents police officers who moonlight as vigilantes, the most relevant being

Dinah Drake, who works for the SCPD but also acts as a masked crimefighter (Season 5, Episode 14), thus setting an example that is in line with the fact that “police officers moonlighting as superheroes are a staple of comic books” (Dumsday, 2009, p. 52).

The case of Drake as a vigilante cop leads us to another indicator of the institutional sanctioning of vigilantism: the progressive integration of private crimefighters in the political and legal structure of the city. After being elected mayor, Oliver keeps moonlighting as Green Arrow and reveals that being in the city hall provides him with information to act as a vigilante: “it’s a means to an end” (Season 5, Episode 1). Under Oliver’s mayoralty, the city dedicates a statue to the memory of Laurel Lance’s masked identity, the Black Canary (Season 5, Episode 1), which can be interpreted as the official sanctioning of vigilante activity. Additionally, Team Arrow’s member Ramirez is appointed as deputy mayor’s assistant, hence arriving at the paradox of Star City’s hall being populated with people that engage in, or collaborate with, extralegal activities (Season 5, Episode 13); Quentin Lance and Thea Queen also work for Mayor Oliver Queen, in a clear example of nepotism. Later, there is a turning point when Oliver starts working for the police. Mayor Pollard wants him booked in violation of anti-vigilante law, but he is not above the law anymore; as Drake explains, Oliver “is officially working for the SCPD. He’s no longer a vigilante” (Season 7, Episode 8). By the end of Season 7, Episode 15, Pollard has been forced to create a vigilante task force, hence legalizing vigilantism: Team Arrow is still sanctioned by SCPD, but at the same time, they are “operating as our own unit, out of the bunker, in our suits”. What is more, Pollard is going to repeal the anti-vigilante law. Now, Green Arrow and his allies live in the best of all possible worlds: they can keep operating as private crimefighters, and they are simultaneously sanctioned by the local government. Notwithstanding this, the show later acknowledges that the SCPD-vigilantes partnership would be untenable, so the partnership ends (Season 7, Episode 21) in an uncommon glint of realism.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Arrow is not just a fictional depiction of vigilante action; the show delivers a huge apology for the vigilante ethos when it comes to attitudes towards crime and justice. This apology is framed in the background of a crime-ridden city where delinquency and violence are out of control and where the Glades neighborhood reflects ghettoization and exclusionary zoning policies. In this regard, *Arrow* may be interpreted as taking in superheroes’ dark turn in the 1980s and their reflection of “societal fears about out-of-control crime” (Muir, 2008, p. 7). In the *Arrow* worldview, however, these fears can only be appeased by vigilantes. The show depicts vigilantism as something to be admired, given the number of characters who join Oliver Queen’s crusade or are inspired by him. The show also highlights the beneficial effects of vigilantism; for example, crime statistics skyrocket in Star City when the vigilantes hang up their masks (Season 7, Episode 12). In this sense, *Arrow* is in line with the tradition of vigilante stories that laud individuals who

take the law into their hands (Grant, 2020) and offers elucidative insights into the approval of extralegal crimefighting within superhero culture. That is a remarkable attitude because even authors such as Dumsday (2009), who thinks that there are conditions under which vigilantism may be permissible, acknowledge that law enforcement is the role of government. Hence vigilantes should take it up only as a temporary measure and handle it as a last resort. The enthusiasm, even extremism, with which *Arrow's* showrunners approach vigilantism goes much further than this and implies that private crimefighting must be continuous and enduring.

The depiction of extralegal activities is reinforced by the portrayal of the state as inefficient and/or corrupt. Although the show sometimes represents the police and the military favorably (e.g., Season 2, Episode 23; Season 7, Episode 19), themes of government inefficiency and corruption structure the narrative. In this regard, a central message of *Arrow* is that state institutions cannot be entirely trusted, hence proposing private justice as a solution for public institutions' incompetence and crookedness. Additionally, such a message — which enjoys a very wide audience, as the show has been followed by over 2.000.000 viewers (Hennon, 2014) — has broader ideological and political connotations and is in line with the fact that vigilantism has been regarded as a critique of the law and the State (Bateson, 2021). *Arrow's* overall political message relates to “the causal processes linking weak formal institutions and vigilantism” (Bateson, 2021, p. 937) and may be connected to neoliberalism's anti-government stance and the boosting of individual empowerment, and public policies characterized by deregulation, liberalization, and privatization (Fawcett, 2015; Steger & Roy, 2010). And it is precisely the neoliberal dismantling of the state which frames one of the rhetorical devices whereby *Arrow* exonerates vigilantism: if government forces are unable to stop crime, then private citizens should do it, hence relating to policies such as the individualization of security. In the 1980s, many superheroes were reimagined as harsh super-conservative vigilantes, including Grell's Green Arrow (Johnson, 2012); the *Arrow* series somehow reflects this ideological turn.

In this regard, the show's discourse on crime may be interpreted as an ideological metaphor for the superiority of private protection over public law enforcement — an interpretation that may be applied to much of the superhero genre (Bainbridge, 2007). Nevertheless, the trend toward militarization and a strong police force are not absent from *Arrow*: as mentioned above, the chronic underfunding of the state underlies the series, and Oliver singled out increased police funding as a political priority. It should also be noted that there is a strong military/police streak in Team Arrow: Diggle and Ramirez are former soldiers, Queen received paramilitary training, and Drake is a police-woman. In the context of the genre, it must be noted that the popular fictional vigilante The Punisher is an ex-soldier that carries out a one-man war on crime. As to police reinforcing, it should be remembered that the vigilantes consider themselves parapolice operatives — as mayor, Queen tells a police officer that “the Green Arrow, and his team, are auxiliary law enforcement” (Season 5, Episode 14) — and Team Arrow is finally

sanctioned by the SCPD, and enabled to operate as their own unit. One might conclude, therefore, that *Arrow* offers relevant hints about the paramilitary and/or parapolice nature of vigilantism — in this context, the real-world concept of “privatized militarism”, which, not coincidentally, is reflected in diverse forms of vigilantism (Cock, 2005, p. 803), may shed light on certain aspects of *Arrow*.

Arrow illustrates the notion that discrediting the justice system and its defenders leads to a culture of vigilantism and privatized power (Caldeira & Holston, 1999). This culture implies, among other consequences, an escalation of violence as a result of vigilante action — a theme that *Arrow* both addresses and evades. After a massacre at city hall, Queen says that his mission “has always been to save this city, and my first instinct has almost always been to use violence”; “it’s a violent world, and sometimes it only responds to violence, but we cannot dismiss the idea that we are just feeding into a vicious cycle” (Season 5, Episode 13). In Season 5, Episode 16, for instance, the Queen’s killing of Ra’s Al Ghul makes master warrior Talia Al Ghul (Ra’s Al Ghul’s daughter) turn against the Green Arrow and ally with serial killer Prometheus. Hence, vigilante violence causes more violence and more killing. However, this vicious cycle is diluted in the overall narrative of the series, as the vigilantes cannot help but use force to bring justice. Actually, Brian Garfield already addressed the notion that vigilantism fuels violence in his seminal vigilante novel *Death Wish*, where he said that vigilantism “is an attractive fantasy, but it only makes things worse in reality” (Garfield, as cited in Grant, 2020, p. 64). To sum up, this notion has relevant, potential socio-political implications because, by supporting vigilantism, citizens ultimately contribute to the propagation of violence (Caldeira & Holston, 1999).

As a post-*Watchmen* cultural artifact, *Arrow* is aware of the shortcomings and problems inherent to vigilantism, such as the escalation of violence, the toll it takes on its practitioners, or the fact that private crimefighters are criminals. However, these negative aspects are very secondary compared to the enthusiasm with which *Arrow* sanctions, justifies, and exonerates vigilantism as a necessary form of stopping crime. Thus, the arguments offered by such an influential magnum opus as *Watchmen* against vigilante violence and psychology are completely overlooked in superhero shows such as *Arrow*, which, although existing in a genre that could not be the same after Alan Moore’s work, have not grasped all its implications. This relates to how *Arrow* ties into the vigilante/superhero genre and academic issues around vigilantism. In this regard, The CW show reflects the origins of superheroes as masked avengers that worked outside the law, did not trust state agents, and resorted to extralegal violence — a narrative which can also be found in the broader context of popular literature, pulps, and movies (Culberson, 1990). The pattern of a hero placed in a situation where some form of violence or criminality is a moral necessity is a basic archetype of American literature (Cawelti, 1975). In this context, Oliver’s deeds partially relate to the concept of vengeance-based entertainment, exemplified by fictional vigilantes like The Punisher (Worcester, 2012).

Moreover, and thanks to its narrative development, *Arrow* reflects the fact that superheroes have sometimes been morphed into state agents (Johnson, 2012). As to academic issues around vigilantism, *Arrow* connects with the concept of the angry hero or antihero — which can be traced back to Achilles (Livesay, 2007) — and with a historical trend — which dates back to the Old West and the myth of American pioneer culture — of community leaders taking matters into their own hands when the government was not sufficiently established (Culberson, 1990). Conceptually, the show also reflects the idea that vigilantism incorporates extralegalism and the enforcement of dominant social values (Culberson, 1990) and provides an illustrative example of the “myth of the vigilante”, which dwells on societal weaknesses and corruption of society, with the vigilante him/herself becoming the law (Cawelti, 1975).

Superhero vigilantism conflicts with the fundamental tenets of liberalism: the monopoly on violence granted to the government is violated by vigilantes, who, irrespective of the degree of the virtuousness of their motives, are guided just by their own individual judgment (Robinson & Wagner, 2022). *Arrow* emphasizes the virtuousness of the motives that explain the behavior of Green Arrow and his teammates, but that rhetoric does not make their behavior less illegitimate. Most of these rationales — helping society, protecting people, saving the city, righting wrongs, developing your true self, and so on — are socially and ethically acceptable and have nothing to do with the dubious motivations behind vigilantism that were brought to light by *Watchmen* and other rationalist critiques of the superhero genre. Besides avoiding the most unpleasant side of the genre, *Arrow* displays an array of motivations that are sometimes contradictory. For instance, Season 7, Episode 16 presents Felicity telling her daughter in the future: “your father and I promised each other that we would keep fighting for the city to make the city better for you, and for our family”; however, later Felicity contradicts herself: “being a hero, Mia, means choosing other people’s safety above your own, including your family”. These contradictions result from the show’s compulsion to justify vigilantism without addressing the fact that some reasons — and the vigilantes’ criminal actions — end up running counter to others. Vigilantism “does not fit well within traditional models of justice in society. Superheroes carry that thematic contradiction with them wherever they go” (Robinson & Wagner, 2022, p. 172); the rationales offered to explain the privatization of justice are just a part of the uneasiness that surrounds the relationship between vigilantism and society. In this context, the relationship between vigilantes, the law, and society may be better discussed by introducing the concept of “zemiology”, which is the study of social harms (Tombs, 2018). Zemiology enables scholars to move beyond the criminological canon, and articulate a diversity of harms, hence laying outside conventional discourses on crime and the confines of criminal law. Consequently, zemiology focuses on social injuries caused by states, organizations, and individuals (Boukli & Kotzé, 2018). In the context of a show such as *Arrow*, zemiology is useful to analyze the

appeal of vigilantism because vigilantes may be perceived as a force that reduces social harms (which are plenty throughout the series), even though their practice is illegal. Thus, the vigilantes' response to crime would relate not to the legal-illegal poles but to the pragmatism with which social harms are addressed and the way justice is served — interestingly, zemiology attempts to reiterate priorities for *social* justice (Boukli & Kotzé, 2018). Another link between the social harms approach and vigilantism may be found in the zemiological idea that the criminal justice system is ineffective (Hillyard & Tombs, 2004), which is one of the rationales behind *Arrow*.

The contradictions of the phenomenon we are studying are also apparent in the way social institutions and the government support and sanction private crimefighting. The series exhibits a pattern whereby institutions may initially be misled about the vigilantes' actions, but in the end, the crimefighters are acknowledged as heroes. Even the police tolerate — if not cheer — vigilantism in *Arrow*. This relates to the notion that there is a “gray zone of interaction between vigilantes and the state” (Bateson, 2021, p. 928), and *Arrow* dwells in such a zone. Thus, it should not come as a surprise that vigilantism is sanctioned and/or practiced by a lot of officials and representatives of the state. This is nothing new in vigilante fiction, where examples abound, such as Commissioner Gordon routinely turning on the Bat-signal to summon Batman's help; or the New York City Police Department letting vigilante gunslinger Paul Kersey go free to continue acting in another city at the end of both versions of *Death Wish* (Michael Winner, 1974; Eli Roth, 2018); but *Arrow* takes it to the extreme.

The CW's show thus reflects a situation where government supports vigilantism, and the vigilantes are not “willingly accountable to the state”. Vigilante actions are autonomous, not in the sense of lacking permission from the state, but regarding a lack of accountability: vigilantes “do not care what the state thinks of those actions” (Dumsday, 2009, pp. 53–54). Consequently, Team Arrow does not face its responsibility for violating the law on a regular basis, and its actions are unaccountable on a final analysis. However, there is a serious ethical problem when self-proclaimed “heroes” behave as if they are above the law and, what is more, aim to get away with it. This problem is not seriously addressed by *Arrow*, whose showrunners are conveying the idea that whatever vigilantes do — be it good or bad, legal or illegal — is justified because they are “saving the city”. In this regard, *Arrow* shows that the depiction of crime, violence, and justice in superhero fiction can be interpreted as a reflection of deep political and social questions related to the relationship between the individual and the democratic state, between the private and the public, thereby transcending the realm of mere escapism. According to showrunner Andrew Kreisberg: “as our TV partner, Greg Berlanti, puts it, at his core, Oliver is an optimist. He believes in people” (Hennon, 2014). However, he does not seem to believe that people, or their government representatives, can democratically manage their own business when it comes to societal menaces: following the superhero/vigilante ideology,

the show states that people must be cared for by private crimefighting supermen that take responsibility and justice in their own hands — not by coincidence, Green Arrow has been included among the characters where “the superiority of the costumed hero as an arbiter of right and wrong, possessed of superior judgment and extralegal powers to punish evildoers and protect the hapless common man, was generally taken for granted” (Lukin, 1997, p. 133).

Power and arbitrariness are directly related to Oliver Queen’s status as a prominent economic and political institution in Star City and, from a wider theoretical viewpoint, to the superhero archetype of the billionaire-turned-vigilante. *Arrow* shows how the vigilantes see the city as their playground; however, this sense of ownership must be contextualized in the power positions that Queen enjoys, be it as a company CEO in Season 2, fully involved in the financial and business worlds (Pineda & Jiménez-Varea, 2017) or as mayor in Season 5. This institutional prominence mirrors other examples of the billionaire-turned-vigilante archetype, such as industrialist Tony Stark (aka Iron Man), who at one point was appointed Secretary of Defense to the U.S. President (Wolf-Meyer, 2006); privileged social positions that may explain why some private crimefighters regard cities as their property — in this respect, Batman would be the genre’s true template, as Gotham City is economically owned by the caped vigilante’s alter ego. Indeed, the powers of billionaire superheroes Green Arrow, Iron Man, and Batman are moored to their corporate presence (Marazi, 2015). In this context, psychological features of vigilantism may be connected to institutional factors since the crimefighters’ extraordinary agency and power relate to the aforementioned personal satisfaction experienced by some vigilantes, thus making the city an enjoyable playground for them — as indicated by the sense of coolness expressed by Thea Queen in Season 4, Episode 1.

Future research should first consider that vigilantism in popular media is a multifaceted phenomenon that presents many other aspects to approach, such as its degree of lethality, effectiveness, or self-reflection on its practice. Likewise, there is a large and rapidly growing volume of narrative where the figure of the vigilante occupies a central place — including the other series of the Arrowverse — and therefore constitutes potentially rich material for further analysis.

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SOCIAL MEDIA IN JUVENILE DELINQUENCY PRACTICES: USES AND UNLAWFUL ACTS RECORDED IN YOUTH JUSTICE IN PORTUGAL

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ABSTRACT

Currently, the strong involvement of young people in social media raises questions about potential multiplier effects on risks and opportunities for delinquent practices. It is not always easy to distinguish a harmless online action, an integral part of the social and relational experimentation typical of adolescence, from a fact that will constitute an unlawful act subject to judicial intervention. This article seeks to understand and discuss how the use of social media is materialized in the facts, defined as a crime by the criminal law, perpetrated by young people aged between 12 and 16, in the context of youth justice in Portugal. It is based on an exploratory analysis of qualitative information collected in a Family and Children Court from youth justice proceedings concerning 201 young people of both sexes. Just under a third of this population was proven to have been involved in unlawful acts using social media at three levels: planning/organization, execution and dissemination. Multiple participation in social media is dominant. There is a significant overrepresentation of girls as perpetrators of unlawful acts, especially those involving a high degree of violence, embodying the online-offline continuum. Most of the analysed facts of both sexes have at their epicentre the perception that personal honour has been attacked and requires reparation. From there, it is a short step to violence, which can lead to a reconfiguration and exchange of roles between victim and aggressor, which is not always easy to prove. For both sexes, the relationships established in school dominate the interaction between aggressors-victims. More than the anonymity afforded by the digital, what stands out is the need for affirmation in public and/or semi-private space, and violent action is the catalyst to gain respect through the instant gratification offered by social media in an online-offline continuum embodying the “onlife” (Floridi, 2017) that characterizes the lives of young people today.

KEYWORDS

young people, social media, digital practices, delinquency, youth justice

REDES SOCIAIS EM PRÁTICAS DE DELINQUÊNCIA JUVENIL: USOS E ILÍCITOS RECENSEADOS NA JUSTIÇA JUVENIL EM PORTUGAL

RESUMO

Na atualidade, o forte envolvimento dos jovens em redes sociais suscita o questionamento sobre potenciais efeitos multiplicadores de riscos e oportunidades para práticas de delinquência. Nem sempre é simples distinguir uma ação online inofensiva, parte integrante da experimentação social/relacional típica da adolescência, de um facto que passa a constituir um ilícito passível de intervenção judicial. Este artigo procura conhecer e discutir como o uso de redes sociais se materializa nos factos qualificados pela lei penal como crime praticados por jovens, entre os 12 e os 16 anos, no quadro da justiça juvenil em Portugal. Recorre-se à análise exploratória de informação qualitativa recolhida em Tribunal de Família e Menores, nos processos tutelares educativos de 201 jovens, de ambos os sexos. Pouco mais de terço da população viu provado o envolvimento em ilícitos com recurso a redes sociais, em três níveis diferenciados: planeamento/organização, execução e disseminação. A participação múltipla em redes sociais é dominante. É significativa a sobre-representação das raparigas enquanto autoras de ilícitos, especialmente com elevado grau de violência, num continuum online-offline. A maioria dos factos analisados, de ambos os sexos, tem no epicentro, a perceção de que a honra pessoal foi atingida e requer reparação. Daí ao ato violento é um passo curto, o que pode levar à reconfiguração e troca de papéis entre vítima e agressor, nem sempre fácil de provar. Para ambos os sexos, as relações criadas a partir da escola dominam a interação entre agressores-vítimas. Mais do que o anonimato que o digital pode proporcionar, transparece a necessidade de afirmação no espaço público e/ou semiprivado, constituindo a ação violenta o catalisador para ganhar respeito pela imediata gratificação, que as redes sociais oferecem, num continuum online-offline que dá corpo à “onlife” (Floridi, 2017) que caracteriza a vida dos jovens no presente.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

jovens, redes sociais, práticas digitais, delinquência, justiça juvenil

1. INTRODUCTION

As a result of the growing digitalization of society (Wall, 2007), youth justice is faced with new and complex challenges associated with the increasing use of digital technologies in delinquent practices in childhood and youth (M. Carvalho, 2019, 2021; Goldsmith & Wall, 2019; Rovken et al., 2018). The easy access to the internet, in any place and at any time, combined with the power it gives its users, shapes the lives of children and young people. Communication, learning, access to information, entertainment and participation are the main activities carried out online (Livingstone & Stoilova, 2019; Mascheroni et al., 2020). However, the internet also presents opportunities for offending (Baldry et al., 2018; McCuddy, 2021; Mojares et al., 2015). Those can take the form of traditional types of crime (i.e., threat, insult, defamation, fraud, extortion, breach of trust and pornography, among others) now perpetrated using technological equipment and applications. On the other hand, it can correspond to new types of crime (i.e., hacking and denial of service attacks [DDoS], among others) that depend exclusively on the use of digital technologies (Wall, 2007).

Currently, social network sites — web-based services that allow users to establish contact with each other by creating a public or semi-public personal profile (boyd & Ellison, 2008) — are a key component of youth socialization and culture (B. Carvalho & Marôpo, 2020; Vilela, 2019). Ease of access, speed and a broad public reach characterize these forms of social participation mediated by the internet. Young people draw several benefits from using social media as an audience or content creators (B. Carvalho & Marôpo, 2020; Ponte et al., 2022). Nevertheless, certain actions represent the perpetration of unlawful acts, often without the young people directly involved, or their family members/caretakers, realizing that they are committing an act defined as a crime by the criminal law. The existing literature highlights that digital practices are neither exclusively positive nor exclusively negative (Staksrud, 2009); such an assessment will depend on the social actors involved and on a host of different factors, including the degree of compliance with the law (Baldry et al., 2018; McCuddy, 2021).

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In a field where knowledge is scarce, this exploratory analysis of the information collected from educational guardianship proceedings seeks to identify and debate the facts and associated dynamics involving the actions of young people on social media for which measures were imposed by a Family and Children Court. By incorporating into the discussion input from sociology, communication sciences and psychology, a unique portrait is drawn to contribute to the advancement of knowledge on how technological development impacts juvenile delinquency as recorded by the mechanisms of formal social control. Scientific evidence is put forth to promote a better understanding of the implications of the involvement of young people in social media and thereby support more informed debate on the regulation and criminalization of digital practices as a key element for the creation of delinquency prevention policies (Goldsmith & Wall, 2019; Patton et al., 2014).

2. YOUNG PEOPLE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

In societies marked by risk aversion (Livingstone & Stoilova, 2019), the strong involvement of young people in social media (i.e., Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Telegram, WeChat, YouTube and TikTok, among others) raises questions about potential multiplier effects on risks and opportunities for delinquent practices. Sexting, cyberbullying, sextortion, flaming, happy slapping and cyberstalking have become everyday terms¹, and they describe unlawful actions in digital environments whose perpetrators and victims are often young people. The media coverage of these cases is viral, taking place on a global scale, and social concern over this issue is rising (Baldry et al., 2018).

¹ See APAV – Associação Portuguesa de Apoio à Vítima (2021).

In Western societies, the transformations experienced by the instances of informal social control (i.e., family, school) are countered by the widening expectations of communities regarding the mechanisms of formal social control, such as the courts, from which individuals and social groups demand stronger regulation of young people's behaviour (M. Carvalho, 2019). In some countries, this leads to increased punitive trends as a reaction to juvenile delinquency (Goldsmith & Wall, 2019; Rovken et al., 2018).

The children and young people of today have never known a world without the internet; they are increasingly online at younger ages and make greater use of personal mobile devices, in a dual role as digital content creators and consumers (Mascheroni et al., 2020; Pereira et al., 2020). Against this backdrop, social media are central to the everyday life of children and young people, offering endless opportunities for social dynamics that unfold across various places simultaneously as a result of the offline-online enabled by the internet (Livingstone & Stoivola, 2019). In societies marked by profound technological advancements, which reconfigure social dynamics and consumer cultures (B. Carvalho & Marôpo, 2020), social relations expand into webs of multiple actors and points of connection, breaking geographical barriers (Mojares et al., 2015). In this context, other questions arise:

teens don't use social media just for the social connections and networks. It goes deeper. Social-media platforms are among our only chances to create and shape our sense of self. Social media makes us feel seen. (...) It's true that social media's constant stream of idealized images takes its toll: on our mental health, our self-image, and our social lives. After all, our relationships to technology are multidimensional—they validate us just as much as they make us feel insecure. (...) Perhaps social-media selfies aren't the fullest representations of ourselves. But we're trying to create an integrated identity. We're striving not only to be seen, but to see with our own eyes. (Fang, 2019, paras. 5–6, 15)

Young people go through adolescence in the process of self-discovery, trying to understand their social roles, driven by a concern over how they pop up to others and are viewed by them in the context of ever-more complex emotional and social lives (Stern, 2008). The discovery of sexuality and intimate relationships is a central aspect of their digital practices, rooted in a constant reaffirmation of the “I” within the intricate relationships with the other(s) (Livingstone & Mason, 2015). There is a transformation of intimacy, which easily turns into a show based on narratives where the constant interplay between privacy and visibility, instantaneousness and personality cult, fiction and loneliness is omnipresent (Sibilia, 2008) and not exempt from various risks.

They can also become a threat and create health risks when they cross the line between real and virtual, public and private, between what is legal and what is illegal, “pirated”, between information and exploitation, between intimacy and distortion of “real” facts and images. (Eisenstein, 2013, p. 61)

In social media, young people constantly negotiate the boundaries of the public and private spheres of their lives and decide how they want to present and reveal themselves to other users (Stern, 2008). Sometimes they do so unexpectedly or suddenly, with a quick click of the mouse, without formulating an argument or fully anticipating the consequences. Other times, they do so under the veil of anonymity afforded by the digital. While access to social media is limited based on age, some circumvent this limitation by creating fake profiles, exposing themselves to greater risks (Vilela, 2019). In settings marked by an informational and technological literacy gap between generations, parents tend to underestimate their children's involvement in online risky and aggressive behaviour and their experiences of harm (Baldry et al., 2018; McCuddy, 2021).

The time that young people spend on social media can be a way of reclaiming a private space they could not find elsewhere (Vilela, 2019). For most, social media are a means of social inclusion, and the fear of missing out and being excluded is real, even when the relationships they establish are only superficial.

Mutual insults, threats, sharing of nudes and unauthorized access to profiles are common occurrences on social media and are not exclusive to the younger generations. Young people can be influenced by modelling based on their observation of others, a phenomenon also known as contagion, but they can also act in response to challenges, often without knowing their source. The continuation of the transgressive behaviour will depend on the external reinforcement and whether (or not) it matches the young person's expectation as well as on the nature of the forms of mediation (i.e., family, peers, others) that he or she is surrounded by (M. Carvalho, 2019).

In this regard, it is important not to minimize the growing visibility and influence of juvenile criminal groups/gangs that use social media to gain reputation and status by disseminating videos, messages and photos of their actions, to lure/recruit new members and/or to confront and challenge rivals (Haut, 2014; Oliveira & Carvalho, 2022; Storrod & Densley, 2017). Social media play an instrumental role in the dynamics of delinquency.

It is not always easy to distinguish a harmless action, an integral part of the social and relational experimentation typical of adolescence, from a fact that will constitute an unlawful act subject to judicial intervention. The subjectivities constructed by victims, aggressors and other participants are crucial for the discovery and subsequent proof of the facts. The overlap between the roles of victim and aggressor is a complex reality with a significant presence: the online "teen aggressor" tends to be, often, also the online "teen victim" (Ponte et al., 2021). The socio-digital construction of violence, easily accessible from anywhere in the world, now reaches social groups/audiences unaffected by the previous models of violence and impacts juvenile delinquency practices (M. Carvalho, 2019).

3. CONNECTED WITHIN THE NETWORK(S)

The use of social media by children and young people has increased in Portugal in the past few years (Matos & Equipa Aventura Social, 2018; Ponte et al., 2022), particularly among the youngest, at ages below the minimum threshold indicated for using

different media (13 years; Ponte & Baptista, 2019). Compared to other countries, young people from Portugal are among those who use them the most — YouTube, WhatsApp and Instagram being the most prevalent (B. Carvalho & Marôpo, 2020; Matos & Equipa Aventura Social, 2018) — and also among those who make a more positive assessment of their digital skills (Ponte et al., 2022).

The study *EU Kids Online* (Ponte & Baptista, 2019) reveals that, in Portugal, the smartphone is the main medium used by children/young people (9–17 years) to access the internet on a daily basis, predominantly for social media use (75%), communication (75%) and entertainment, such as listening to music/watching videos (80%). The use of the internet starts earlier. Girls display higher levels of engagement in social media, communication with friends and family and listening to music; they own a smartphone more often (albeit at older ages than boys) and have greater access to the internet outside the house (i.e., at school and *en route*). Boys look more frequently for groups with shared interests/hobbies, news and video games.

As the age increases, so does the use of social media. The main motivation for this use is access to a group of peers, with only a small percentage of the respondents not being allowed to use them: 7% (boys: 18%; girls: 11%; Ponte & Baptista, 2019).

About a quarter of the population in this research (23%) had experienced, in the previous year, online situations that had bothered/upset them, pointing out instances of undesired and/or aggressive contact on social media (Ponte & Baptista, 2019). Bullying (24%) was among the most frequently mentioned situations, with cyberbullying being predominant compared to face-to-face bullying. Exposure to pornography (37%) and sexting (1 out of 4 at ages 11–17, 29% of the girls and 44% of the boys) are particularly relevant. About a third of the boys (30%) and 7% of the girls had received messages of sexual nature by text, image or video. About half said they had been neither pleased nor upset, while 32% had been pleased. Images of a sexual nature are seen more frequently on the internet than television (Ponte & Baptista, 2019).

The data of the *Health Behaviour in School-aged Children in Portugal HBSC/PT–2018* (Matos & Equipa Aventura Social, 2018) regarding the role of social media in the everyday life of the young people who were surveyed are also relevant. The following are noteworthy: having tried to spend less time on them but not being able to do so (26%), feeling bad when unable to use them (20.9%), or frequently being unable to think of anything other than using them again (20%). About half of the respondents said they spent 2 hours or more daily on social media (Matos & Equipa Aventura Social, 2018).

Such is the portrait drawn from national works of research that reveal how central social media have become to young people's lives.

4. EMPIRICAL STUDY

This study is part of the initial phase of data analysis under the *YO@JUST* project. It aims to explore and discuss how the use of social media is materialized in the facts defined as crimes by the criminal law perpetrated by young people aged between 12 and

16 and for which measures were imposed in the context of youth justice in Portugal (Lei n.º 4/2015, 2015).

Based on the qualitative information collected from the records of educational guardianship proceedings involving 201 young people (83% of the total) of both sexes and subject to a final decision in the jurisdictional phase, between 1 January 2015 and 30 June 2021, in a Family and Children Court, all proved facts containing a reference to the use of social media were identified and selected for thematic content analysis, organized into categories according to the types of crime involved. The data on the perpetrators (i.e., sex and age) were organized and codified in MS Excel and exported to a database created in IBM SPSS v.25, which will be used for future analyses.

Data collection for this study was carried out by the author in person, at the court, with prior authorization from the High Council for the Judiciary (2019/GAVPM/1436) and the judge responsible for the case. It took place between November 2019 and August 2021, with a 1-year interruption due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. All the information was anonymized, and the names of the young people were replaced with two randomly selected letters to protect the privacy of the participants mentioned in the procedural documents.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The focus of the analysis presented in this article is the use(s) of social media in the perpetration of unlawful acts as recorded in judicial proceedings. First, a sample description will be provided, followed by an exploration of the dynamics associated with the planning/organization, execution and dissemination of the unlawful act.

5.1. FACTS UNDER ANALYSIS

Out of a total of 354 facts proved in a court hearing during the period under analysis, 92 (26%)² of the cases indicated the use of social media authored by 56 young people (27.8% of the total): 30 boys (50 facts, 54.3%) and 26 girls (42 facts, 45.7%). The difference between the sexes is slight and does not align with the trend regarding a lower representativity of females in offline delinquency recorded by the courts (M. Carvalho, 2019).

In terms of age at the time of the facts, 15-year-olds ($n = 36$, 20 boys) and 13-year-olds ($n = 31$, 16 boys) are more represented, followed by 14-year-olds ($n = 20$, 10 boys), while the youngest (12-year-olds) have little representation ($n = 5$, 4 boys). In terms of age distribution, there is no significant difference between the sexes.

The instances of the use of social media are more expressive in the case of unlawful acts against persons (79.3%), especially when involving girls (Table 1). Significantly behind are the facts against property (18.4%), in which boys stand out. Facts against life in society related to narcotic drugs (trafficking) are residual.

² These occurred between 2014 and 2020, mostly in 2017 (23), 2016 (18) and 2019 (16).

TYPE OF CRIME	FACTS DEFINED AS CRIMES BY THE CRIMINAL LAW	SEX		TOTAL
		MALE	FEMALE	
Against persons (n = 73)	Sexual abuse of children	3	0	3
	Threat	3	2	5
	Aggravated threat	0	3	3
	Coercion	0	1	1
	Aggravated defamation	0	3	3
	Unlawful recordings and photographs	1	1	2
	Aggravated unlawful recordings and photographs	2	2	4
	Insult	1	1	2
	Bodily injury	10	8	18
	Aggravated bodily injury	3	10	13
	Attempted aggravated bodily injury	0	1	1
	Bodily injury as a single offence committed through repeated similar acts covered by a unified criminal resolution	1	0	1
	Child pornography	4	4	8
	Aggravated child pornography	9	0	9
	Illegal restraint	0	2	2
Against property (n = 17)	Breach of trust	2	0	2
	Damage	2	0	2
	Theft	5	2	7
	Robbery	1	1	2
	Aggravated robbery	2	0	2
Against life in society (n = 1)	Public instigation to commit a criminal offence	1	0	1
Anti-drug legislation (n = 1)	Drug trafficking	0	1	1
Total		50	42	92

Table 1 Facts that include the use of social media, according to the type of crime, by sex

It is possible to see a relationship between the use of social media and unlawful offline practices, especially in the case of bodily injury, which, across its different categories, amounts to more than a third of the total (35.8%), with girls being more represented than boys. Child pornography (18.5%), when “aggravated”, is exclusive to boys. Threats (8.7%), when “aggravated”, are exclusive to girls. By age, 15 and 13-year-olds are more represented in the category of facts against persons, while for 14-year-olds, in the category of the facts against property.

5.2. PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION

The planning/organization of unlawful acts through social media has a low representation in the proceedings analysed. However, when reported, it is associated with serious facts against persons and against property, especially aggravated bodily injury and aggravated robbery, that resulted in major personal damages.

The identification of closed groups on social media to prepare an assault on someone else joined intentionally and/or under pressure/threat from its users is relevant because of how the perpetration of violence is organized and, to a certain extent, normalized among young people (Mojares et al., 2015; Storrod & Desnley, 2017).

I was informed by the child TA [girl, 14 years old] of the existence of an organized group on Instagram with the address or group name #XXXXX#, where young females ask each other to commit acts of assault so that their names will not be connected with those acts, that is, some female children offer to assault others or are coerced into assaulting others to whom they are in no way related.

These practices are exclusively associated with girls in different contexts, revealing their increasing involvement in forms of violence traditionally seen as masculine, and thus could be a reflection of the construction of new forms of femininity (M. Carvalho et al., 2021).

Currently, meetings between young people organized through social media (*meet*) are an element of the youth cultures. Given the power of communication on the internet, they have the potential to quickly reach a high number of young people and different audiences. *Meets* are spaces of socialization that are becoming increasingly important for constructing social relationships and personal identity, experimentation and discovery, which are essential to the development during adolescence (Goldsmith & Wall, 2019; Stern, 2008).

Delinquent practices in a *meet* are the exception, and they do not represent the experience of most young people involved. However, the exploitation of some *meets* by rival groups of young people, mostly boys, frequently from territories in conflict, that come together to settle scores with each other is an occurrence that has been gaining visibility. That highlights the online-offline continuum (Donner et al., 2015) and how social media transform the nature of communication within a group and within the interaction with those who are perceived as “enemies”, with the *meet* serving as a tool to assert power through threats, intimidation and violence, but also to recruit new members (Haut, 2014).

LL [boy, 15 years old] went to the [local] MEET and found the boy victim who was part of a group of 10 individuals. LL knew a friend of the victim, and because of that, he went to meet them. LL was supposed to apologize to a friend of the victim. Since LL did not do so, the victim showed the tip of a knife and a glass bottle inside the backpack he was carrying. (...) Afterwards, things became peaceful, and when they were already outside, a group of boys came and said that LL and his friends could hit the victim. WL [boy, 15 years old] was hit on the head with the bottle, and LL kicked the victim in the belly because he had previously threatened him with a knife. He was not afraid of the victim, nor did he want the backpack. On that date, he was the subject of 4 pending

educational guardianship proceedings. (...) The victim [boy, 17 years old] spent 9 days in the hospital for neurological monitoring.

The findings of this first level of analysis also include the actions of a 15-year-old girl on social media used as tools to strengthen drug trafficking networks. Easy to use and far-reaching when it comes to organized crime, social media guarantee anonymity under the veil of cryptography, with many of its users drawing a sense of impunity from the fact that activities are hard to trace (Haut, 2014; Oliveira & Carvalho, 2022), which calls for new approaches and means of criminal investigation in the context of youth justice.

5.3. EXECUTION AND DISSEMINATION

For most children and young people, the distinction between online and offline makes no sense (Pereira et al., 2020; Ponte & Baptista, 2019). The ways of life of today's children and young people embody the concept of “onlife” (Floridi, 2017), an everyday life marked by a continuous interweaving of physical and digital environments. This trend is evidenced by social media practices in the perpetration of unlawful acts, along two general lines: when they are committed on social media; and when they are the result of a prior interaction on those media, which is indicated as the reason for the facts.

New communication and social interaction patterns, including the ways of learning and expressing sexuality (Livingstone & Mason, 2015), are present in the proceedings analysed. In most cases, young people and their family members/caretakers are unaware that some practices constitute facts defined as a crime by criminal law.

AC [boy, 14 years old] asked VV [girl, 12 years old], via Messenger and/or WhatsApp, to send him photos of herself. She sent the first one in her bra and knickers (...) a total of 31 photos and one video with music where she can be seen dancing until she is naked. (...) AC sends the video via WhatsApp to TP [boy, 14 years old], who, in turn, sends it via WhatsApp to NA [boy, 14 years old]. NA sends it to BJ [boy, 13 years old] (who was VV's boyfriend), and BJ sends it via Messenger to ZI, WR and QM [boys, 13–14 years old].

The victims' unawareness of the sharing and lack of consent to it, the minimization of the harm caused and the need for reparation are common features of these actions. As the investigation and/or the taking of evidence in the hearing progresses, the complexity of the social reality is revealed, and, in some cases, a reconfiguration of the roles of victim and aggressor emerges. At a certain point, the victim becomes/became the aggressor, and the aggressor becomes/became the victim. This overlap between victimization and aggression, a characteristic of the paths of many young people (M. Carvalho, 2019), expands due to the speed with which it unfolds on the internet (Ponte et al., 2021).

Other dynamics reveal that young people bothered by the requests of their peers on social media end up not sending nudes of themselves in response; but, unwilling to admit to this refusal due to pressure, fear or another reason, end up exposing themselves even more by resorting to online pornography websites to search for images that they then send as their own.

KH [boy, 13 years old] was one of her best friends at the time. She recalls KH asking her to send intimate photographs of herself. Not wanting to send photographs of herself, she searched on Google for a photograph of that type and sent it. She regrets doing it, clarifying that she did not know that sending this kind of photograph to another person could be a crime and that had she known this at the time, she would not have done it [girl, 13 years old].

Not only does the suspect [boy, 14 years old] humiliate and harass the girl [12 years old] in person, but he also uses social media to do it, especially Facebook. He uses social media to send photographs of his genitals and to try to maintain a conversation of a sexual nature to lure her into performing the act with him. (...) The suspect tells the child to search for certain web-pages allegedly of interest to her, sending her links to pornography sites and asking her to send him photos of “hot chicks”. The child said the suspect repeatedly asked her to take photographs of her vagina and send them to him, which she has always denied.

The link between internet searches and participation in the world of pornography often occurs as a result of apparently innocent and unanticipated encounters that can lead to the consumption and production of pornography, given the ease of anonymous access to search engines like Google (Goldsmith & Wall, 2019). Some young people realize, at an early age, that they can easily obtain material gains from the sexualized exploitation of contacts with adults, which they can easily establish on social media.

During the time they dated and until (...), SB [boy, 15 years old], under circumstances that could not be established, pointed a knife at CA [girl, 14 years old] and also punched and slapped her in the face, either out of jealousy – due to CA speaking to other boys – or because he wanted her to give him the money that her mother gave her for a meal, which she said she didn't have, but he ended up finding out that she did. In [2 years before], knowing that this was possible, CA, who was 12 at the time, searched for websites and social media where, for a sum of money, she would kiss male individuals or perform acts of a sexual nature to them. To that effect, she established contact with someone who asked her if she wanted to (...) and told her that he would give her money according to the type of acts she was willing to undergo. For an unspecified period, on her own initiative, CA used her mobile phone to arrange encounters (...) with that man and other males, kissing them, being groped and consenting to take photographs half-naked, without SB knowing. For those activities, she was never paid less than 50 euros, which she gave him and which he spent “*on neighbourhood business, with his partners*”, or buying hashish (from his grandmother) and tobacco, which they both consumed.

This case highlights how within a framework of supposed autonomy — associated with the dissolution of social ties and with intimate relationships marked by an escalation of violence — “business” on social media can become a source of income.

Some of the proceedings show how easy it is for young people of both sexes to circumvent the minimum age limits established for the creation of pages/profiles on certain social media and how, when a page is blocked, they simply and immediately create another one under a different name/nickname. The modification of the date of birth is usually complemented by manipulating the profile photo using special effects and/or accessories to hide the real age.

FV [girl, 15 years old] is the girlfriend of *PM* [boy, 15 years old]. She clarified that she had a Facebook page (...) that Facebook itself cancelled/blocked this page. (...) On her old page, she indicated XX.XX.1996 as the date of birth, in which the day and month were correct, but the year was changed from 2003 to 1996, thus allowing her to portray a 20-year-old girl/woman when at the time of the facts she was only 13 years old. At the time, she told her mother she couldn't understand why her page had been blocked and created a new page she currently uses. That the cancellation of her old page occurred on XX 2018, which she believes was when her boyfriend sent her a photograph with the exposed genitals of a girl. At the time of the facts, *PM* explained to her that the photograph mentioned above had been sent to him by a girl known by the name *RT* who, during the year 2015, had been a student at the (...) school where *FV* had studied (...). Before her boyfriend sent her this photo, *RT* herself had already sent it to her via Skype, saying that the photograph was hers, though she doesn't know whether that is true. In the previous 3 or 4 days, she had spoken with *RT* herself on Instagram, telling her that she was no longer sure whether she had sent the photo via Skype or Facebook.

Since the discovery of sexuality is a developmental task of adolescence, these actions are, in most cases, described by young people as “it was all just a children's game because, at the time the facts occurred, everyone was under 13 years old” (boy, 15 years old) or “without realizing that this fact could be associated with the crime of child pornography” (girl, 15 years old). Given the criminal nature of some of the images shared, the educational guardianship proceedings may stem from reports from supranational bodies, such as the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, within the framework of international cooperation to combat networks of sexual abuse of children and child pornography. These actions have various consequences, and in light of the extent to which criminal investigation authorities intervene in the contexts in which young people live, such is the case of the girl “that due to the facts reported, the house of her maternal grandmother was subject to a house search in connection with the crime of child pornography, as shown by the copy of the search warrant”.

Prior interactions on social media are common in the case of facts against persons carried out offline. Thus, there is a transposition into virtual environments of interactions that, before the internet existed, were confined to physical territories.

These three children [NE, VQ and KJ, boys, 13 years old], now with the collaboration of child GB [boy, 13 years old], (...) acting jointly inside the school (...), assaulted with slaps, punches and kicks to several parts of the body their schoolmates and children MA and ME [boys, 13 and 14 years old], under the pretext that they had made comments on Facebook that they had not liked.

JH [boy, 15 years old] informed that initially MO [boy, 15 years old] had grabbed him by the neck, kneeling him in the belly and kicking him in the left shoulder and that afterwards, while he was being grabbed by the neck, LP [boy, 15 years old] had slapped him in the face. About 10 minutes later, GF [boy, 14 years old] approached him and slapped him on the neck. It should be noted that, on that same day, LP, via Instagram, threatened him (...). The victim informed that he plays football in a team MO has played in the past and that MO has a rivalry with JH.

Still, within this context, there are also unlawful acts that arise from challenges among peers on social media, as noted in the case of the “PZ [boy, 12 years old] who confesses having graffitied a car following an exchange of videos and messages on social media in which he was challenged to do it”.

The potential of social media for communication shows that school extends beyond its walls and is present day and night in young people’s lives, in contrast to what happened when the internet did not exist and contacts after school hours were very limited. Therefore, it is not surprising that most of the facts under analysis involve young people who met in school and can contact each other through social media anytime.

She has known DF [girl, 14 years old] since she was 4-5 years old, since pre-school, and they always attended the same schools and in 7th grade were in the same class. She thought of herself as DF’s friend and older sister, which is no longer the case. It all began with a fight that happened at school, on the last school day, because her schoolmates JH and DF grabbed EV’s drawing folder [girls, both 14 years old], and JH ran away with it, even throwing it at the ground and they both stepped on it. She had no patience to chase them, and she was upset. On (...), between 1.18 am. and 2.49 am., EV and the victim [DF] chatted on WhatsApp [aggravated threats, death threats, from EV to DF]. What she said was also based on a story created on the internet (*Creepypasta*) about *Jeff the Killer*.

A particularly relevant aspect of this study is the predominance of girls and their groups, most of which bring together female children and young adults, though some of these girls also lead groups of boys. For most of them, social media are a locus of

construction of identity and fight for power, and they do not shy away from resorting to violence in various forms. The phenomenon of fight compilations (Cantor, 2000; Haut, 2014), traditionally masculine, has a significant presence in girls' social media, and the victims are mainly other girls.

There had been a serious assault inside the school. This assault by *EM* [girl, 13 years old] on *FI* [girl, 13 years old] had supposedly been filmed with the mobile phone of another student (*LU*) [girl, 14 years old] (...). During a conversation with *LU*, she first declared that she had not filmed the fight. However, after being told that there were already shares on Snapchat and Instagram, viewed by the assaulted girl's mother, she finally said that she had filmed it but not shared it. *EM* could have shared it, as she had asked her for a copy of the video, and she had shared it in a chat on social media. (...) It can be concluded that *LU* did not film the assault by chance because even before the assault began, the image shows the aggressor addressing the victim, and there was even a pause for the recording.

The two female children [*CE*, 15 years old; *CB*, 13 years old] envisaged and intended, with at least eight other girls with ages close to theirs, to deprive the victims of their freedom to move by forcing them – using psychological violence – to walk with them for about 300 metres to lead them into an alley. There, they intended to assault *AN* and *AS* [girls, both 13 years old] physically and, to increase their humiliation, shame and embarrassment, allow others to record the assault and disseminate it among *AN*'s friends and acquaintances, which they did.

The victim [boy, 13 years old] was walking along a path to leave the school when a group of schoolmates appeared, surrounded him and cornered him: *RA* [boy, 11 years old], *TA* and *CA* [boys, 13 years old], *JA* [girl, 14 years old] and *GA* [girl, 13 years old]. *JA* grabbed the victim's sweater and told him 3 times, "come on, hit me". At the same time, *RA* and *CA* used their mobile phones to record what was happening, in particular, the image of the victim. Simultaneously, *RA* called the victim (...), and the child *TA* told him, "*JA*, beat him up!" and *CA* hysterically shouted (...). Afterwards, *JA* assaulted the victim by punching and slapping him several times in the face and all over his body as he covered his face with both hands while *JA* punched his ears several times. The female child also punched him in the stomach. The assault stopped when the child *JA* wanted it to stop. The assault was filmed by *RA* and by the children *TA* and *CA*, who intended to record the moment of public humiliation and shaming of their schoolmate and classmate to disseminate it on social media. Under these circumstances, the victim would never have consented to his image being recorded, and the children knew this.

Despite being frightened, *GR* [girl, 13 years old] and *SJ* [girl, 14 years old], as described in the report, pointed out the suspects identified in the report as perpetrators of an attempt to enter their home, fulfilling, as mentioned therein, the threats that they had been receiving from the suspects, and they even had a video of an assault that *XL* [girl, 15 years old] had sent showing a fight between girls. This video was sent via WhatsApp by *XL* to *SJ* and understood as a form of threat/coercion aimed at *GR*.

The third level of analysis identified in the judicial proceedings reveals the potential of social media for — public, semi-public or private — dissemination of the facts by young people, mainly to humiliate the victims, an action that can constitute a new unlawful act. The perpetration of the facts and their dissemination on social media go almost hand in hand.

She also saw *CE* [girl, 14 years old] upload the photographs on Snapchat, after which she copied them to her mobile phone and uploaded them on Twitter. Since she had not taken the photographs herself nor had been the first to publish them, she thought her responsibility would not be relevant.

When confronted with the video in the case file, she said she recognized herself in it as the person who was hitting *NA* [girl, 13 years old]. She also recognizes the reference at the top of the video as her own. The reference (...) is her handle in one of the Instagram accounts, as she has two accounts on that social media platform [girl, 15 years old].

The teacher informed: that the parent of student *ND*, duly identified as the victim, had addressed the school board to report that her son had been the target of threats made on a social media platform by students *BL* [13 years old] and *GP* [14 years old], both identified as suspects, in the context of which *BL* had stated that he would stab her son with a knife. Her son believes *BL* can act on that threat, and he is thus afraid for his own physical well-being and hesitant to go to school. That she made a #print screen# of her son's mobile phone, as attached, in which *BL* calls himself (...).

In this context, special attention should be paid to the secondary victimization experienced by some young people as their family members reproduce the videos of their assaults on (other) social media, with unpredictable results.

Feeling angry about what had happened to her daughter, and to make sure that her aggressors would be quickly identified and that this type of situation would not happen to other young females, she decided to post the videos on Facebook and ask for help to identify the aggressors. To that effect, she asked her daughter *RM* [16 years old, sister of the victim] to do it, and she was the one who posted them on the sites (...) and (...). Before

disclosing the videos, she contacted [the media] by telephone. She also gave an interview to [the media]. After these events, her daughter did not return to school.

Other limitations arise from the growing number of views, the failure to promptly remove the videos and the impossibility of controlling sharing on social media. The unlawful acts are not restricted to interactions among peers, and some of the videos posted on social media reveal the victimization of adults, especially teachers.

Several of her female students, identified as the suspects, used a mobile phone inside the classroom to make videos and photographs of her, which they then posted on social media (Facebook and Twitter), adding as a caption to those photos and videos, expressions that attacked her honour.

Even though the Statute on Students and School Ethics only permits the use of smartphones within school premises for educational purposes and subject to prior authorization (Lei n.º 51/2012, 2012), Portugal was one of the European countries where young people least mentioned having rules at school to prevent their use (Simões et al., 2014).

The analysed proceedings show the complexity of taking evidence of the facts through digital technologies in the context of youth justice, and most young people end up cooperating with the authorities. In certain cases, social media play an important role in identifying the suspects/aggressors, making it possible to identify victims and family members who provide the authorities with information that proves decisive for the outcome of the investigation.

6. CONCLUSION

Access to justice is a basic condition for life in society. Within the framework of the *YO&JUST* project, this study has sought to understand how social media are used in juvenile delinquency as recorded by the courts, making an original contribution to a topic on which knowledge is scarce.

The prevalence of social media in the lives of young people is apparent compared to just under a third of the base population in the period under analysis. Multiple participation, in which a young person has several profiles on one and/or on various social media platforms simultaneously, is dominant. Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp and Facebook are the most represented, without noticeable differences in how they were used in the facts identified. Some of the proceedings highlight the ease with which young people create fake profiles, especially on Facebook, to circumvent the access restriction relating to a minimum age. The findings of this study illustrate the “onlife” (Floridi, 2017), the hallmark of the ways of life of young people in current times. These young people have never known a world without digital engagement, and for whom social media are everyday spaces of social inclusion and participation.

Part of the analysed facts initially reflected social dynamics associated with the developmental tasks of adolescence (i.e., construction of identity, discovery of sexuality,

gaining autonomy and social participation), but that repeatedly evolved into transgression, often causing great harm to others. That trend that used to characterize delinquent practices in the physical world is now renewed by the speed of the escalation of violence, the greater number of young people involved in these acts and the broad reach of their public dissemination, which leads to the secondary victimization of the offended. There is a significant overrepresentation of girls as perpetrators of unlawful acts, especially those involving a high degree of violence, with numbers very close to those of boys. This trend differs from the one commonly identified in the delinquency officially recorded at the national and international levels.

Most of the unlawful acts identified are related to school and the interactions that originated in it, which, in this digital age, extend beyond school hours and premises. The constant interaction between victims and aggressors facilitated by social media, at any time and in any place, has at its epicentre the perception that personal honour has been attacked and requires reparation. From there, it is a short step to violence, which sometimes leads to a reconfiguration and exchange of roles between victim and aggressor, which is not always easy to prove. More than the anonymity afforded by the digital, what stands out is the need for affirmation in public and/or semi-private space, and violent action is the catalyst to gain respect through the immediate gratification offered by social media. Other children, especially acquaintances/friends, are the main victims. To a much lesser extent, the victims are also adults, especially teachers.

The growing complexity of criminal investigation in the context of youth justice is evident, and three levels of social media use in the perpetration of unlawful acts were identified. The first, similar to what has been described as violent and organized crime perpetrated by adults, reveals the use(s) of these media for planning/organization. The second and third levels are often linked, combining the execution with the subsequent dissemination of unlawful acts on social media. In some proceedings, the dissemination itself constituted a new unlawful act, especially in situations relating to child pornography.

This study is limited to the most serious cases subject to a decision issued within the framework of youth justice in Portugal and, therefore, in which there is clear proof of harm. The importance of not restricting the analysis of delinquency to a dichotomous view of the online and the offline worlds is one of the main recommendations. Given the nature of children and young people's involvement with digital technologies in their everyday life, there is a need for further research on the appropriateness of the categories, instruments and models used in this study to assess the profile of the perpetrator of the unlawful acts. Addressing this question will be instrumental in understanding the relationship between the state and young citizens, an endeavour currently pursued under the *YO@JUST* project.

Mitigating risks and promoting opportunities associated with the use of social media should be a priority for professionals working with young people. In line with other research on online aggression, findings show the need to offer educational programmes and communication tools aimed at specific groups, such as girls, given the prevalence of their digital practices over others.

It is essential to acknowledge that not all reasons for violating the rules (will) lead to a delinquent trajectory and that all young people need support to develop digital skills and learn to mediate risks-opportunities. Based on an ecological perspective, the integrated collection of data about the activities in digital environments in each young person's path is vital for future action but not yet a very common practice in the country. Intense and highly technical challenges await the courts dealing with matters relating to family, children and young people – where, from the base to the top, the resources are (very) few –, and there is an ever-growing need to employ/update existing knowledge and work in cooperation with experts, given the multidimensional nature of these situations.

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ONLINE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: REPORTS FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

After the pandemic of COVID-19 was declared by the World Health Organization in March 2020, a set of health measures were adopted internationally to control the spread of the virus. Among these, the lockdowns and isolations resulted in the widespread adoption of communication technologies as mediators in all daily situations involving physical contact, from work to leisure. In addition to the several unprecedented conditions that the pandemic brought, this widespread adoption brought about an unparalleled context regarding online gender violence, focusing on women. This study focuses on how women experience the nature, prevalence, and impacts of online violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. By using critical thematic analysis, this qualitative approach resulted from in-depth interviews with 30 women victims/survivors of online violence during the pandemic. The data enabled the identification of 10 types of dynamic and hybrid modalities of online violence against women. The results of this study contribute to deepening the knowledge about this specific period and, above all, to the solidification and typification of a lexicon related to online violence, helping to fill an existing gap in Portugal.

KEYWORDS

gendered online violence, abusive behavior, victimology

VIOLÊNCIA ONLINE CONTRA AS MULHERES: RELATOS A PARTIR DA EXPERIÊNCIA DA PANDEMIA DA COVID-19

RESUMO

Depois de a pandemia de COVID-19 ter sido declarada pela Organização Mundial de Saúde em março de 2020, um conjunto de medidas sanitárias foram adotadas internacionalmente para controlar a expansão do vírus. De entre estas, os confinamentos e isolamentos tiveram como consequência a adoção generalizada de tecnologias de comunicação como mediadoras em todas as situações quotidianas que implicassem contacto físico, do trabalho ao lazer. Para além das várias situações inéditas que a pandemia trouxe, esta adoção generalizada trouxe um contexto sem precedentes no que diz respeito à violência de género online, com particular enfoque nas mulheres. Este estudo debruça-se sobre a forma como as mulheres experienciam a natureza, a prevalência e os impactos da violência online ocorrida durante a pandemia de COVID-19. Com recurso a uma análise temática crítica, esta abordagem qualitativa resultou de entrevistas em profundidade a 30 mulheres vítimas/sobreviventes de violência online durante a pandemia. Os dados permitiram identificar 10 tipos de modalidades dinâmicas e híbridas de violência online contra mulheres. Os resultados deste estudo contribuem, não só para aprofundar o conhecimento sobre este período específico, mas, sobretudo, para a solidificação e tipificação de um léxico relativo à violência online, ajudando a colmatar uma falha existente em Portugal.

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violência online genderizada, comportamentos abusivos, vitimologia

1. INTRODUCTION

The new digital platforms we use daily to access information, communicate and combat physical isolation can be highly emancipating (Amaral & Simões, 2021), particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited face-to-face social contacts. However, the inappropriate, toxic, offensive, and discriminatory nature of online behaviours highlight the digital environment's subversive role. In particular, patterns of violence against women seem to be intensifying while new modalities of offence are emerging.

The COVID-19 pandemic offered, in a way, the first big global test for digitalisation. The new platforms, which we started to use even more intensively, often in a relationship of dependence, to access information, to communicate, to work, for education, for health, to fight isolation, revealed themselves in a double dimension, as a solution and as a problem. While creating new technosocial spaces to mitigate isolation, they were also intensifying as inappropriate, toxic, insulting, offensive, and discriminatory spaces, disproportionately affecting women (Santos, 2022). That is the context from which we study the emerging problem of online violence against women and misogyny.

The evidence collected and analysed by our study firstly points to the need to broaden the conceptual field of violence against women, which cannot be reduced to physical abuse in the private space, homicide committed by an intimate partner, or sexual violence in the public space. For some time now, violence has adapted, migrated to the digital environment and often gone viral. At the same time, it is a phenomenon whose

gendered nature is evident, being inextricably linked to the norms that underpin discrimination and gender inequalities, which always intensify in crisis contexts. Online violence against women integrates the broader continuum of violence (Kelly, 1987), translated into behaviours that express and reproduce gender inequalities, although not always valued.

In Portugal, there is no linguistic and cultural framework to turn to in search of knowledge on how to name, define and interpret what happens when women are the target of sexist hate comments, misogynistic rhetoric, and recurrent insulting attacks. Our study gave a good account of the lack of recognition of online abusive behaviour, including the lack of awareness of victim and/or survivor status. Its relevance is further reaffirmed by the very scarcity of data regarding the analysed context.

Thus, this article aims to understand the prevalence, nature and impact of online violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic using a qualitative methodological strategy, with 30 semi-structured in-depth interviews with women victims/survivors of online violence during that same time. Thus, the research question guiding this empirical study is: how do women victims/survivors experience the nature, prevalence, and impacts of online violence during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The theoretical framework that underpins this study has two axes that stand in the line of the so-called feminist technology studies: the centrality of the use of online platforms during the pandemic and the various impacts that this use had on the development of these forms of violence. It is to a denser understanding and a clearer delimitation of this still unexplored context that this work intends to contribute, starting from a critical position on how the internet is a space of reproduction and expansion of misogynist dynamics offline.

2. GENDER AND TECHNOLOGY

Almost 30 years have passed since Cynthia Cockburn and Susan Ormrod (1993, p. 1) encapsulated the relationship between gender and technology in the image of the woman car driver making two attempts to park, a situation that implicates material issues, representations and meanings and ultimately creates a gender hierarchy in the face of technology's apparent dominance. Technology is always situated in temporal and spatial contexts, which leads to constant change in the study of these material and symbolic dynamics. Indeed, much has changed in 30 years. Nevertheless, many power structures remain in the social fabric, as this article aims to reinforce.

The relationship between gender and technology emerged and established itself as a field of social science in the last quarter of the 20th century. In a central place, as recently as the 1970s, a deterministic focus was adopted on the effects, particularly, on domestic technology and how advances in this area had not allowed women to spend less time away from domestic tasks (Wajcman, 2000, p. 449).

The following years contributed to a shift in this focus, which would imply a horizon of greater reciprocity between technology and gender. As a mark of this evolution, from the 1980s onwards, a perception gained ground in the literature that "ideas and

[technological] artefacts are social constructions, the result of negotiation between social actors, both individuals and groups” (Cockburn & Ormrod, 1993, p. 9). Constructivist theoretical perspectives, which emerged in the late 1980s, assume, precisely, this process of mutual influence between society and technology. Consequently, we can deepen our views by studying gender from the point of view of technology and vice versa. Or, as Cynthia Cockburn wrote in 1992, “technology permeates gender identity and (...) technology itself cannot be well understood without reference to gender” (p. 29). It is in this dialectical context that we speak of “coproduction” (Bray, 2007).

If in the 1970s, many feminist studies translated a particularly pessimistic position about the potential that technology could have for gender equality, as explained by Wajcman (2000, p. 450), the research techno-optimist who, at the turn of the millennium, anticipated a brave new world brought by the internet, was at its antipodes, giving rise to cyberfeminism that assumed technology as a means of women empowerment (Wajcman, 2000, p. 460). However, outside this cyberfeminist movement, the reference works on the new information society provided little or no sensitivity to gender issues (Corneliusen, 2012; Wajcman, 2000).

At the turn of the millennium, the presence of computers had exploded in the most diverse contexts. In this period, the main challenge, “was not to make women interested in computers, but to ensure that their relations with technology were not constantly undermined by images of femininity, on the one hand, or, on the other, by images of men’s relations with technology” (Corneliusen, 2012, 169).

This explosion of computer use turned out to be one of the first and most decisive steps toward virtual environments and permanent connectivity, with all the implications that the new technosocial dynamics brought to the perception and construction of identity, the body and personal relationships. As emphasised by Wajcman (2000), the works of Donna Haraway, Sherry Turkle, and Allucquere Stone are fundamental in this period to understand how technology promised to challenge the expressions and practices of intimacy, desire and the very notions of gender identity: “cyberspace provides us with new possibilities for choosing a gender identity that does not depend on the material body” (p. 459).

Faced with a permanently connected daily life, we see new critical perspectives emerging in social research on the use of technologies and new communication flows, power and gender relations. In an only apparent paradox, the internet, being able to be a space promoting equality, does not fail to configure a mirror of the past, that is, despite opening new opportunities and offering a space “for fourth-wave feminism, this technology also lends itself to behaviours that constituted second-wave feminist concerns: gender violence” (Walklate, 2017, p. x).

The study of gender-based violence in the digital context took some time to stand out in research due to the trend in observing the positive impacts of the internet. The subversive impacts have, however, acquired increasing visibility in recent years (Pavan, 2017). It is in the light of these other impacts that the dialectic between technology and gender that underlies the study of online violence against women also allows repositioning the mainstream view on the participatory culture itself (Jenkins, 2009):

it is not that individuals have stopped participating, creating or sharing; what we are realising is that such actions are not necessarily encouraging greater engagement, in general, with the world, nor are they inherently more democratic or contribute to a more just and peaceful future. (Massanari, 2015, p. 167)

3. TECHNOLOGICAL MEDIATION OF VIOLENCE

Building on this tradition of feminist studies on technology, the theoretical framework that supports this study has two prevalent dimensions. On the one hand, the specificities of technological mediation during the pandemic period; on the other, the particularities of the online context as a space of continuity of the dynamics of violence existing offline.

Despite the sudden outbreak of war in Europe, at the beginning of 2022, having come to annihilate a certain emotional relief longed for during the pandemic, people are gradually experiencing a return to a life with fewer restrictions. The pandemic was declared in March 2020, precisely the month in which, in Portugal, the first of several confinements and mandatory social restrictions was decreed. Globally, on March 17, 2022, the World Health Organization recorded more than 6.000.000 deaths from COVID-19 (a little more than 21.000 in Portugal) and more than 10.000.000.000 vaccines administered (in Portugal, 90% with vaccination complete, 60% with reinforcement; World Health Organization, n.d.).

The experience of the pandemic can be considered a turning point in several areas, particularly in relation to the use of technology, especially due to the magnitude of what happened and the questions that arose.

Globally, technology has become a medium for almost everything due to the impossibility of physical contact and travel. Television and online sources were significantly more widely used than newspapers, which relied on physical distribution (Newman et al., 2020). Online media, especially social platforms, became a preferred source of information (true, false or misleading), produced and spread in unprecedented quantities, impacting the formation of global discourses (Cinelli et al., 2020). Remote classes have been widely adopted to mitigate the consequences of temporary and repeated school closures around the world (Garbe et al., 2020; Morgan, 2020). Teleworking became mandatory several times during the pandemic, ensuring the necessary social distance and the possibility of continuity of economic activities (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020). Online shopping grew exponentially, forcing people to adopt new behaviours (Eger et al., 2021). Telemedicine itself was rapidly implemented in various contexts (Wosik et al., 2020). This period of technological dependence and ubiquity of screens in everyday life was the first glimpse of what Anderson and colleagues call “tele-everything” to designate a possible near future (Anderson et al., 2021).

The use of online social platforms was already intense before the pandemic, which can be explained by their positive contribution to overcoming space-time barriers and

responding to the constraints that the intense pace of life causes in relationships established offline (Antoci et al., 2015). However, the pandemic changed this dynamic by preventing offline social contact. In this period, the use of social platforms thus saw a huge increase (Newman et al., 2020). Singh et al. (2020) even refer to a “compulsive use of online social media”, where “over-engagement” has become a “psychological necessity, in helping people meet their needs for human interaction and cope with the pandemic” (p. 1). Thus, at a first level, the use of social platforms during the pandemic can be understood as a real need to combat social isolation and relate, interact and belong. It is worth calling upon Maslow’s (1987) theory, which explained how the existence of emotional needs, when unmet, was dominant and led to stability-seeking behaviour.

However, as shown, for instance, in the study by Boursier et al. (2020, p. 1), prolonged exposure also increased anxiety in many cases, creating a cycle that is difficult to break. This dichotomy is, on several levels, prevalent in the results of studies on the impacts of social media use. There are always complex frameworks in which socio-economic and cultural factors need to be considered (Bekalu et al., 2019) and where virtues and dangers are inevitably identified simultaneously (Allen et al., 2014; Radovic et al., 2017, among others). Mental health effects constitute one of the most prolific areas, with research on the effects of addictive behaviours being widely explored (Hou et al., 2019; Marino et al., 2018). Not being unprecedented, this approach to the pandemic has shown an association between social media exposure and mental health (Zhang et al., 2021).

The other line of research that is fundamental to the framework of this study is the one that focuses precisely on online media as spaces of violence, particularly against women and the perpetuation of gender inequalities. It is our conviction, as previously stated, that online violence against women is part of this wider continuum of violence and subjugation (Kelly, 1987).

That is not a new reality, as shown by Barak’s (2005) work on online harassment or Filipovic’s (2007) work on how the online context of bloggers reproduced a structural dynamic. However, only much more recently, with the ubiquity of social media in everyday life, has this area become more prolific in the academy.

When it emerged, the internet brought with it a set of ideas associated with its free and open essence, such as equality, participation, and emancipation. Nevertheless, online environments did not develop exclusively as deliberative forums promoting democracy, as Dahlberg (2001) stated. The work of Papacharissi (2004) on online incivility, a multi-significant concept covering various manifestations, is based precisely on this attack against the core values of democracy. In this sphere are included behaviours that somehow contribute to the removal of women from this deliberative space since what is at stake are the real possibilities of participating and intervening significantly in a space without any type of constraints or fears (Santos, 2022). However, the internet hasn’t been like that for some time. In 2016, *Wired* magazine collectively wrote a letter to the internet saying it was time to end the dynamics generated in those 2 decades: “you were supposed to be the blossoming of a million voices. We were all going to democratise access to information together. But some of your users have taken that freedom as a license to

victimise others” (Wired Staff, 2016, para. 2). The call to action made by Wired was addressed to large corporations since the official discourse and practices of the platforms about the consequences on the perpetrators, do not coincide. Rigorously, while companies claim that they take these instances of online abuse of women very seriously (Wired Staff, 2016), there is evidence to confirm that this is not always the case. A study by the Center for Countering Digital Hate (2022), conducted in November 2021, identified 288 accounts that had spread offensive and violent, misogynistic content directed at several women with public notoriety. After 2 months of the complaint was reported to Twitter by the Center for Countering Digital Hate (2022), 88% of these accounts were still active. A more recent analysis of this second group showed that around half of these accounts not initially blocked by Twitter had reoccurred. On another scale, the experience of Marianna Spring (2021), the BBC’s leading expert on misinformation, is identical after reporting to Facebook the threats she received while producing a documentary about the subject. However, this is a reading that does not go unnoticed by people who are aware of it and are critical of this attitude of the platforms, as shown in the Pew Research Center study, referring to the American reality (Vogels, 2021, p. 5).

This same study provides a set of results that help to make concrete what happens in online spaces (particularly social networks) as spaces of violence. Firstly, it should be noted that the percentage of US citizens who have experienced any kind of online abuse has not increased in the last 4 years, remaining at around 40%. What has changed is the severity and intensity of the situations (Vogels, 2021, p. 4), which implies another reading of the data: in the most severe categories of abuse, physical threats, stalking, prolonged harassment and sexual harassment, there has been a doubling in the number of people reporting having experienced these situations since the 2014 study.

Like others, the Pew Research Center study (Vogels, 2021) shows that this is a reality experienced by both men and women. However, the results also show unequivocally that the type of violence differs between genders: men more often report being insulted or physically threatened. In contrast, women report being more sexually harassed or stalked. Incidentally, this is particularly evident in younger women: a third of women under 35 said they had been sexually harassed online. Broader studies, however, uncover more worrying figures: the Plan International (2020) study, which covered 31 countries, has results showing that more than half of young women (15–25 years old) have experienced such a situation online. The Amnesty International (2017) study, which involved Denmark, Italy, New Zealand, Poland, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States, points to almost a quarter of the sample (23%), although their age group is wider (18–55; Amnesty International, 2017).

The handling of statistics can be misleading and sometimes sterile since there are studies done in the most diverse socio-cultural contexts and with the most diverse methodological designs. In this sense, proceeding to a systematisation that can solidify frames of reference for framing the results is imperative.

Institutionally, besides the respective legislation of each country and the contribution of several Non-Governmental Organisations, there is a relevant international framework

for issues of gender violence through conventions and resolutions of the Council of Europe, the United Nations and the European Union, among other organisations.

Nevertheless, there is no stable conceptual delimitation of online gender violence. Ging and Siapera (2018) address this multiplicity of situations under the broader umbrella of the concept of online misogyny to emphasise the cultural dimension of what goes beyond violence. Here, we also intend to go beyond any delimitation of the legal order. In this sense, like Amaral and Simões (2021), we assume that “online gender violence” encompasses a set of diverse negative manifestations (sometimes even overlapping or related) and is, as a rule, used in the same sense as other references, such as online abuse, being also framed, sometimes, by the very sphere of “incivility”. Since it is not the task of this article to discuss these specificities, we assume here, within the scope of online violence or abuse, a series of diverse manifestations, such as: defamation, falsehood, revenge porn, sextortion, doxing (unauthorised disclosure of private information), unwanted sexual messages, offensive approaches, threats, various forms of hate speech, insult, humiliation, stalking, prolonged harassment, forms of objectification (Nussbaum, 1995) or passive verbal forms (Barak, 2005). These practices, alone or combined, reflect a systemic condition based on gender discrimination.

Besides the enumeration, from which some forms may inadvertently be left out, it is important here to consider two dimensions, as Nadim and Fladmoe (2021) do: the first comprises the level of aggressiveness, which is variable and may range from “name-calling”, to a concrete threat or hateful remark; while the second refers to the target of the remark, that is, the target at which the message is directed, which may range from the single person to the group or its thought or attitude (p. 248). This systematisation leads to a distinction between comments directed at the person (what he or she is and his or her characteristics) and those directed at what he or she thinks or stands for (Nadim & Fladmoe, 2021, p. 248).

When online violence is directed at “who” people are (either in a group or individually), the possibility of this resulting in silencing is greater than when it is directed at what they “think”, and this process is more evident in women (Nadim & Fladmoe, 2021, p. 255). The International Amnesty (2017) study shows this is a very common reality: 58% of respondents who had experienced online harassment said it included racism, sexism, homophobia or transphobia.

The psychological impacts are identified and are significantly mentioned in the various studies available: anxiety, depression, panic attacks, low self-esteem and lack of confidence, sleep problems, inability to concentrate, fear, discomfort and insecurity, feelings of guilt, shame, and vulnerability in online interaction (Amnesty International, 2017; Plan International, 2020). Ultimately, there is a process of silencing, of corrosion of core democratic principles and equality: more than three-quarters of women who experienced such situations in the Amnesty International (2017) study reported that they changed their way of using online platforms, and about one-third of women in that group stopped posting opinion-expressing content on certain topics. This silencing process is well explained by Megarry (2014, p. 46), who clarifies how equality is not achieved only

through mathematics: online equality does not depend only on the possibility of occupying space but on being able to participate in equal measure, to express without fear of threats or violence.

For this study, it is therefore important to characterise the specific context that occurred during the pandemic, with reference to: (a) the increased use of apps and social networks for the majority (if not the totality) of the promotion of personal contacts; (b) the use of technological mediation platforms for the maintenance and development of professional activities due to the social and professional limitations arising from the confinements; (c) the exceptionality of a situation of public calamity, with potential emotional impacts exacerbated by the prolongation of measures, the mandatory confinements, the unpredictability of the situation and the “infodemy” itself, which raged through the networks.

In the online context, an increase in gender-based violence has been reported during these 2 years or so (Berger, 2021). Online violence, as an extension of systemic relations of gender inequality, thus reflects an increase in situations of gender violence during the COVID-19 pandemic (Mittal & Singh, 2020), namely domestic violence (Piquero et al., 2021). Notwithstanding this background, the necessary characterisation of the Portuguese context during this period does not seem easy, given that there are no systematised quantitative indicators to date that respond to the specificity of this study. The context is also built on data collected piecemeal from various reports.

Recently published data confirmed that the widespread perception is that the pandemic led to increased physical and emotional violence against women during the pandemic. The European Parliament (2022) eurobarometer shows that 90% of women in Portugal share this perception, exceeding the European average of 77%. Specifically, in Portugal, the use of quantitative data with statistical expression is made possible by the Internal Security reports, whose most recent editions report that the occurrences of domestic violence recorded by the security forces in 2020 decreased by 6.3% compared to the previous year (Sistema de Segurança Interna, 2021) and by 4% in 2021, totalling 26,520 occurrences in that year¹ (Sistema de Segurança Interna, 2022, 2022). The decrease in domestic violence complaints to the security forces during the months the state of emergency was in force has been explained by the various limitations imposed on individual mobility, as there was an increase after the end of that period. The Portuguese Association for Victim Support has also highlighted another relevant aspect that occurred during the confinements and that the data from the police forces do not discriminate: the increase in psychological violence (Neves, 2021).

With a very strong gender dimension, crimes against sexual freedom and self-determination are significant in this context. That includes several types, namely coercion and sexual harassment or rape. However, there are no quantitative data in the Internal Security reports that allow us to characterise trends in recent years. The data from the National Cyber-Security Centre are also not systematised to respond to this specific context.

¹ In this context, it should be noted that 85% of complaints refer to violence against a partner, 75% of which refer to violence against women.

Although the Portuguese Association for Victim Support data does not translate total numbers for the territory, the association has a social and geographical expressiveness that validates its inclusion. The Portuguese Association for Victim Support (Associação Portuguesa de Apoio à Vítima, 2021) registered an increase in requests for help in 2020 (when compared to the previous year). Of the total number of requests for help, 87% were in the context of domestic violence, 61% of which were in intimate relationships, mainly registering threats, coercion, insults, and offences against physical integrity. The remaining 13% of requests, referring to the non-domestic context, register among other crimes of violence against women, insults, and sexual crimes.

Although there were contingency and intervention plans for the pandemic in the most diverse agents, the focus here is on the institutional responses regarding this period. Here, legislative measures stand out, such as the inclusion of situations of displacement and circulation during states of emergency and calamity for the reception of victims. There was also a classification of victim assistance and support services as essential services, which allowed for a support framework for employees. Other responses included opening temporary emergency reception structures and adopting contingency plans in the field of domestic violence support, which included implementing and reinforcing remote means of denunciation, support and management. The Commission for Gender Equality created a new email address (violencia.COVID@cig.gov.pt) and a free and confidential SMS line, 3060, in addition to the existing permanent phone service. The BrightSky App was launched with various information, a risk perception tool, and a covert mode feature. The management of vacancies for victims' reception was also centralised online, which allowed for more agile management of the processes (Comissão para a Cidadania e Igualdade de Género, 2020). In June 2021, the Plan for Strengthening the Prevention and Fight against Domestic Violence was launched, reinforcing dissemination campaigns, strengthening contacts with signalled victims and providing new tools for police forces and specialised agents. Although it was not a response driven by the pandemic context, it is important to mention that during this period, several actions began to take shape resulting from the approval by the Council of Ministers of a resolution (No. 139/2019), which included, among other aspects training of security forces, improvement of protection measures and data processing. This resolution originated in the "recommendations presented by the Multidisciplinary Technical Commission created in March, after the high number of homicides in the context of domestic violence earlier this year" (Comissão para a Cidadania e Igualdade de Género, 2019, para. 2).

4. METHODOLOGY AND CRITICAL ISSUES

This study is part of a larger project whose objectives are (a) to produce knowledge about an emerging theme that has been little studied in Portugal, namely to know the prevalence, nature and impact of online violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic, mapping the experiences and perceptions of these practices; (b) to promote gender equality in the field, with actions that raise awareness about the responsible use

of media and digital technologies; and (c) to contribute to guiding social and institutional responses aimed both at preventing and combating violence and misogyny in digital contexts. As a result of these objectives, in this article, we seek to answer the following research question: how do women victims/survivors experience the nature, prevalence and impacts of online violence during the COVID-19 pandemic?

4.1 CRITICAL ISSUES IN PANDEMIC TIMES: CHALLENGES OF INVESTIGATING ONLINE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Doing victimology research during the COVID-19 pandemic will undoubtedly mark the most experienced researchers. Of course, fieldwork that focuses on painful experiences is always complicated for those who report these experiences and for those who investigate them. However, the isolation measures to contain the pandemic of COVID-19 had, and still have, a complex and significant impact, both on those being investigated and on those investigating. It is undoubtedly the case when studying through qualitative methods online violence against women, which has become a pandemic within the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this study, we conducted in-depth interviews to understand how women targeted for harmful online practices during the COVID-19 pandemic make sense of these practices. We spent several months trying to gather volunteers willing to participate in a research project based on a personal data collection method. Subsequently, for about 6 months, we conducted 30 1-hour semi-structured interviews with victims/survivors of online violence using videoconferencing applications. All formal interviews were recorded, focusing on the participants' contexts, nature of the harmful experiences lived, their impacts and perceptions of their social consequences.

The practical, ethical and legal issues faced in adapting fieldwork to digital research were key challenges. However, we also faced unique problems regarding the identification of victims with their negative experiences as targets of little-known deviant behaviour in pandemic times. Hundreds of informal interactions and conversations, mainly through social networks and instant messaging platforms, preceded these interviews to find potential volunteers: women aged 18 years or older living in Portugal during the pandemic and with a history of negative online experiences. These informal contacts served to describe how the interviews would take place and the non-financial compensation for participation in the study, namely contributing to a research focused on an emerging social problem.

In particular, the project's qualitative methodology, with unquestionable value in capturing people's everyday experiences, accounts for several of the difficulties we faced. In Portugal, there is no common linguistic and cultural framework to draw on for ideas on how to name, define and interpret what happens when women are the target of sexist hate comments, misogynistic rhetoric, abuse or murder threats on the net. Thus, the lack of recognition of abusive behaviour in digital environments, including the lack of self-understanding of being a victim of those, was a sometimes difficult obstacle to

overcome. During the interviews, we also saw survivors struggling to put into words situations of great suffering not disconnected from admittedly wider issues but nevertheless distant from public conversation and the cultural imaginaries with which we all make sense of reality.

Furthermore, even though the technology makes it possible to do fieldwork in real-time and hold interactive conversations, despite the demands for social distance, it is not conducive to empathetic expressions by researchers to mitigate the risks of participants feeling negative emotions. Notably, with the increasing use of digital technologies in response to the confinement measures enacted by the government, there remains no discussion of the wave of critical issues related to technology, which has embodied new social and political relationships, often increasing the burden on the most vulnerable groups.

Remembering painful experiences can cause suffering. We believe this was mainly why many volunteers left us waiting in vain, without any justification, in the scheduled videoconferences. On other occasions, justification came with the participant's regret that she had consented to the interview, realising how verbalising what happened would make her relive what she just wanted to forget. Standard research ethics, such as ensuring that participants were in control and could stop their participation, aimed to protect survivors. However, there is evidence that survivors participating in non-anonymous data collection methods can benefit emotionally from sharing their stories (Campbell et al., 2004). Notably, capturing the stories of those who suffer from deviant behaviour is a way of giving them a voice and shaping the issue being studied on their own terms. Finally, the interviews were also emotional for the project team. It was not easy to provide participants with the opportunity to introduce impactful topics and ideas when we heard: "I started to mutilate myself because it was too much for me. I wanted another kind of pain to stop feeling what I was feeling". We found it difficult to attend to the personal narratives of the still fresh and damaging experiences without sounding too condescending. Furthermore, given the personal and professional limitations arising from the pandemic, it was not always possible to have more than one researcher for each interview to talk to about the emotions felt from the stories being told.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had and continues to impact how we conduct research, requiring old concerns about the participation of trauma survivors and new ethical reflections regarding informed consent and reflexivity to address objects in the context of profound mediatization (Couldry & Hepp, 2018).

4.2. METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGY

The methodological strategy mobilised in this work is anchored in the feminist phenomenological approach (Butler, 1988; De Beauvoir, 1949/2014;) and articulated with a new feminist materialist perspective (Haraway, 2006; Lupton, 2019). In this sense, we start from the idea of being a woman and her historical structure, considering her place of speech in multiple dimensions that do not focus exclusively on biology. In a feminist phenomenological logic, we considered lived experiences as gendered and non-neutral

articulating them with the new feminist materialist perspective that holds that the dynamics of people's engagement with other people and objects through technology is deeply productive. It follows that the use of technology not only promotes the consumption of dominant ideologies but directly affects how people are feeling and thinking (Lupton, 2019).

As mentioned above, from October 2020 to March 2021, we conducted 30 in-depth interviews lasting about 1 hour, using videoconferencing applications, with victims/survivors of online violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. For corpus analysis, using MAXQDA software, we used critical thematic analysis to identify and analyse patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As a first step, the analysis process involved coding the text and identifying patterns, repeated discourses and critical themes. In the second stage, based on the victims' lived and perceived experiences and following Lawless and Chen's (2019) proposal, we identified the modalities of online violence suffered by the participants in the critical themes and patterns.

4.3. PARTICIPANTS

The survivors we interviewed are young women, aged between 18 and 44, who are engaged in a diverse range of professional activities, including teaching ($n_i = 2$), health ($n_i = 2$), technology ($n_i = 2$), architecture and arts ($n_i = 2$), administrative services and sales ($n_i = 7$), students ($n_i = 6$), among other professions ($n_i = 6$). There are also three unemployed persons among the interviewees. Most of the victims/survivors have completed secondary education ($n_i = 13$), a degree ($n_i = 8$) or a master's degree ($n_i = 5$). There are also four persons with other qualifications. At the regional level, there is a predominance of the Lisbon metropolitan area ($n_i = 16$) and the northern zone of the country ($n_i = 12$). Only two interviewees are from the centre of Portugal.

5. RESULTS

The results of this research allow us to understand that online violence is a real social problem that takes place in dynamic modalities, often interconnected, integrating a continuum of violence against women (Kelly, 1987) that cannot be separated from the offline context. In this sense, we perceive that violence occurs indiscriminately, affecting women in different contexts and a multiplatform logic. The evidence collected and analysed by our study immediately points to the need to broaden the definitory field of violence against women, which cannot be reduced to physical abuse in the private space, homicide committed by an intimate partner, or sexual violence in the public space. Violence has adapted, migrated to the digital environment and often gone viral. At the same time, it is a phenomenon whose gendered nature is manifest, therefore, inseparable from the norms that underpin discrimination and gender inequalities, which always deepen in crisis contexts.

Online violence against women is, therefore, part of the broader continuum of violence, translated into behaviours that express and reproduce the gender inequalities of a

patriarchal society based on traditional gender roles that translate how men and women should be and behave. As the scientific literature shows, online violence against women is dynamic and can fit into a broader picture of online misogyny (Ging & Siapera, 2018). However, our data show that violence modalities go beyond misogynistic rhetoric or incivility (Papacharissi, 2004), translating into varied abuse behaviours with harmful consequences for victims (Amaral & Simões, 2021).

Based on the critical thematic analysis, the data collected allowed us to identify 10 modalities of online violence (Figure 1), all of them integrating some diversity of behaviours and dynamics and, therefore, in constant transformation. We systematise them below to contribute to the establishment of a specific lexicon for these situations in Portugal.



Figure 1 Modalities of online violence

5.1. ONLINE HARASSMENT

Online harassment encompasses a diverse set of abusive behaviours that involve the intentional imposition of emotional distress through digital discourse. Examples of

online harassment include: offensive teasing on social media, chats and forums; threats of physical and/or sexual violence via email, mobile messages or online platforms; hate speech that is sexist or based on gender identity and other characteristics, such as nationality and sexual orientation.

One of them even sent me a picture of a woman all beaten up. Telling me to be careful in the street. When that could happen to me. Just for the simple fact that I was a woman giving my opinion. (Student, 20 years old)

5.2. STALKING ONLINE

Online stalking involves the repeated hampering of victims' freedom of determination, harassing them and causing them distress in the private, professional and social spheres. Examples of online stalking practices are: repeatedly sending offensive or threatening emails, mobile phone messages or instant messages; systematically and harassingly posting offensive comments; repeatedly sharing intimate photos or videos on the internet or via mobile phone.

I think he started to put pressure that he didn't even know, so that at the end, in the more aggressive message he sent, he said: "I don't know what's special about you, but I know I will not stop bothering you". (Unemployed, 30 years old)

5.3. CYBER MOBS

Cyber mobs are collective online harassment practices aimed at attacking a particular person, often in competition with other online groups. Examples of collective harassment include online groups posting offensive, humiliating, and destructive content with the aim of creating a negative image around someone.

Some saying that I had no place in politics. Others saying I had no right to be there. They also started taking screenshots of my Twitter feed and started posting them in groups. Groups that are openly right-wing extremist. And now, with the presidential elections, that's happening again. (Student, 20 years old)

5.4. DOXING

Doxing is the term used to describe the unauthorised theft and publication of private data. Examples of doxing are the theft and unauthorised online disclosure of personal information from the private, financial, and family spheres.

It was in Gmail. It was in Gmail spam. I went to check my spam, the junk box, I looked twice and “What is this?” And I went, “No, no”. But, as I saw it and it actually had a password that had already been mine, I got a bit worried. (Educator, 40 years old)

5.5. IDENTITY THEFT

Online identity theft involves practices of illegitimate appropriation of other people’s identities or personal information for illicit purposes and to commit crimes. Online identity theft often occurs through the appropriation of online profiles after the theft of login data and passwords from email or social network accounts, which are subsequently used by another person. Identity theft may also result from the creation of fake profiles of the victim by third parties.

“So what this person did was create several fake accounts in my name. On Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook and Tinder. At least, as far as I know” (Administrative, 41 years old).

5.6. SEXUAL ABUSE THROUGH IMAGES

Sexual abuse through images includes the non-consensual dissemination of intimate photographs or videos of others. Examples of sexual abuse through images are the non-consensual online dissemination of photographs or videos that may have been recorded consensually or captured non-consensually.

Pictures of me without my consent have been spread since I’ve known myself as a woman, literally. I was 12, 13 years old, and it was pictures, posts on my Instagram, my Facebook in other groups asking if there were pictures of me and videos of me. When I barely knew what sex was. And my friends would come to me and say, “look, they’ve put photos of you here, and they’re here talking about you” (...). Now, this last time, it was intimate videos of me. (Unemployed, 23 years old)

5.7. CYBER-FLASHING

Cyber-flashing corresponds to the reception of unwanted images of a sexual nature.

“Besides harassment in terms of non-consensual images, there were also disgusting messages that I preferred not to read. (...). Either they send a dirty message or a photo that nobody asked for” (Sex worker, 21 years old).

5.8. SEXTORTION

Sextortion involves extortion practices of money or other demands in exchange for not disclosing sexually explicit photographs or videos involving the victim online.

The worst thing they can do to me is to send me, like this guy who sent me an email (...), saying: “Look, either you transfer me, I don’t know how much into my account, or I will send your friends a video or some indecent photos of you”. (Educator, 40 years old)

5.9. IMAGE MANIPULATION AND DEEP FAKE

Practices of sophisticated manipulation of images of a person and their illegitimate disclosure. The term deep fake refers to the use of technology that manipulates real photographs or videos, generating fake but technically credible content of a person, often of a sexual nature. One of the most common practices is to change the face of people involved in sexual practices.

“I don’t know where those photographs of mine went, ah, ended up, ended up” (Student, 20 years old).

5.10. HARASSMENT IN TELEWORK

Repeated practices of moral or sexual harassment compatible with situations of harassment in the workplace and carried out with the technological mediation of digital platforms and tools used in a teleworking context.

“A lot of the pressures are more over the phone. They’re more in video conferencing, which was not recorded. And you end up not having proof to go forward” (Administrative, 39 years old).

6. DISCUSSION

The presentation of this systematisation of forms of online violence can only be properly understood in its context, so it is important to place it in the broader context provided by thematic analysis. It happens, however, that in Portugal, there is no common linguistic and cultural framework to which to turn in search of knowledge on how to name, define and interpret what happens when women are the target of sexist hate comments, misogynist rhetoric, and recurrent insulting attacks. In this sense, our study brings to the fore the need to equate a common nomenclature for these behaviours and phenomena, which, although dynamic, are perpetuated and often normalised for occurring online.

The results of this study suggest that the violence that occurred during the pandemic situation tends to be normalised by the victims and excused, given the massive use of technologies and the tendency to vent through them the frustrations, anguish and other emotional pressures developed or exacerbated during the confinements. One aspect to underline is that our study clearly showed the lack of recognition of abusive behaviours online, including the lack of awareness of the victim and/or survivor condition, which even made it difficult for women victims/survivors to get involved in the study.

Particularly because they would have to come forward in formal interviews to talk about a subject far removed from the public conversation.

During COVID-19, the digital platforms most used by the study participants were essentially social networks and social media. The lived and perceived experiences of violence occurred indiscriminately in these spaces, in the form of private messages, comments, and shares, among other practices. As in domestic violence, where, notwithstanding the existence of risk factors, victimisation knows no boundaries of class, education, region of belonging, colour or creed, the transversality of online violence must also be acknowledged. The diversity of socio-professional profiles of the women victim-survivors we interviewed reveals this picture. Women students, unemployed, administrative assistants, teachers, health professionals, and technology and fashion professionals report the routine prevalence of online violence in their lives, which is never an isolated practice, but a persistent experience.

In most cases, unknown male profiles, acting individually or in organised groups, are identified as the perpetrators of various forms of online violence against women. Other cases reported by survivors involve unknown female profiles, integrated into communities and organised groups, whose action is recognised by the victims as being amplified by the sense of anonymity and impunity offered by the internet.

The experiences of violence lived or witnessed that involve known perpetrators are also significant. They are predominantly men with whom the victim has had an intimate relationship in the more or less recent past.

Only three situations involving women in the role of perpetrators known to victims, acting individually, were reported. Most situations involving women in the role of perpetrators were described as the result of the action of communities and organised groups, as mentioned above. The fact that there are female perpetrators does not negate the widespread nature of the phenomenon. On the contrary, it shows that the repeated reproduction of norms that favour traits associated with masculinity and disparage things codified as feminine, particularly women, is a widespread practice in society. The harm caused by this practice further produces and reproduces social subordination and denies or restricts equal opportunities to participate in social and political life for women and other marginalised and stigmatised groups.

For survivors of online violence, the consequences could be dramatic, both online and offline. Online, the impact contemplates self-censorship, self-discipline and silencing and even abandonment, albeit temporary, from the social media where the experiences of violence took place. Offline, online violence also has severe consequences, including stress and anxiety, isolation, feelings of insecurity, loss of self-esteem or self-harm.

7. FINAL NOTES

Online violence against women, in its multiple expressions, has not been sufficiently worked on or discussed, particularly in Portugal, where there is no generalised ethical-social recognition of its seriousness nor a normative model to address it. That

explains why the reactions of the victim-survivors who participated in the study are overwhelmingly limited to responding in the same space where the violence occurred, blocking profiles, for example, or leaving the digital platform. Only a minority is seeking help from non-governmental organisations or security forces. It is therefore important to emphasise the need, starting with the academy, legislators, and other organisations and public figures, to promote awareness and a generalised ethical and social recognition of this reality. Currently, given the existing type of recognition and support, it must be acknowledged that the family and network of friends are the first lines of support for these women.

The situation during COVID-19 was exceptional, not only for how technology mediated almost all social interactions in the most diverse contexts but also for the enormous emotional pressure that uncertainty and isolation caused. What the results of this study show concerning how women experience online violence practices illustrate the continuum of misogyny and gender violence to which they are exposed in their daily lives. This reading implies that we continue to look at the online realm as a space of power networks and inequalities. By facilitating the scrutiny and policing of women's behaviour, online violence has inhibiting effects on women's participation in public space, reinforcing gender injustice. Therefore, online violence affects not only women's dignity but also the freedom to participate fully and express opinions in public space without fear of harassment. It conditions the right to freedom of expression, limiting professional opportunities and recreating a space of inequality that already exists offline. Ultimately, online gender violence persists in eroding a pillar of democracy that is equality and continues to demonstrate that being present in equal numbers does not always imply equality.

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FACIAL RECOGNITION TECHNOLOGY AND PUBLIC SECURITY IN BRAZILIAN CAPITALS: ISSUES AND PROBLEMATIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Based on the identification and analysis of proposals presented by municipal public administrators, this paper notes the relationship between digital technologies and general security in Brazil. The government programs prepared by the current mayors of all capitals of the country in the last municipal election (2020), and filed with the Superior Electoral Court, were selected as a research corpus. As the main results of the analysis, we lay out the following: the forecast of the use of digital technologies in public security by 15 of the current 26 mayors of capital cities, the party pulverization and the geographic diversity of these managers, the concealment of potential problems in the application of these technologies. Adopting the notions of surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2018/2020) and algorithmic racism (Silva, 2019), we conclusively understand that digital technologies applied to public security must consider the possible ethical, social, political, and cultural implications, especially in a country marked by structural racism, so that, in fighting crime and expanding protection, violence against historically discriminated groups is not perpetuated.

KEYWORDS

surveillance capitalism, digital technologies, facial recognition,
public security, algorithmic discrimination

TECNOLOGIA DE RECONHECIMENTO FACIAL E SEGURANÇA PÚBLICA NAS CAPITALS BRASILEIRAS: APONTAMENTOS E PROBLEMATIZAÇÕES

RESUMO

A partir da identificação e análise de propostas apresentadas por gestores públicos municipais, o presente artigo tece apontamentos sobre a relação entre tecnologias digitais e segurança pública no Brasil. Como corpus de pesquisa, foram selecionados os programas de governo elaborados pelos atuais prefeitos de todas as capitais do país na última eleição municipal (2020) e protocolados no Tribunal Superior Eleitoral. Como principais resultados da análise, apontam-se aqui: a previsão de uso de tecnologias digitais na segurança pública por 15 dos atuais 26 prefeitos

de capitais, a pulverização partidária e a diversidade geográfica desses gestores, o ocultamento de potenciais problemas na aplicação dessas tecnologias. Adotando as noções de capitalismo de vigilância (Zuboff, 2018/2020) e racismo algorítmico (Silva, 2019) compreende-se em termos conclusivos que, sobretudo em um país marcado pelo racismo estrutural, as tecnologias digitais aplicadas à segurança pública devem ser pautadas considerando as possíveis implicações éticas, sociais, políticas e culturais, de modo que, na busca pelo combate à criminalidade e por ampliação da segurança, não se perpetue violências contra grupos historicamente discriminados.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

capitalismo de vigilância, tecnologias digitais, reconhecimento facial, segurança pública, discriminações algorítmicas

1. INTRODUCTION

The problem of urban violence and crime is one of the main concerns of the Brazilian population. On the eve of the 2018 presidential election, public security was indicated by voters as the second most serious problem in Brazil, second only to healthcare (Gelape, 2018). This perception is motivated by the fact that the country has an annual rate of over 40,000 murders, the highest absolute number of homicides worldwide, and a rate five times higher than the global average (Chade, 2019).

Since no doubt overcoming this issue requires a set of efforts and political actions, what answers have the public administrations of Brazilian cities offered in general security concerning the use of digital technologies? That is the driving question of this article, of which the primary objective is to analyze how proposals that foresee the application of technologies, defended by mayors of the country's capitals, relate to discourses on fighting crime.

Methodologically, delving into the question presented, the work began with the survey of government programs registered on the website of the Superior Electoral Court (n.d.) of all the current mayors of the 26 state capitals¹, elected in 2020 and sworn in in 2021.

From this, we identified in these government programs the proposals related to the use of digital technologies in public security, based on the use of 10 key expressions that are close to the researched object: “facial recognition”; “artificial intelligence”; “surveillance”; “video surveillance”; “monitoring”; “drone”; “camera”; “video”; “data”; “technology”.

After gathering the programs that contained some proposals of interest to this work, a form was prepared to guide and standardize the analysis, including the following questions:

- What types of digital technologies are proposed for use in public security?
- Are those technologies integrated into a specific program?
- Are the proposals put forward as an alternative to fight crime?

¹ Aside from its 26 state capitals, Brazil has a federal capital, Brasília, that does not have a mayor.

- Are the possible benefits of using information and communication technologies in public security showcased?
- Are possible issues arising from using those technologies in the safety contexts mentioned?

These questions were defined to identify if there is, in the proposals of the mayors of Brazilian capital cities, a tendency to use digital technologies in public security regarding the fight against crime.

To fulfill the proposed objective and based on these methodological procedures, the article is structured as follows: firstly, (a) a brief theoretical-conceptual review on surveillance capitalism and the role of digital technologies in this process is made; then (b) information on cases of errors and failures in the identification of people by digital technologies in the area of public security in Brazil are presented and problematized from the perspective of algorithmic oppressions; in sequence, (c) the main results of the analysis are exposed, and some critical remarks are developed; and, lastly, (d) the conclusive considerations are pointed out.

2. SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES: SOME REMARKS

Although they are often seen as the next stage after the disciplinary societies studied by Foucault (1970/1975), based on panoptic surveillance, the “control societies” themed by Deleuze (1992) do not imply less surveillance than the previous ones. The surveillance device is based on technologies that allow information production, diffusion, and collection. Surveillance, far from going away, becomes even more ingrained and radical: if in disciplinary societies, individuals are watched in an on-site, localized, punctual, and involuntary way, in control societies, they are now watched in a virtual, delocalized, omnipresent, and voluntary manner. The term “network society” (Castells, 1996/1999) expresses well, *malgré soi*, this idea of the individual trapped in a web from which he could only escape if, like Robinson Crusoe, drifted away to some island cut off from the world — but he would always risk meeting his Friday, now carrying a cell phone.

No wonder, then, that in his classic text on the subject, Lyon (1994) speaks of a new panopticon that emerges in the information society, the “electronic eye”, based on the systematic collection of data on citizens by the state and by companies, registering the smallest gestures of their daily lives. It is precisely this process that underlies what Lyon (1994) calls the “surveillance society”, the term “surveillance” is used here precisely “as a shorthand term to encompass the many and expanding ranges of contexts in which personal data are collected by employment, commercial, and administrative agencies, as well as in policing and security” (p. ix). This theme of surveillance is taken up and deepened by Lyon in other later texts, most prominently in the book *The Culture of Surveillance: Watching as a Way of Life* (Lyon, 2018). In this work, the concept of “surveillance society” is reviewed in a double sense: first, in the fact that surveillance is not only an activity exercised, on oneself, by entities external to the subject — but it is the subject itself who, freely and voluntarily, provides data about itself and its various activities

(namely through social networks); second, because hetero and self-surveillance become a regular and normalized practice and natural. This artificial “naturalness” of the norms and practices of surveillance constitutes a “surveillance culture”.

In turn, inspired by Foucault, Rouvroy and Berns (2013) designate the type of surveillance that emerges in “control societies” as “algorithmic governmentality”. The inspiration in Foucault lies in the fact that the authors see algorithmic governmentality in the continuity of a form of “power” exercised not over the physical body (law, discipline) or the moral conscience (herding, confession), based on interdiction or prescription, but through “security devices”, based on regulation:

the regulation of a means in which it is not so much a question of fixing limits, borders, in which it is not so much a question of determining locations, but above all essentially of allowing, of guaranteeing, of ensuring circulations: circulation of people, circulation of goods, circulation of air, etc. (Foucault, 2004, as cited in Rouvroy & Berns, 2013, p. 175)

In this sense, the authors define algorithmic governmentality as “a certain type of (a)normative or (a)political rationality that rests on the automatic collection, aggregation, and analysis of massive amounts of data to model, anticipate and affect [i.e., to regulate] possible behaviors in advance” (Rouvroy & Berns, 2013, p. 173). The data that subjects voluntarily provide about themselves and their lives to technological-informational platforms and networks are used by these and by the various economic, political, military, and police powers that articulate with them to build “profiles” that allow directing and guiding individual behaviors in specific directions instead of others, thus determining paths, defining activities, delimiting choices. The “freedom” and “autonomy” of subjects do not cease to exist, but they are conditioned to specific frameworks whose choice does not depend on themselves. These frameworks are lateral to their “freedom” and “autonomy”.

Also, from Foucault’s perspective on the “genealogy of the modern soul”, in which subjectivities are inseparable from visibility devices, Bruno (2004) emphasizes that contemporary communication technologies are characterized by the focus of visibility on the ordinary individual. This aspect is determinant in the production of subjectivities and identities.

The gaze is no longer on those who exercise power but on those over whom power is exercised. On the typical, ordinary individual, and even more on those below the usual and average — the deviant, the abnormal. It is, in fact, an individualizing gaze, a power that individualizes by looking, making the common individual visible, observable, analyzable, and calculable. Thus, power becomes more and more anonymous. In contrast, the standard or deviant individual, exposed to visibility, becomes more and more objectified and tied to one identity — the criminal, the sick, the crazy,

the student, the soldier, and the worker have their behaviors, symptoms, manias, addictions, failures, performances, aptitudes, merits and demerits invested, known, registered, classified, rewarded, punished by the machinery of hierarchical surveillance. (Bruno, 2004, p. 111)

The tragic irony of this new surveillance system is that its leading agent is the subject itself, who paradoxically freely subjects itself in the context of what Zuboff (2018/2020) calls “surveillance capitalism”. A regime that started with Microsoft continues with Google, Facebook, and other social networks and is now generalized to all products, services, and devices that can integrate into the so-called “internet of things”.

In an introductory text on the topic, Zuboff (2019) points to four key features in the constitution of surveillance capitalism: the massive extraction and analysis of data; the development of new contractual forms using computational monitoring and automation; the desire to personalize and customize the services offered to users of digital platforms; and the use of technological infrastructure to perform future experiments on its users and consumers.

The accumulation logic that would ensure Google’s success appears clearly in a patent filed in 2003 by three of the company’s top computer scientists, entitled “Generate user information for targeted advertising”. The invention, they explain, would seek to “establish user profile information and use it for ad dissemination”. In other words, Google would no longer be satisfied with extracting behavioral data to improve its services. It would move on to reading users’ thoughts to match ads to their interests, which in turn would be deduced from collateral traits of online behavior. The collection of new data sets, called *User Profile Information*, would significantly improve the accuracy of these predictions. (...) The invention of Google has revealed new possibilities for deducing the thoughts, feelings, intentions, and interests of individuals and groups through an automated extraction architecture that works as a one-way mirror without regard to the awareness and consent of those involved. This extraction imperative has resulted in economies of scale that would provide a unique competitive advantage in a market in which predictions of individual behavior represent a value that can be bought and sold. But above all, the one-way mirror symbolizes particular social relations of surveillance based on a spectacular asymmetry of knowledge and power. (Zuboff, 2019, paras. 9, 11)

Such a regime, presented in more or less “economic” language, has as its raw material our experience with technologies and the data we yield during that experience. From this data, manufacturing processes based on “machine intelligence” allow the manufacture of “prediction products” that feed a “market of future behaviors” (Zuboff, 2018/2020, p. 13). Through these future behaviors, technologies like Microsoft, Google,

Meta (owner of Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp), and many others sell to the companies that produce a wide variety of goods and services and to the various political-military and police powers.

Now, the data that digital technologies and their respective databases collect and archive are increasingly pictures, especially pictures of our faces, and those technologies have been improving, over time, their ability to process those images. Combining these processes — image collection, archiving, and processing — makes face recognition possible. That companies like Amazon, Google, Microsoft, or IBM have been developing facial recognition programs from image databases in recent years is proven by news reports such as those that emerged in mid-2020, according to which the first three of those companies were being sued by citizens because their photographs from an IBM database were being used without their permission (Musil, 2020).

3. FACIAL RECOGNITION AND DISCRIMINATION

I suffered because the neighbors judged me. I lost many jobs because they said I was a drug dealer. I said I was innocent, and the police told me to think about what I had done. I thought a lot about my family and that I wouldn't see them again. (Bomfim, 2022, para. 12)

These were the words of José Domingos Leitão, 52, in a statement to the R7 portal, after spending three days in jail in October 2020.

Living in the municipality of Ilha Grande, Piauí, José Domingos Leitão was mistakenly identified by facial recognition technology as the author of a crime. The fact that José lives more than 2,000 km from where the crime occurred and that he had never been to the city where the fact occurred was not even considered since his image was in a national database used by the Federal District Police.

Roughly speaking, facial recognition begins with scanning an individual's face. From this, the features and characteristics of the face are transformed into "reference points" that are analyzed, as an identifier associated with that person, so that the database can then normalize with other faces classified in patterns or types based on a certain level of similarity.

Face recognition is a form of biometrics that links a unique element of an individual's human body with a unit of record. The body element can be the fingerprint, the face, or the way of walking. The most common units of registration are those such as the General Register (RG), the Social Security number, or the bank account. The part of the body used for biometrics, be the fingerprints or the face, is never analyzed in its entirety. That means that some points on the face or finger are chosen, and based on the distances between these points, the probability is calculated that the finger or face

belongs to the person registered in the database. In the case of the human face, the possibilities of differences or modifications in these distances are much greater than in a fingerprint since a person ages, might be yawning, or blinking. (Nunes, 2019, pp. 67–68)

Thus, in addition to using for collective monitoring, facial recognition can identify, track, single out and trace people in the places where they transit, thus being able to exercise specific surveillance and violate rights such as privacy, data protection, and non-discrimination.

In the United States, a similar case to that of José Domingos Leitão was registered in 2019, when Robert Williams spent 30 h in jail, in Detroit, also due to an error in the facial recognition system of the Michigan State Police. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, Williams was “the first person wrongfully arrested based on this technology” (Robertson, 2021, para. 1).

A few years earlier, however, the American Civil Liberties Union was already warning of possible problems in this regard. Using a facial recognition tool developed by Amazon, Rekognition FR, the organization applied a survey to members of the United States Congress. It concluded that 28 members of Congress were mistakenly identified with other people already arrested for some crime, most of them Black people (Snow, 2018).

Since then, facial recognition technology errors have been mounting in the United States (O’Neill, 2020), Brazil (G1 Rio, 2019), and other countries. In the United Kingdom, for example, a report produced by researchers at the University of Essex identified an 81% error rate in cases using facial recognition by the London Metropolitan Police (Fussey & Murray, 2019).

In Brazil, data from the Network of Security Observatories (Ramos, 2019) point out that between March and October 2019, in four states surveyed (Bahia, Paraíba, Rio de Janeiro, and Santa Catarina), 151 people were arrested using facial recognition technology, and in cases where there was information on race and color, 90.5%, were Black.

Different authors (Broussard, 2018; Lohr, 2018; Nakamura, 2008) have pointed out that, beyond “natural” errors and failures, these cases highlight the discriminatory nature of these technologies. Broussard (2018) recalls that algorithms “are designed by people, and people incorporate their unconscious biases into algorithms. It is rarely intentional, but that doesn’t mean we should stop analyzing. It means we should be critical and vigilant about things we know can go wrong” (p. 289).

In formulating the concept of algorithmic racism, Silva (2019) points out that there is, in the design of digital technologies, a double opacity regarding the aspect of racialization, characterized by the idea of technology and algorithms as neutral and, at the same time, by the ideology of denial and invisibility of race as a social category.

I elaborate on “algorithmic racism” to describe how automated interfaces and systems, such as social media platforms, can reinforce and hide the racist

dynamics of the societies where they are used and employed. It is important to stress that the problem is not this or that specific algorithm but “how racist societies consequently construct technologies with discriminatory potentials or applications”. (Silva, 2019, para. 6)

In a kind of “timeline” of algorithmic racism, Silva (2019) presents a diversity of cases, data, and reactions to racialization processes in interfaces, databases, algorithms, and artificial intelligence, such as Google systems that allow companies to display ads about crime specifically to African Americans; results in Google Images that show hypersexualized content for searches such as “Black girls”; tagging photos of young Black men with the tag “gorilla” by Google Photos; conversational robots of startups that do not find Black women’s faces; and computer vision systems that miss gender and age of Black women; image bank search engines that render Black families and people invisible; apps that transform selfies and equate beauty with whiteness; natural language processing tools that have biases against Black language and themes; facial emotion analysis that associates negative categories with Black athletes.

In the same direction pointed out by Silva (2019), a study developed by Buolamwini and Gebru (2019) from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology revealed that the margins of error of facial recognition were quite different according to skin color and gender: 0.8% in the case of white men, 26% when Black men and 34% in the case of Black women, one of the motivations being the low representation of faces of darker shades in the datasets, thus leaving the recognition more inaccurate regarding this racial-ethnic group.

Recent studies show that machine learning algorithms can discriminate based on classes such as race and gender. (...) The substantial disparities in the classification accuracy of darker women, lighter women, darker men, and lighter men in gender classification systems require urgent attention if commercial companies are to build genuinely fair, transparent, and accountable facial analysis algorithms. (Buolamwini & Gebru, 2019, p. 1)

The results of studies like the ones mentioned above have generated reactions against adopting facial recognition in different parts of the world. Some examples are Big Brother Watch (<https://bigbrotherwatch.org.uk/>) and Liberty Human Rights (Liberty, n.d.), both in England; the “Ban Facial Recognition” campaign (<https://www.banfacialrecognition.com/>) in the United States; and the Internet Freedom Foundation (n.d.) in India.

In Brazil, in May 2022, hundreds of digital rights organizations, activists, and researchers launched the “Tire o Meu Rosto da Sua Mira” (get my face out of your sights) campaign, which calls for a total ban on digital facial recognition technologies in public security, given the potential for abuses and rights violations.

Surveillance technologies create insecurity by violating our rights without giving us chances to avoid or even consent to its implementation and by making

us targets. Notably, the violations of our integrity, by the collection and processing of personal biometric data; of our freedom to come and go and self-determination, as we may be under surveillance 24/7, creating a frightening context; of our right to the due legal process, as mass surveillance considers everyone guilty as a matter of principle, undermining the constitutional guarantee of the presumption of innocence as a fundamental legal assumption. (Tire o Meu Rosto da Sua Mira , 2022, para. 6)

Other initiatives also aimed at banning facial recognition are worth mentioning. Such as Bill 824/2021 (Projeto de Lei 824/2021, 2021), filed by Councilman Reimont (Workers' Party), which proposes a ban on the use of this technology by Rio de Janeiro city hall, and the Public Civil Action, signed by public agencies and civil society organizations, which aims to ban the use of facial recognition in the São Paulo subway (Intervozes, 2022).

4. MAIN RESULTS

As a result of the first methodological stage of the work, based on the previously defined key expressions, 15 of the current 26 mayors of Brazilian capitals presented, in their government programs in the last election, proposals that involve the use of digital technologies in public security.

The geographical distribution and the party distribution of these 15 mayors — which include cities from all five regions (North, Northeast, Central-West, Southeast, and South) and belong to 11 different political parties² — indicate that the perspective of using technologies as a strategy for security actions is not an issue restricted to one or another part of the country or specific ideological groupings.

Among the types of technologies proposed by the 15 mayors³, as shown in Figure 1, 13 mayors mentioned the installation or expansion of video surveillance or monitoring cameras, either in public transportation, on urban roads, or in other circulation spaces, such as parks and squares; eight mayors proposed the application of facial recognition; four presented actions using drones, and five referred to other technologies.

² The following political parties are represented by the 15 mayors, having proposals that are of interest to this paper: Avante (one), Democrats (two), Brazilian Democratic Movement (two), Labor Democratic Party (one); Brazilian Socialist Party (one), Social Democratic Party (two), Brazilian Social Democracy Party (three), Podemos (one), Progressive Party (two), Republicans (one), União Brasil (one).

³ It should be noted that some mayors mentioned the use of more than one technology.

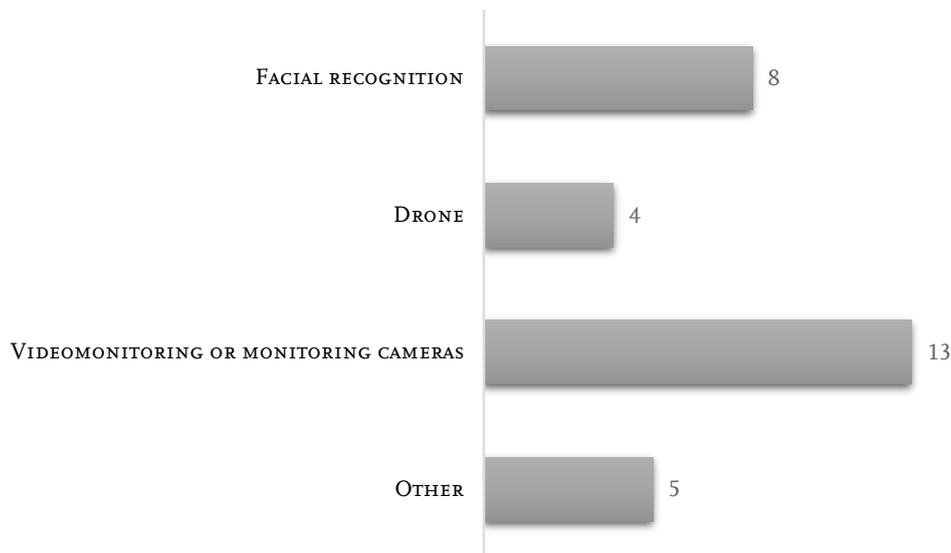


Figure 1 Types of technology

The research also showed that seven of the 15 mayors proposed using technologies in broader public security initiatives. Expressions such as “wall”, “fencing”, “security”, and “safe”, among others, as seen in Table 1, denotes a perspective of segregation, control, and surveillance in the implementation of these technologies by public managers.

PROGRAM NAME	CITY
<i>Muralha Digital</i> (Digital Wall)	Curitiba
<i>Cercamento Eletrônico da Cidade</i> (Electronic City Fencing)	Aracaju
<i>City Câmeras</i> (City Cameras)	São Paulo
<i>De Olho na Rua</i> (Watching the Street)	Goiânia
<i>Teresina Segura</i> (Safe Teresina)	Teresina
<i>Vitória Segura</i> (Safe Vitória)	Vitória
<i>Andar Seguro</i> (Walking Safely)	João Pessoa

Table 1 Program names that connect technologies and public security in Brazilian capitals

Another aspect evidenced in the reading of the government programs was the forecast of strategies that propose the direct involvement of the population in the city’s surveillance.

The management program of Mayor Maguito Vilela (Brazilian Democratic Movement), from Goiânia, points out that “condominiums with video camera systems will be required to have part of the equipment monitoring the streets”.

A similar measure is proposed by Rafael Greca (Democrats) in Curitiba, who defended “the incentive to the population (residences, buildings, and condominiums) and companies (commerce/services)” in collaboration with the *Muralha Digital* (Digital Wall) program.

In Belo Horizonte, the government plan of Mayor Kalil (Social Democratic Party)

signaled that the Operations Center of the City Hall “would also have cameras and sensors installed by citizens themselves. Their images could be made available through a collaborative monitoring platform, expanding the coverage of the city and improving responses to various situations of security and public disorder”.

It is worth questioning that proposals such as those presented above contribute to a kind of “public big brother” in which everyone is, at the same time, a potential watcher and potentially watched, compromising the very notion of public space as an environment for the free circulation of citizens.

Moreover, the analysis identified that in 80% of government programs, the application of technologies in public security is expressly defined as a strategy to fight crime. In this sense, reducing vandalism, depredations, thefts, robberies, invasions, graffiti, assaults, and sexual violence, among others, are cited as the purpose of using technologies.

Furthermore, in 11 of the 15 government programs, generic statements are presented, without details, about the benefits to the population of using digital technologies in public security, such as “more security” (government programs of Teresina, São Paulo, Manaus, Palmas, and Curitiba), “expansion of coverage of the city” (government programs of Aracaju, São Paulo, Campo Grande, Natal, and Rio Branco), and “improvement of responses to the various security situations” (Vitória, Curitiba, and Florianópolis).

On the other hand, although there was already news about rights violations generated by technologies such as facial recognition, like the ones mentioned in this paper, none of the government programs cited any possible problem in using these technologies in public security, nor even alternatives to potential problems. At least in the proposals of the current mayors of Brazilian capitals, it did not appear as a topic of concern.

It is important to note that other capitals where the current mayors did not present a specific proposal in their mayoral programs in the last elections have witnessed actions involving digital technologies in public security. Examples of this are Salvador, Recife, and Rio de Janeiro, which in recent editions of the Carnival (Intervozes, 2019) have carried out surveillance and monitoring via facial recognition from state government initiatives in partnership with multinational technology companies, such as Huawei (Falcão, 2021), Avantia (Ams, 2019), and Oi (Kawaguti, 2019).

In Rio de Janeiro, when the cameras initially installed for carnival 2019 were still in the testing phase, a woman — who was sitting on a bench in the Copacabana neighborhood — was mistakenly arrested by the Military Police after being identified, via facial recognition technology, as a suspect for the crimes of murder and concealment of a corpse. However, hours later, at the police station, they found out that the real author of that crime had already been arrested for it in 2015.

In Recife, despite not being mentioned in his government program, Mayor João Campos (Brazilian Socialist Party) announced in late 2021, still in the 1st year of his administration, the intention to install 108 digital clocks that, in addition to displaying time and traffic information, would have monitoring cameras with facial recognition (Diário de Pernambuco, 2021). Although the adoption of digital clocks has been postponed, the

proposal's implementation involves the possibility of a public-private partnership, granting the operation to private companies for 20 years (Santos, 2021).

Although the proposal was not included in his government program registered during the election period, the mayor of Salvador, Bruno Reis (Democrats), announced, in the last months of 2021, the installation of cameras with facial recognition at touristic locations in the city, one of the motivations expressed by the manager being the fight against crime (Redação, 2021).

It is also worth noting that the adoption of these technologies has been encouraged by the federal government. For example, Ordinance No. 793 (Portaria nº 793, 2019), when regulating the National Public Security Fund, provides resources for the “promotion of the deployment of video surveillance systems with facial recognition solutions, by Optical Character Recognition – OCR, use of artificial intelligence or others”, is one of the fundable actions for the “fight against violent crime” (Portaria nº 793, 2019, Article 4).

In addition to the aspects evidenced in the analysis of government programs and understanding of the increasing relevance of digital technologies in public security, questions such as: when managers mention “suspicious persons”, what data are collected to build these profiles? How are the databases that support these technologies developed, and what do they contain? Besides the automated action of algorithms, who is behind the facial recognition cameras? Are there any protection mechanisms for personal data? Which databases are being cross-referenced? Who stores, qualifies, and indexes these databases? Who is granted access, and who is denied it? What is being recorded? What is understood as “good practices” in the use of these technologies when there is still no current legislation regulating their use?

5. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the analysis of the government programs of the Brazilian capitals' current mayors suggest that the use of digital technologies to fight crime is a trend in public security policies in the country. Given this issue and the growing cases of wrongful arrests and other errors in identifying people based on facial recognition, these technologies must be supported by public discussion and monitoring involving the different segments of society.

In this sense, we should be alert to the fact that none of the government programs analyzed indicates any concern with possible risks of violating the rights of citizens due to errors in the use of digital technologies.

In a country that already has a history of wrongful imprisonment for non-digital photographic recognition (*Exclusivo: 83% dos Presos Injustamente por Reconhecimento Fotográfico no Brasil São Negros*, 2021), primarily Black people, which has the third largest prison population worldwide (Pastoral Carcerária, 2018) and characterized by the genocide of the Black population as a structuring logic of the state (Nascimento, 1978), it is also essential that the implementation of digital technologies, especially facial recognition, is guided by all possible ethical, social, political, and cultural implications, so that,

in the quest to fight crime and increase security, violence against historically discriminated groups is not perpetuated.

Translation: Susana Valdez

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“I NEED AMMUNITION, NOT A RIDE”: THE UKRAINIAN CYBER WAR

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ABSTRACT

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has shown that cyberwarfare is integral to modern military strategies. Although the Russian army has developed cyber capabilities and capacities over the years, Ukraine has quickly created a new and innovative cyber defence that includes public and private actors. Using online communication platforms to reach out to populations, internally and externally, has been instrumental for military success. Inventive thinking has enabled the actors to utilise the online space and develop new computing tactics to defend the country. The intense online presence of Ukrainian President Zelenskyy stands in clear contrast to Russian President Putin. President Zelenskyy is mastering online communication and is speaking directly to the people. Because of his constant use of virtual communication platforms, new public and private resistance movements have formed based on civic activism and a defiant stance against Russian aggression. Various non-governmental groups of hackers, hacktivists and activists have created a structure of resistance, where each has taken on a role in a nodal system depending on skills and engagement levels. This article will focus on how the Ukrainian leadership has been able to carry out a successful speech act that has activated numerous online users internally and externally. This speech act has enabled a new form of online civic activism where online actors fight with the military forces — but mostly without being employed by the state. Within the first 40 days, this activism has proven beneficial to the existing military force to defend Ukraine. The article investigates Ukraine's role in the David and Goliath fight and how Ukraine's initiatives have helped develop its cyber defence. The research is based on secondary sources predominately based on grounded theory, where the data collected are critically compared with theoretical content. All data is theoretically sampled and analysed based on the established socio-political approaches deriving from discourse analysis. The timeframe for this research is the first 40 days of the conflict, starting on February 24 2022.

KEYWORDS

cyberwar, online platforms, communication, speech act, securitization, activism, Ukraine

“PRECISO DE MUNIÇÕES, NÃO DE BOLEIA”: A GUERRA CIBERNÉTICA UCRANIANA

RESUMO

A invasão russa da Ucrânia em fevereiro de 2022 demonstrou que a guerra cibernética integra as estratégias militares modernas. Embora o exército russo tenha desenvolvido capacidades e competências cibernéticas ao longo dos anos, a Ucrânia criou rapidamente uma nova e inovadora defesa cibernética que inclui agentes públicos e privados. A utilização de plataformas de comunicação online para chegar às populações, dentro e fora do país, tem sido fundamental para o sucesso militar. O pensamento inventivo permitiu aos agentes utilizar o espaço online e desenvolver novas táticas informáticas para defender o país. A intensa presença online do presidente da Ucrânia, Zelenskyy, contrasta claramente com a do Presidente Putin da Rússia. O Presidente Zelenskyy domina a comunicação online e fala diretamente com as pessoas. A sua constante utilização de plataformas virtuais de comunicação motivou a formação de novos movimentos de resistência públicos e privados assentes no ativismo cívico e numa postura desafiadora contra a agressão russa. Vários grupos não governamentais de hackers, *hacktivistas* e ativistas criaram uma estrutura de resistência, onde cada um assumiu um papel num sistema nodal, em função das competências e dos níveis de envolvimento. Este artigo abordará como a liderança ucraniana tem desenvolvido um ato de discurso bem-sucedido que tem mobilizado inúmeros utilizadores online interna e externamente. Este ato de discurso permitiu uma nova forma de ativismo cívico online onde os intervenientes online combatem as forças militares — sem serem na sua maioria contratados pelo estado. Nos primeiros 40 dias, este ativismo provou trazer benefícios para a força militar existente defender a Ucrânia. O artigo investiga o papel da Ucrânia na luta de David e Goliás e como as iniciativas da Ucrânia têm ajudado a desenvolver a sua defesa cibernética. A investigação assenta em fontes secundárias predominantemente baseadas em teoria fundamentada, onde os dados recolhidos são comparados de forma crítica com o conteúdo teórico. Todos os dados são recolhidos e analisados teoricamente com base nas abordagens sociopolíticas estabelecidas, decorrentes da análise do discurso. Esta investigação tem como horizonte temporal os primeiros 40 dias do conflito, com início a 24 de fevereiro de 2022.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

guerra cibernética, plataformas online, comunicação, ato de discurso, securitização, ativismo, Ucrânia

1. INTRODUCTION

On February 24 2022, Russian military vehicles violated Ukraine’s sovereignty by crossing the borders into Ukraine and the subsequent invasion of a sovereign state. This invasion has been the most significant military threat to Europe since the end of World War II (O’Connor, 2022, para. 5). Russia paved the way for the invasion on February 21 by recognising two Ukrainian rebel regions, Donetsk and Luhansk, as independent states and entering a part of Ukraine on an artificial peace-keeping mission (Roth & Borger, 2022, para. 2; United Nations, 2022, para. 4). This action sent a shockwave through the international society that, for a long time, had tried to ease the regional tensions using diplomatic means.

Embedded in the Ukrainian conflict is the use of cyberweapons on multiple levels. One part of cyber warfare mirrors traditional military actions by air, water, and land.

Conventional cyberwar is essential in modern warfare, where actors directly attack vulnerabilities in computer systems and networks to damage or destroy essential critical infrastructure. This research has also uncovered that communication and activism are equally important in the hybrid warfare model. The war in Ukraine has demonstrated the power of online communications to reach a large audience to seek support, further a particular argument, and legitimise actions that would otherwise have been rejected under normal circumstances. When it is done successfully, communication is a powerful weapon that can activate and engage a vast amount of people.

This article focuses on online communication, whereby a successful speech can trigger a new form of activism and “togetherness”, incorporating multiple groups of actors into the country’s defence strategy. The speech act, conducted by President Zelenskyy and other Ukrainian leaders, has been instrumental in mobilising a widespread form of civic action in alliance with the state’s defence of the country. The invasion and the atrocities conducted by Russian soldiers have shocked the western world and left people feeling powerless while watching the war unfolding online and in mass media. The constant online and offline communication has drawn attention to the situation in Ukraine and kept the war in the news feed worldwide. Nationals and foreign actors support the state against Russian invasion and aggression. Well-known hacktivist groups and ordinary online users have merged their resources and capabilities, using illegal and legal means to support Ukraine in an unjust war.

During the transition from a threat of war to the actual invasion by Russia, the Ukrainian leaders, in particular President Zelenskyy, have constantly balanced the world’s need for information against calls for support to defend the country and protect its citizens. Undoubtedly, the Ukrainian leadership won the information warfare by using innovative and highlighted efficient communication skills incorporating various virtual spaces and social media. Numerous internal and external online users have rallied around Ukraine to support and help the state’s “David versus Goliath fight” against Russian aggression. Embedded in this article is an investigation of assertive online communication and how it has activated non-governmental online users to engage in an online war.

The online networks linked to Castells’ analysis of the online environment are still accurate and valuable for understanding current conflicts and actions. According to Castells (1996), “networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in the process of production, experience, power, and culture” (p. 469; Hassan, 2008, p. 24). The technological development and the constant use of online spaces, such as social media, for communication in a global context have made significant changes in how people interact and communicate, and what is happening in one country has a substantial impact worldwide. The networked international community is not an innovation prompted by technology; it has been a part of human life throughout time and space, where people have organised themselves in human networks. Nevertheless, the way virtual spaces

and new communication forms have created a foundation for communication and information exchange can be referred back to new information technology paradigms which make a material foundation to expand the network to include entire social structures (Castells, 1996, p. 469; Hassan, 2008, p. 24).

2. METHODOLOGY

This article explores a new form of online activism that emerged during the first 40 days of the Ukrainian war, where governmental and non-governmental actors were involved in the country's defence on an unprecedented scale. The theoretical foundation of this article combines Castells' networked approach with the Copenhagen School of Security Studies' theory on security to understand the use of communication and its impact in an interconnected society. Elements of the Copenhagen School's securitization theory, such as the speech act, are used to understand how Ukrainian leaders have captured attention globally and fostered online civic actions outside the sphere of the state. The speech act is vital due to the successful communication with an audience, and legitimacy is provided to circumvent the normal processes of the state (Buzan et al., 1998).

The method is based on secondary qualitative research, including academic and news articles from well-recognised news outlets, periodical sources, and social media posts. The timeframe for the data collection is the first 40 days after the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24 2022. The case studies selected have been reported within this timeframe. However, they have not been documented in academic research as events unfolded at the time of writing. Therefore, social media content and mass media news articles have an important place to record key events. These sources help examine the relationship between the speech act and online activism. To validate the news stream, the researchers have used well-established western-oriented English-speaking news outlets and periodicals, such as *Reuters*, *Associated Press*, *The Guardian*, *BBC News*, *The Verge*, and *Wired*, among others, despite the potential bias in using regional sources. New articles are used to report events, not opinions. All reported events have been fact-checked against trustworthy news outlets' reports to ensure the quality of the content. Mass media and social media reporting are important sources in a developing conflict understanding how key actors are communicating and the impact of the communication. The data collection is based on grounded theory, where the data collected are critically compared with theoretical content. Sources such as academic books, chapters, peer-reviewed articles, reports, news articles, social media accounts, and web pages have been used to collect data, and the online research is based on search words, such as:

Anonymous, cyberwar, cyberattacks, hacking Ukraine, hacking Russia, hacktivism, hacktivists Ukraine, information warfare, non-governmental cyber attacks, online attacks 2022, online support Ukraine, Putin 2022, Russia 2022, social movement, social actions, social media communication

Ukraine, social media support Ukraine, non-governmental hacking, hacking activities Ukraine, speech act, Ukraine 2022, war, war Ukraine, Zelenskyy, Zelenskyy speeches 2022.

All data are theoretically sampled and analysed based on the established socio-political approaches deriving from discourse analysis.

3. SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION

3.1. SOCIAL MEDIA AND VIRTUAL SPACES

Information warfare is defined as “the conflict or struggle between two or more groups in the information environment” (Porche III et al., 2013; p. xv; Stupples, 2015, para. 2). In contemporary society, information and communication are constantly changing due to technological development, interdependencies, and the reliance on interconnected online systems. The rise of online platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok has been a game-changer for communicating during a conflict where it is vital to reach out to numerous people simultaneously. The volume and extent of online social media communication are progressing, and new online means and methods have fuelled new types of political activism and social change. Online communications using social media and the online environment spans all ages, ethnicities and geographies unprecedentedly. This development includes virtually all online users; the spectacular rise of websites and virtual communication spaces has revolutionised how people communicate and interact with friends, family, and colleagues in public and private contexts, but also how people partake in public life and politics (Ludwig & de Ruyter, 2016, p. 124; Munk, 2022a, pp. 36–37)

Different types of communication and technologies are entwined in contemporary societies, such as radio (broadcasting and television), newspapers (magazines and books), and films (documentaries and movies; Ahmad, 2020, p. 6; Hirst, 2018, para. 1; McQuail, 2010, p. 4). Text and images help illustrate events and portray people’s behaviour in power, professionally and privately. Media stories are circulated based on what the audience believes is essential, conforming to existing standards of justice and morality and what is deemed acceptable behaviour. Therefore, it is necessary to look at what is communicated and how information is circulated (Dunaway & Graber, 2022, p. 5). Online communication and broadcasting can influence public opinion and reach a large audience. Various virtual spaces are helpful for effectively sharing and visualising issues in the war and spreading propaganda and information on an equal footing. Therefore, mass media can be a platform for persuasion and mobilisation, thus, can present a specific topic positively or negatively (Ahmad, 2020, pp. 6–7; McQuail, 2010, pp. 136, 151–152).

3.2. THE POWERFUL SPEECH ACT

Ukraine does not have cyber capabilities that can match Russia like-for-like. Therefore, Ukraine focuses on strengthening its online and offline defence tactics, as its primary function is to protect people and properties and hold the territory. The Ukrainian information war tactic includes using an effective communicator, President Zelenskyy. The Ukrainian president's speeches and video clips are potent weapons to spread knowledge and ask for help and support, playing on the sympathy and guilt that the western world and natural allies of Ukraine have. Therefore, using computer technologies to communicate has proved to be timely and cost-effective ammunition. These different layers of cyber-defensive engagement should not be underestimated. New and innovative forms are observed and used in legal and illegal ways (Milmo, 2022b; Munk, 2022b; Paul, 2022; Trackray, 2022).

On the political spectrum, communication is essential to give legitimacy to different decisions that traditionally would not be acceptable. The speech act is integrated into the Copenhagen School's approach, a discursive practice that links security to a particular issue and frames it as a threat. Buzan et al. (1998) have argued that security issues need to meet a strictly defined threshold that allows the problems to be moved outside normal political areas. The securitization process is, therefore, "the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics" (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 23; Hough, 2018; Munk, 2015, pp. 33, 101). Through a successful speech act, problems are presented and dramatised as an urgent priority. If the speech act is successful, it gives an agent/ agency legitimacy to move it outside the normal democratic processes (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 26; Glover, 2011). The speech act is a necessary part of the process as the security issues are moved beyond the traditional stands or procedures. Yet, it is too narrow to understand that speech act as a pure state concern, as the process is not only linked to the security of a sovereign state or particular values (Munk, 2015, pp. 33, 105).

In the Ukrainian conflict, many people have chosen to get involved in online activism, prompted by the constant communication between Ukrainian leaders and citizens fighting to defend the territory. Yet, it is not all security concerns which can be securitised. The actual issue and the process can be influenced by the state's history, geographical and structural position (Buzan & Hansen, 2009, p. 34). Therefore, the speech act is used differently by Russia and Ukraine. The Ukrainian tactic is vibrant, inclusive and innovative as the state is fighting for survival. They need a broad level of support and acceptance to involve exceptional measures in wartime. Therefore, Ukrainian communicators are reaching out to a large audience on multiple levels, governmental/non-governmental and internal/external, using online communication routes to spread the messages widely. In comparison, Russian communication is based on old-fashioned means of communication that appear stiff, bureaucratic and outdated. Where Ukrainian communication is broadly distributed, Russian communication is mainly directed to a small, selected group of officials.

Some elements of exceptionalism are included in actions taken by key actors. For example, traditional illegal online means and methods, that is, hacking, defacement, and data compromises, are encouraged by both governmental and non-governmental actors in this conflict. Political speech acts include the power to organise people's minds and opinions and are instrumental tools to control and direct people. Through this process, various types of communication can reach a large audience if communicated correctly. Communication to a receptive audience is instrumental for establishing and maintaining social relationships, expressing feelings and promoting ideas, policies and programmes. The act aims to advance the speaker's intentions and context to receive legitimacy to act, which can be the securitization move. Despite hacking being a concept developed over the years, there are no clear hacking definitions. United Nations has attempted to create definitions over the years, but the institution has failed to gain support for its initiatives (Munk, 2018, pp. 239–240, 2022a, p. 87). The hacking typology includes "illegal access", "unauthorised access", or "illegal intrusion". The Council of Europe's Convention on Cybercrime (2001) criminalises illegal access to a computer (Article 2), illegal interception (Article 3), data interference (Article 4), and misuse of devices (Article 5). Ukraine is also a signatory state, ratifying the convention in 2006 (Ahmad, 2020, p. 9; Convention on Cybercrime, 2001, pp. 3–4; Council of Europe, 2022; Munk, 2022a, pp. 204–206). Despite being criminalised, hacking has been accepted as a tool to attack Russian systems and networks — just as Russia has used its numerous computer capabilities to attack Ukraine and take down critical infrastructure before and during the war (Ahmad, 2022, pp. 7–10; Munk, 2022b). As stated by Buzan et al. (1998),

if, by means of an argument about the priority and urgency of an existential threat, the securitising actor has managed to break free of procedures or rules he or she would otherwise be bound by, we are witnessing an act of securitisation. (p. 25)

4. SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE AND THE IMAGE OF A LEADER

4.1. UKRAINE

From day one of the conflict, Ukrainian President Zelenskyy has had a significant on-line presence, where he communicates on Twitter and other social media, posting short videos and appearing in live broadcasts. Using the tag @ZelenskyyUa, he has constantly been available as the voice of the Ukrainian government (Zelenskyy, n.d.). Zelenskyy responds defiantly to the invasion and the ongoing war in all posts. When video clips show him standing on a street in Kyiv, he boosts morale, symbolising a commander-in-chief who suffers the same hardship as ordinary Ukrainians (CNN, 2022; Mulvey, 2022, paras. 2, 5, 9, 12). The celebrity status that Zelenskyy obtained during the first days of the war

has given him a powerful communication platform and constant mass media attention in a way that is not shared with his Russian counterpart.

In Ukraine, the invasion and the following war have created bonds between internal and external online users that can be linked to Castells' notion of networked societies. Access to numerous online spaces keeps the Ukrainian government in control of the narrative. Doing so challenges the traditional monopoly of powerful media to keep the conflict in the news feeds worldwide (Siapera, 2018, p. 47). However, using social media for communication does not replace core news outlets. Instead, the active online presence acts as an accelerator to generate interest in main events, progress a particular narrative or counter state propaganda from the adversary state (Newman et al., 2014, p. 139). Although online platforms are helpful for direct communication, they also have value for indirectly conveying messages online using a snowballing effect, where text and images are shared and reshared beyond the original audience. The online speech act goes in two directions. Firstly, the online presence is essential to keep an audience informed about the situation. At the same time, the communicators stay in control of the narrative. Secondly, it is used traditionally where political actors get legitimacy to circumvent conventional processes in a war-torn country fighting for survival. This online community is designed to help and support Ukraine, fuelled by a sense of powerlessness as a trigger for action.

The quote "I don't need a ride, I need ammunition" went viral after Zelenskyy rejected an offer from the United States to evacuate from Kyiv in the early days of the war (Braithwaite, 2022; Freedland, 2022, para. 8; The Associated Press, 2022). This message is considered to be the prototype of digital statesmanship. Live broadcast presentations have been shown in parliaments worldwide, such as the European Union, United Kingdom, Germany, Israel and the United States, where constantly Zelenskyy delivered virtual addresses as a part of his strategy to gain support (Freedland, 2022, paras. 12–13; McGuinness, 2022; Parry, 2022; Scott, 2022; Watson, 2022). Due to global online communication, people are used to following significant events live when they unfold. Yet, this also creates a level of news fatigue. People are becoming emotionally distanced and desensitised due to the constant flow of images of bombings and atrocities from global hotspots. The broadcasts often escalate the news coverage to gain media attention (Jewkes, 2015, p. 33). That means that the people in charge of the speech act must constantly balance their reporting against the interest of people, other world events, and the audience's engagement with the topic. The Ukrainian leadership has been eminent in balancing these as the online audience has continued to increase support and become actively engaged in the defence.

Although verbal speech is essential for communication, particular repeating images and symbols are powerful tools for creating associations with the original speech act. The use of symbols in politics is not new. Symbols in action are powerful to illustrate a particular stance or paradigm change. In 1970, when Willy Brandt, the then chancellor of the German Federal Republic, kneeled in front of the Warsaw Memorial in honour of Jewish heroes of the 1943 Ghetto was perceived as symbolising a new era and changes

in Germany's postwar politics (Rauer, 2006, p. 258). The use of symbols and particular behaviours have been deeply integrated into politics. The symbol value in Zelenskyy's actions is visible in the address to the nation, where he and the leadership group are filmed walking around Kyiv the first night after the Russian invasion. This film signals several things: the government remain in Kyiv, acts in solidarity with the Ukrainian citizens, and does not fear Kremlin's actions ("Video: Ukrainian President Zelenskyy Says Country's Leaders Remain in Kyiv", 2022). The performative actions of the Ukrainian leadership enable the speech act by communicating the message worldwide using several different communicative methods by repeating recognised words, images or slogans online and offline. Previously, President Zelenskyy was officially addressing the Ukrainian nation from the presidential office, wearing a suit and tie. Since the invasion, Zelenskyy's internal and external addresses have been conducted in neutral places to avoid revealing his location. He predominately wears his makeshift t-shirt with the Ukrainian flag or other state symbols (Buncombe, 2022; Freedland, 2022, para. 7; Stanage, 2022, para. 2). This t-shirt has become a symbol of his leadership and resistance toward Russia. It is trending on commercial online websites, and a charity Lego-like figure is sold in support of Ukraine, symbolising his leadership. The iconic t-shirt enables Zelenskyy to stand out and demonstrate that he is a part of/stands together with Ukrainians during this challenging time (Burton, 2022; Myustee, 2022; Picclick, 2022).

4.2. RUSSIA

While Ukraine's President Zelenskyy remains in a position where he remains dignified, resolute and well-articulated online, his Russian counterpart is perceived differently (Mulvey, 2022, para. 3; Smith, 2022b, paras. 2, 4). Russia's President Putin remains a distant figure. When he appears in mass media, he is either sitting far away in a vast room, by the end of a long table, communicating online using a giant computer monitor or sitting in an oversized chair (Holmes, 2022; Saul, 2022; Walker, 2022, para. 7). In his appearance, Putin appears pale, cold, withdrawn, aggressive, erratic, and spiteful. For example, in the tense exchange between President Putin and Naryshkin, chief of the foreign intelligence service, Putin interrupted the spy chief several times, angrily asking him to "speak plainly" ("Speak Plainly!": Putin Has Tense Exchange With His Spy Chief – Video", 2022; Walker, 2022, para. 10).

Other speeches have included aggressive rants about Ukraine, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and everyone who stands in the way. Instead of being a unifying and leading Russian statesman using the speech act actively to build up support, Putin threatened anyone who questioned this invasion by calling for a "natural cleansing" of "scum and traitors" (CBS/AP, 2022; "'Scum and Traitors': Putin Threatens Russians Who Oppose War in Ukraine – Video", 2022; Smith, 2022b). This negative-loaded narrative seems to be a part of Russian propaganda. Putin repeated these claims at his "unity" rally (2022) in Moscow on the anniversary of the annexation of Crimea, where he for once appeared

to deliver a 5-minute speech in front of an audience (Fisher, 2022; "Russian State TV Cuts Away From Putin at Pro-Russia Rally – Video", 2022; Sauer, 2022).

The Russian speech act aims to promote power and control, supported by the Russian propaganda machine claiming that the war is a "special operation" and that Ukraine constitutes a direct threat to Russia and the Russian population. The actual speech act conducted by Putin mirrors the speech act outlined by the Copenhagen School, where the state apparatus is in control of the narrative and censorship has been imposed on mass media. The process is manipulative as it is solely in the speaker's power to frame the security issues and determine how to conduct the speech act (Munk, 2015, p. 105; Salter, 2008, p. 328). The process appears premeditated, directed to a chosen audience and promoted to achieve acceptance (Munk, 2015, p. 105). However, the Russian state apparatus does not have the same communication infrastructure as Ukraine and cannot generate the same level of support internally and externally using various online and offline media. Therefore, the Russian speech act is only directed at the Kremlin leadership that always will support President Putin for fear of reprisals.

5. POLITICAL ACTIVISM

Activism is defined within a specific context. It is driven by confrontation and displeasure with particular policies and practices, and it is conducted to achieve changes through various means, such as protests, marches, speeches, and singing, among others (Anderson & Herr, 2007). The activism deriving from the intense Ukrainian communication is value-based, primarily understood as political activism closely linked to people's feelings about the world and what matters most to them, such as right and wrong (Munk, 2022a, p. 31). Social media, cyberspace and computer technologies have changed the way people can connect instantly with each other. At the same time, computer technologies create an unprecedented opportunity for distributing information and inspiring and influencing other people (Lewis et al., 2014; Munk, 2022a, pp. 33–34).

Online activism is often associated with political mobilisation, which includes computer technologies and networks. However, this form of cyberactivism is not necessarily illegal. The users use online spaces to protest or support political causes online and offline (Lutkevich & Bacon, 2021, para. 1; Munk, 2022a, p. 201; Sauter, 2014, p. 26). The online environment allows groups to reach a large audience across traditional and social borders to distribute information and create awareness about causes, tactics, and tools (Ahmad, 2020, p. 16; Kremling & Parker, 2017). Different actors have been vocal in their critique of Russia and support of Ukraine by defending Ukraine's sovereignty and freedom. The United States actor Arnold Schwarzenegger's appeal to the Russian people in a Twitter message is one way to show solidarity with Ukraine and reach out to the Russian population to inform them about the war (Schwarzenegger, 2022; *Ukraine: Arnold Schwarzenegger's Anti-War Video Trends on Russian Social Media – Video*, 2022).

The ammunition Zelenskyy called for in the early days of the war has shown to take many different shapes and forms. Well-known hacktivist groups are mingling with

ordinary online users to defeat Russia online. Hacktivism, as a concept, merges hacking and activism, which often has been deployed against powerful institutions, businesses, or states. Despite having a reasonable level of support among the public, their activities are not considered legitimate and fall within the scope of cybercrime. The successful speech act conducted by Ukrainian officials and the constant focus on the war by mass media has had an effect. Different forms of activism have consequently appeared, that is, legal and illegal, governmental and non-governmental. The activation of other groups in society is essential.

All types of actions have been deployed to support Ukraine's defence, where hackers have been able to disrupt the data traffic on Kremlin and the Duma's webpages and gain access to state-owned media services, banks and companies. Not all of these actions are illegal. A large number of online users carry out activities within the legal sphere, such as circulating counterpropaganda, collecting information, and fighting online disinformation. Advertising specialists have a role in designing and disseminating adverts to raise awareness about the war in Russia and Belarus by circumventing censorship and platform closures (Stokel-Walker & Milmo, 2022). The common determinant for all these actors is a belief in the leadership of Ukraine and that their actions help defeat Russia.

5.1. HACKERS, HACKTIVISTS AND ACTIVISTS

5.1.1. THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ARMY AND HACKERS

Ukraine is building a volunteer information technology (IT) army to help enhance its defence. However, several activities are based on hacking and distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks illegally breaking into corporations and governmental targets. Two days into the Russian invasion, Ukraine's deputy prime minister and the minister for digital transformation, Fedorov, announced in a tweet the establishment of a volunteer IT army. The tweet included a plea to stop tech companies from working with Russia and an attempt to attract computer-savvy talents, such as developers, cyber-specialists, designers, copywriters, and marketers, to engage in the new online frontier (Burgess, 2022, para. 2; Stokel-Walker & Milmo, 2022). Contrary to many other private initiatives, the IT army is a direct proxy of the state, where tasks are assigned to volunteers depending on their engagement and computing skills. A Telegram channel, the "IT Army of Ukraine", is where the assignments are distributed. More than 300,000 people subscribed to the channel 3 weeks after this announcement, and the numbers have increased since (Burgess, 2022; Milmo, 2022a, para. 2; Newman, 2022). These actions are a clear outcome of a successful speech where the area has been framed as an existential threat, and an audience has given acceptance for the state to circumvent the usual rules and processes, that is, by incorporating hacking and other illegal attack forms in the toolbox. Political power and virtual spaces have significant benefits when combined. By using the

online spaces and creating a Telegram route, it is possible to mobilise and “employ” a large number of voluntary actors who can either engage in direct online actions or work the web (Wolfsfeld, 2022, p. 5). However, the political actors still need to balance the speech act with the need to activate many volunteers to help with the online defence — and not using the same tactic as Russia. The goodwill the Ukrainian government enjoyed is linked to clear communication and the speech act. Zelenskyy and governmental actors’ online presence, Russia’s disregard for international laws, and its unprovoked attack on a sovereign country have been instrumental in forming this extensive volunteer IT army.

Although Ukraine now has recruited many internal IT volunteers, the call was also circulated online, and foreign volunteers signed up via the Telegram channel. This engagement by foreign nationals led to a stern warning from western officials about the dangers of these private operations. Firstly, hacking and similar activities are criminalised, and hackers would break the national law to help Ukraine from abroad (Ahmad, 2020, p. 7; Milmo, 2022a, paras. 3–4, 8; Munk, 2022a, pp. 204–207). Secondly, concerns have been raised that these actions might unintentionally spill over to other areas enabling Putin to claim that the west attacks Russia — or that the attack impacts Ukraine too, that is, cyber worms or viruses (Burgess, 2022, para. 13; Milmo, 2022a, para. 9). Yet, compared with the Ukrainian speech act, these warnings have not had the anticipated effect, as many foreign hackers are still involved in actions supporting Ukraine.

5.1.2. HACKTIVISTS

Hacktivism combines hacking techniques and tools with activism, enabling a particular political message to be delivered. It is not only the IT army using illegal means to fight against Russia. Contrary to traditional political foundations, the online environment enables a new type of activism where people can connect and pursue alternative possibilities of action regardless of where they are placed (Castells & Kumar, 2014, p. 95; Sorell, 2015, p. 392). Early in the conflict, the international hacktivist group Anonymous and affiliates declared war on Russia. By doing so, they have been able to justify their use of exceptional means and methods despite their non-governmental status. However, the different hacking groups have been vocal online and communicated with the network by replicating the speech act (Anonymous, n.d.; Coker, 2022; Milmo, 2022b). In line with Castells (1996) network theory, Anonymous simultaneously act on local and global issues. Since all the actors are interlinked online, they operate on the international level, creating a powerful force, as seen in the first 4 weeks after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Anonymous is a decentralised hacker collective, dedicating its efforts and hacking skills to promoting the rights to online privacy, free internet and anti-censorship. The group is known for their long-term operations against states, businesses, associations and other power full actors, such as #OPPayback, #OPAvengerAssange, and its involvement in the Arab Spring protests (Ahmad, 2020, p. 18; Karagiannopoulos, 2018, p. 16; Li, 2013, p. 307; Munk, 2022a, p. 215; Sorell, 2015, pp. 393–397).

Groups like Anonymous are reacting to the speech act by the Ukrainian officials online calls for help. Hacktivist groups use various criminalised means and methods similar to the IT army. These practices have gained momentum during the war, and it is acceptable to use them due to a successful speech act. During the first 4 weeks of the war, Anonymous successfully conducted campaigns against Russia, such as hacking and DDoS attacks against the Russian ministry of defence database and the Kremlin's web pages (Milmo, 2022b, para. 3). Hacktivists have also hacked into several Russian state television channels, such as Russia 24, Channel 1, and Moscow 24, where shows were replaced by various footage informing about the invasion of Ukraine, anti-war messages, Ukrainian music and symbols (Anonymous TV, 2022; Milmo, 2022b, para. 4; The Kyiv Independent, 2022). The group has also taken credit for a marine tracking data defacement renaming Putin's superyacht "FCKPTN" and changing its destination to "Hell" (Maritime Industry News, 2022, para. 1; Newman, 2022, para. 6; Smith, 2022a).

Anonymous is not the only group operating in this conflict. The Distributed-Denial-of-Secrets (DDoSecrets) released 15 different sets of Russian information obtained from other hacktivist groups, such as realising 820GB of illegally obtained data from the Russian Roskomnadzor (Coker, 2022; Collier et al., 2022, para. 18). However, these leaking activities are illegal, and DDoSecrets is already under investigation in the United States regarding the BlueLeaks data dump in 2020 (Munk, 2022a, p. 230). Other hacktivism groups have defaced Russian webpages and replaced content with pro-Ukrainian or anti-Putin messages. For example, groups have defaced a webpage belonging to the Russian Space Research Institute and have presumably leaked data from the Russian space agency, Roscosmos (Newman, 2022, para. 1).

5.1.3. OTHER ONLINE ACTIVISTS

Online activists have been inspired by the constant communication from the Ukrainian leadership. In one of his many speeches, President Zelenskyy asked Russian TikTok users, scientists, doctors, bloggers, and stand-up comedians, to step up and help win the war (Chayka, 2022; Paul, 2022). The TikTok generation/generation Z has already demonstrated their activism during the United States 2020 presidential election and the "BlackLivesMatter" protests after the murder of George Floyd. Social media sites are essential in conducting these civic actions as user-generated content is spread quickly. This type of mobilisation/communication fits into the original speech act that asks for help and support. Social media acts as microblogging sites where news is distributed widely despite being unreliable (Jewkes, 2015, p. 73). Yes, images created on mobile phones, texts and emails circulated are powerful communications. As a social media platform, TikTok is known for being choppy and decontextualised with upbeat music, but it is also a popular online communication platform (Ahmad, 2020, pp. 16, 41–42; Chayka, 2022; Munk, 2022a, pp. 222–224).

Videos tagged #Ukraine have received more than 30,000,000,000 views on the platform within 4 weeks. However, there are issues related to using TikTok to distribute information. The company's algorithm determines what data is pushed within the news feed based on the algorithm's favour and user engagement. The core element of TikTok is how the platform enables online users to upload video clips and soundbites without references. Therefore, it is nearly impossible to verify content. Unfortunately, the TikTok generation is less concerned about the verification of information. They are more interested in reaching the goal by creating or promoting a powerful video that catches attention (Clayton & Dyer, 2022; Hern, 2022b; Paul, 2022). For example, "Ghost of Kyiv" shows a Russian jet being shot down. But this footage is from a video game unrelated to the conflict. Yet, that does not stop the video from being shared further (Chayka, 2022, para. 8; Hern, 2022, para. 5).

Numerous people are engaged in supporting Ukraine using legal means and methods. Undoubtedly, these provide powerful ammunition to the country's defence. Alphabet Inc. suspended new user-generated reviews from being uploaded on the platform after an inevitable influx of political statements. Statements were uploaded in comment fields where users could interact and leave reviews. For example, Anonymous encouraged online users to post reviews on Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian businesses and tourist destinations on Google Maps. These reviews would form an essential information plank by circumventing censorship. Anonymous encouraged its 7,700,000 followers to go to Google Maps, find a restaurant or business, and upload a review that includes information on what is happening in Ukraine (Anonymous, 2022; Baynes, 2022). For example, a screenshot of a TripAdvisor review, uploaded on an Anonymous (2022) Twitter page, stated: "the food was great! Unfortunately, Putin spoiled our appetites by invading Ukraine. Stand up to your dictator, stop killing innocent people! Your government is lying to you. Get up!".

Other users argued that giving five stars in the review is important to avoid ruining the business as they are most likely to be small family-owned/small businesses (Anonymous, 2022; Baynes, 2022). Alphabet Inc. moved quickly to block new reviews, as the campaign violated the company's policy against fake, copied, off-topic, abusive or defamatory reviews. Similar messages were placed on TripAdvisor. Instead of reviewing a restaurant, café, or shop, a text emerged with information about the war. TripAdvisor's moderating system picked up the increase in fake reviews. Therefore, the review section was temporarily suspended to prevent activists' risky postings. Instead, the company directed its users to their community forum, where information about the war was posted (Baynes, 2022; Deighton, 2022, para. 7; Hamilton, 2022; Smith, 2022c).

6. CONCLUSION

The areas covered in this article show only a snapshot of the actions conducted within the first 40 days. However, a communication pattern has emerged where Ukraine has combined securitization speech acts with other types of communications using text, video clips, live broadcasts, symbols and recognisable behaviours.

President Zelenskyy would probably prefer more flights, tanks and missiles, but he still needs to win the online war. So far, the Ukrainian leadership has successfully communicated with numerous people internally and externally. These constant communications have become a valuable part of the government's weaponry to defend the country. The actual media war is already won by Zelenskyy and his masterful use of social media for different types of communications and direct live appeals for help. It is interesting how positive people worldwide have reacted to these types of communications and the level of goodwill the Ukrainians have received.

Social media and online communication have obtained a prominent position in modern politics. This means that the securitization process can be amplified online. The speech act can be linked to the traditional use of obtaining legitimacy for moving the referent object outside the normal processes. Contemporary politicians are deeply engaged in communicating with an online audience about everyday politics that does not need to be framed as security threats. Fuelled by Zelenskyy's constant online presence and call for action, citizens worldwide have been drawn to the conflict by engaging in low-level political activism, hacking and hacktivism. Online governmental communication and civic activities will be mirrored in future conflicts. This means that the actual war is fought on two fronts, one on the official front, where the state directs military actions. The second front is the voluntary army, which has a different level of engagement, skills, and incitement to be involved. However, this voluntary, non-governmental army is autonomous and is only engaged as long as it fights for a just cause. The new ammunition is people skills and engagement in the conflict, and the impact cannot be underestimated.

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THE ART OF SMEARING: HOW IS FEMINIST DECOLONIZING ARTIVISM RECEIVED BY ITALIAN NEWSPAPERS? THE CASE OF MONTANELLI'S STATUE

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ABSTRACT

On March 8, 2019, during a demonstration organised on occasion of the International Women's Day in Milan, members of the feminist collective Non Una Di Meno (not one woman less) Milano threw washable pink paint on the statue that commemorates the Italian journalist Indro Montanelli (1909–2001). The aim of exposing at a visual level the acclaimed writer's controversial past was crucial to the group's symbolic action. In fact, despite being a reference figure for many Italian intellectuals, Montanelli participated in the Abyssinian war in 1935 and, as a member of the fascist army, he engaged in a relationship with a 12-year-old local girl who acted as his wife and sexual object. The collective's action, which can be labelled as a feminist decolonizing performance, has already been read as a form of activism that manipulated the Italian's artistic heritage with the objective of criticising the existing narrative on Italy's colonial past. In this sense, an analysis of the resonance that journalistic coverage assigned to the event proves crucial for understanding the impact that such an action has had on Italian public opinion and the progress towards the country's mental decolonization. This article presents the findings of a qualitative analysis conducted on a corpus of 10 online newspaper articles published in the aftermath of the activist performance on Montanelli's statue. The study employs Foucauldian critical discourse analysis in order to identify the rhetorical strategies used by journalists to criticise or legitimate the feminist collective's action. Among these strategies, particular attention is paid to those discursive techniques adopted to portray the act as a form of vandalism or, on the contrary, as a form of art. The aim is to show how the discourse on art versus non-art/vandalism is used to confirm (or overcome) the discursive limits imposed by the still dominant narratives on the nation's colonial history as well as on the disposability of "othered" women's bodies.

KEYWORDS

Indro Montanelli, feminist activism, gender-based violence, Italian journalism, decolonizing, Italian colonialism

A ARTE DE MACULAR: COMO É RECEBIDO O ARTIVISMO DESCOLONIZADOR FEMINISTA PELOS JORNAIS ITALIANOS? O CASO DA ESTÁTUA DE MONTANELLI

RESUMO

No dia 8 de março de 2019, durante uma manifestação organizada no âmbito do Dia Internacional da Mulher em Milão, membros do coletivo feminista Non Una Di Meno (nem uma mulher a menos) de Milão lançaram tinta rosa lavável sobre a estátua em homenagem ao jornalista italiano Indro Montanelli (1909–2001). O objetivo de expor visualmente o passado

controverso do aclamado escritor foi crucial para a ação simbólica do grupo. Apesar de ser uma figura de referência para muitos intelectuais italianos, Montanelli participou na guerra abissínia em 1935 e, como membro do exército fascista, manteve um relacionamento com uma menina local de 12 anos que desempenhou o papel de esposa e objeto sexual. A ação do coletivo, que pode ser rotulada como uma performance feminista descolonizadora, já foi lida como uma forma de ativismo que manipulou a herança artística italiana visando criticar a narrativa vigente sobre o passado colonial italiano. Assim, para compreender o impacto que a ação teve na opinião pública italiana e o progresso para a descolonização mental do país, é crucial uma análise da ressonância que a cobertura jornalística atribuiu ao evento. Este artigo apresenta os resultados de uma análise qualitativa realizada sobre um corpus de 10 artigos de jornal online publicados na sequência da performance ativista sobre a estátua de Montanelli. O estudo utiliza a análise crítica do discurso foucaultiano para identificar as estratégias retóricas utilizadas pelos jornalistas para criticar ou legitimar a ação do coletivo feminista. Entre estas estratégias, é dada particular atenção às técnicas discursivas adotadas para retratar o ato como uma forma de vandalismo ou, pelo contrário, como uma forma de arte. O objetivo é mostrar como o discurso sobre arte versus não arte/vandalismo é usado para confirmar (ou superar) os limites discursivos impostos pelas narrativas ainda dominantes sobre a história colonial da nação, bem como sobre a disponibilidade de corpos de mulheres “alheias”.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Indro Montanelli, ativismo feminista, violência baseada no gênero, jornalismo italiano, descolonização, colonialismo italiano

1. INTRODUCTION

On March 8, 2019, during a demonstration held in Milan and organised by the Italian feminist network Non Una Di Meno¹ (not one woman less) on occasion of the International Women's Day, a few participants in the event engaged in an organised performative action that consisted in throwing washable pink paint on a statue that commemorates the Italian journalist Indro Montanelli. In order to understand the reasons that drove the feminist collective to temporarily modify the aesthetics of the statue, we need to look at the acclaimed but controversial figure of Indro Montanelli. Born in Fucecchio (Tuscany) in 1909, he started his career as a journalist during the fascist “Ventennio”, as the 20 years of Benito Mussolini's dictatorship (1922–1943) are commonly known in Italy. He participated as a volunteer in the Abyssinian war in 1935 as a member of the fascist army that invaded Ethiopia². After his brief experience in the colony, he went back to Italy and progressively dissociated from fascist politics, which he started to criticise to the point of being expelled from the national association of journalists and deprived of the fascist party's membership. During the years after the Second World War, Montanelli distinguished himself as a conservative journalist and founded the right-wing newspaper

¹ Non Una Di Meno is a network that brings together feminist collectives and groups scattered in the Italian peninsula. Non Una Di Meno was established in 2016 and, since then, it gained national recognition thanks to the organisation of a series of demonstrations and campaigns. The name, which literally translates as “not one woman less”, testifies to the connection of the Italian movement with the Argentinian feminist movement against femicide Ni Una Menos. For more, see the network's website: <https://nonunadimeno.wordpress.com/>.

² The Ethiopian war happened between October 1935 and May 1936. On the historical event, see Labanca (2015).

Il Giornale in 1974. Despite his clear political orientation, his figure was rehabilitated even in the circles of the Italian left when, at the beginning of the 2000s, he openly criticised Silvio Berlusconi. After his death, which occurred in 2001, Montanelli ended up being generally considered the biggest and most authoritative figure of Italian journalism³.

This happened notwithstanding the controversies associated with his involvement in the practice of concubinage, commonly referred to as *madamato* by Italian historians (Trento, 2011), and, in particular, a relationship with Destà, a 12-year-old Abyssinia girl who acted as Montanelli's wife, slave and sexual object during the months of his colonial enterprise. The journalist never publicly regretted his participation in the racist and sexist practice of *madamato*, as the following statement, released in 1969 during an interview, demonstrates:

it seems that I chose well. She was a very beautiful local girl, and she was 12 years old (I am sorry, but in Africa, things work differently). I regularly married her, which means that I bought her from her father, and she accompanied me together with the wives of other members of the troop. The wives did not follow the troop every day. They used to reach us every fifteen days. I've never really understood how they managed to find us in those infinite lands of Abyssinia, but they did, and with them, my wife, who, with a basket on her head, used to bring me clean laundry. (Bisiach, 1969, 00:47:43)

It is on the basis of Montanelli's behaviours and declarations that the Milanese branch of the network Non Una Di Meno decided to organise the feminist and decolonising performance of the pink paint, which can be described as an act of re-symbolisation aimed at challenging the current regime of visibility that regulates the negotiation of cultural memory in Italian public spaces. In other words, the pink paint functioned as a tool to subtract, at an aesthetic level, the visibility and prestige assigned to the figure of a white, male and patriarchal coloniser while at the same time retrieving from invisibility the forgotten figure of Destà. A form of feminist symbolic decolonisation, the collective's action has already been read, in academic circles, as a form of activism that manipulated Italian's artistic heritage with the objective of sparking "the debate in the general public around the canonized narrative of Italy's colonial past" (Lissi, 2019, p. 6). As Stefano Lissi (2019) stated, this canonised narrative revolves around the misleading myth of Italy's mild colonising practices and was fostered by institutional historical reconstructions that depicted Italians as "good colonisers" who were interested in promoting a process of civilizations rather than in implementing those violent actions of conquest that infamously characterised French, Belgian and British occupations of the African soil. Historians and activists started challenging this dominant rhetoric only in recent years (namely, from the 1990s onwards), when they started unveiling the cruelties carried out by Italian soldiers in Ethiopia, thus operating a full disclosure on the false narrative promoted by Fascism and continued by the political elites in the post-war period (Del Boca,

³ On Montanelli and his life, see the biography by S. Gerbi and R. Liucci (2014).

1998; Endaylalu, 2018; Jedlowski, 2011; Leone, 2011; Pankhurst, 1999). Even more recently, the intersection of racist acts of invasion and gendered practices of objectification of Ethiopian and Eritrean women has been brought to the surface of historical discourse in Italy (Giuliani, 2018; Houérou, 2015; Ponzanesi, 2012; Trento, 2012). Scholars such as Gaia Giuliani (2018, p. 67) highlighted how the sexist myth of the fascist virile coloniser, who was portrayed as in charge of dominating nature and promoting a good modernisation, perfectly sustained subtle and dangerous operations of subjugation against the colonised others, especially if female.

Non Una Di Meno's performance of the pink paint should be read as a successful attempt to inscribe in the "city-text", which is to say street names and statues that commemorate past events or individuals (Palonen, 2008, pp. 219–220), the signs of a counter-discourse that contributes to problematize the official chronicles. In other words, it is an action that, with Chantal Mouffe (2007), we can consider as part of that continuous "agonistic struggle" that opposes "hegemonic projects [the hegemonic order and a counter-hegemonic one] which can never be reconciled rationally" being them "precarious and pragmatic constructions that can be disarticulated and transformed" (p. 3). And it is precisely this irreconcilability that was visually exposed through the feminist collective's action, which significantly differed from the famous phenomenon of boxing up statues of racist colonisers that spread throughout the globe between 2019 and 2020 as a result of the insurgence of the Black Lives Matter wave. The act of toppling or removing statues that marked the practices of the recent decolonising movement aimed at erasing from the city-text the presence of the colonial symbol, thus neglecting or ignoring the relevance that those symbols, whether we like it or not, still have in other spheres of our societies' cultural memory. As opposed to this, Non Una Di Meno's performance temporarily modified the monument and, in so doing, it made the continuous and productive dialectic between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses visible. The Italian feminist collective's action, being a noticeable and eye-catching sign of the ongoing controversies on the colonial legacy, amplified the debates on Italy, its ex-colonies, racism and gender, quickly reaching the sphere of mainstream media.

2. OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

In light of the aforementioned theoretical framework, this article proposes a study of the response to the pink paint operation with the aim of understanding what effect the performance had on an extremely popular discursive plane, that of online journalism, and which discourse (if the hegemonic, the counter-hegemonic one or both, to use the categorisation proposed by Mouffe, 2007) did the coverage of the event reproduced or echoed. It presents the findings of a qualitative analysis conducted on a corpus of 10 articles published in the aftermath of the activist performance on Montanelli's statue on 10 of the most popular Italian online newspapers. The selected newspapers are mostly without specific political connotations, such as *Il Post*, *La Repubblica*, *Il Giorno*, *Il Corriere della Sera*, *Ansa*, *Milano Today*, *Globalist* and *Fanpage*. However, the corpus includes a newspaper

traditionally associated with the Italian left-wing, *Il Manifesto*, and *Il Giornale*, the newspaper founded by Indro Montanelli, which is linked to the *milieu* of Italian conservative and right-wing politics. The reasons for this choice can be referred back to Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini's (2004) observations on the peculiarities of Italian journalism, which belongs to the "mediterranean or polarized pluralist model" and is historically influenced by political affiliations (p. 210). In this sense, the inclusion of *Il Manifesto* and *Il Giornale* allows for evaluating the differences in the reception of Non Una Di Meno's action between liberal and conservative discursive planes. The articles were selected through a keyword-based search (keyword: "Montanelli statua" [Montanelli statue]/"Montanelli statua" + newspaper name) conducted on the newspapers' websites and Google. The search resulted in a corpus of 10 articles, and no further selection was made by the author of the current study. The selected time frame for the articles' publication is March 1, 2019, to March 31, 2019, which provides the research with a sample of journalistic reactions produced in the aftermath of the artistic event.

The study availed of the methodology of Foucauldian critical discourse analysis (Jäger & Maier, 2009). This was used to identify the rhetorical strategies employed by journalists to legitimise or criticise the feminist collective's action, which corresponds to embracing the counter-discourse or reproducing the hegemonic discourse, respectively. Among these rhetorical strategies, particular attention was paid to those discursive techniques adopted to portray Montanelli and his deeds. Lexical choices, as well as the inclusion and endorsement of external statements on the journalist's behaviour, were considered in order to investigate the coverage's proximity to the feminist group's ethos of denouncing Montanelli's colonising and misogynous attitude. Moreover, the article analyses the description of the artistic act by paying specific consideration to the range of collective symbols or *topoi* used by journalists. According to Sigfried Jäger and Florentine Maier (2009), collective symbols "provide the repertoire of images from which we construct a picture of reality for ourselves. Through collective symbols, we interpret reality and have reality interpreted for us, especially by the media" (p. 49). By investigating how collective symbols are employed in the newspaper coverage to categorise the artistic act either as a form of vandalism or as a form of art, the aim is to show how the common trope that opposes dirt to cleanness or disfiguration to beauty is used to confirm or challenge the "discursive limits" (Jäger & Maier, 2009, p. 47) imposed by narratives on the nation's colonial history.

3. ANALYSIS. EMBRACING THE COUNTER-DISOURSE

The analysis shows how Non Una Di Meno's action resulted in a journalistic coverage that generally condemns Indro Montanelli for his participation in the practice of *madamato* with a minor. This fruitfully contributes to the problematisation of the dominant rhetoric that depicts Italian colonialism as non-harmful or gentle, and it helps identifying the sexist and racist attitudes that characterised the fascist invasion of Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The main and most frequent strategy employed by journalists to denounce Montanelli's acts and controversial declarations consists of the inclusion in their articles of Non Una Di Meno's statement. This is the statement how it is, most often, reported by the majority of the newspapers considered in the analysis, which shows how neatly Montanelli's exploitative practice is described.

These are the words that Indro Montanelli pronounced about his colonial experience: "She was twelve years old...at twelve, those [African women] were women already. I bought her from his father in Saganeiti, together with a horse and a rifle. I paid everything 500 *lire*. She was an obedient little animal, and I built for her a *tucul* (a simple circular building with a conic roof made with clay and straw) with some chickens. Then, every fifteen days, she used to reach me wherever I was, together with the other wives... she used to arrive with a basket on her head and clean linen" (interview released to Enzo Biagi for the broadcaster RAI in 1982). Are these the men we should admire? (Non Una Di Meno – Milano, 2019)

This statement, which contains Montanelli's declarations as well as the feminist collective's criticism of it, is often reproduced by the journalists without the presence of further judgments, which can be interpreted, at a discursive level, as an implicit endorsement. Eight, out of 10 articles use this technique (*Il Post*; *Il Giornale*; *Il Manifesto*; *Milano Today*; *Ansa*; *Globalist*; *La Repubblica*; *Il Giorno*). Among these, the article by the conservative *Il Giornale*, where the statement is reported without comments despite being anticipated by an adversative title ("Montanelli Imbrattato e Delirio 'Rosa'"; Montanelli Smear and "Pink" Insanity; *Il Giornale*, March 10, 2019). In the same article, the statement is followed by a paragraph in which the collective's action is described as stemming from the same climate of feminist protests from which originated an action against a roundabout named after the ultra-right militant Sergio Ramelli, in Perugia.

Another demonstration of the general tendency expressed by the authors of the analysed articles to implicitly blame Montanelli is the fact that Non Una Di Meno's statement is often followed by other indirect strategies to condemn the man's behaviour, such as the inclusion of other openly problematic words that Montanelli said on the case (*Il Manifesto*), or the mention of other feminists' opinions on the journalist's figure (*Il Post*). Among the most poignant ones is the reference, mentioned by *Il Post*, to the challenging questions that the feminist and African descendent Elvira Banotti asked Montanelli during the previously quoted television interview released in 1969 for Giovanni Bisiach. Here is an excerpt as it is reported by *Il Post* (March 10, 2019):

Banotti: "You have just stated that you had a 12-year-old wife (let's say this) and that at 25, you just did not worry about it because 'In Africa, you do these kind of things'. I would like to ask you how you conceive your relationships with women"

Montanelli: "I am sorry, madam, but on violence... there was no violence because girls in Abyssinia marry at 12"

Banotti: "This is what you say"

Montanelli: "At the time, it worked like that"

Banotti: "At the level of personal consciousness, the relationship with a 12-year-old is a relationship with a 12-year-old. If you do this in Europe, you would think of raping a girl, right?"

Montanelli: "Yes, in Europe, yes, but..."

Banotti: "Precisely. Which differences do you think there are at a psychological or even physical level?"

Montanelli: "No, look. There, they marry at 12. That's it".

Aside from this, which clearly contributes to the depiction of the man's conduct as despicable, most journalists decide to report in their articles material such as Montanelli's questionable reply to a women reader who commented on his figure in the newspaper where he was writing (*Il Post*); the opinion of historians or experts who contextualised Montanelli's behaviour stressing on the existence of a law against sexual relationships with minors of 14 years of age that at the time was in place in Italy (*Il Manifesto*; *Il Post*); the statement of I sentinelli (the sentinels), a group that supported Non Una Di Meno's action (*Il Giorno*; *Globalist*; *La Repubblica*; *Il Giornale*; *Ansa*). All this, which is present in 6 articles out of 10, constitutes an implicit condemnation of Montanelli's deeds.

Lexical choices also highlight the article's propensity to condemn Montanelli's act of buying and marrying a 12-year-old girl. In some cases, the journalist's lexical choices involve the employment of strong adjectives such as "pedofilo" (pedophile) or "schiavista" (slaver), as well as the use of words like "stupro" (rape; *Il Post*, March 10, 2019; *Milano Today*, March 9, 2019; *Globalist*, March 9, 2019), which, in two occasions, are clearly exposed in the section of the title (*Milano Today*). The aforementioned lexical choices highlight the intention to build discursive knots (Jäger & Maier, 2009, p. 48), which is to say to entangle the discourse on the colonial enterprise with those on violence. That is confirmed by the fact that three articles out of 10 (*Il Post*; *Il Manifesto*; *Fanpage*) use implicit or explicit references to the phenomenon of gender-based violence as a discursive technique to showcase the problematic aspects of Montanelli's behaviour. In the case of the progressive/left-wing newspaper *Il Manifesto*, for example, the link with the discussed issue of violence against women is suggested not only in the text but also by the choice of the image, which belongs to the limited repertoire of pictures that Italian journalists employ in coverages of cases of violence against women. *Il Manifesto* also

discusses the issue of female genital mutilations, and infibulation in particular, which is generally considered under the umbrella category of gender-based violence, being it a “manifestation of gender inequality” (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights et al., 2008, pp. 5–6). Infibulation is described by the World Health Organization as follows: “narrowing of the vaginal orifice with creation of a covering seal by cutting and appositioning the labia minora and/or the labia majora, with or without excision of the clitoris” (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights et al., 2008, p. 24). The reference to infibulation is made possible by Montanelli's own words, which describe, in a piece written for the column “La Stanza di Montanelli” (The Montanelli Room), for the newspaper *Il Corriere della Sera*, and subsequently re-published online by *La Voce Della Sera* (Montanelli, 2020), the difficult process of initiating sexual intercourse with an infibulated girl like the one he married. The brutality to which infibulated girls are condemned when they have intercourse (the man should, in fact, cut the reduced vaginal entrance to make penetration possible), together with the girl's complete inability to experience sexual pleasure which results from clitoris removal, are mentioned in the article, and they have the effect of fostering the denunciation of Montanelli's complicity to the patriarchal system of exploitation:

infibulation involves the cut of the clitoris, small labia and big labia, as well as the act of sewing the vagina, which leaves an orifice big as a buttonhole. When the woman gets married, the husband needs to open the flashy buttonhole with a knife, so to be able to penetrate her. The first abolition of this type of excision was promulgated by Guinea in 1965. Do we need to add more to question how a famous journalist, in 2000, when he was 91, can tell such an experience without showing a bit of remorse? (*Il Manifesto*, March 12, 2019)

Furthermore, both *Il Manifesto* and the newspaper *Il Post* define Montanelli's act as sexual violence in light of historical research that demonstrates that at the time, paedophilia was identified as a crime by the fascist penal system (Codice Rocco, Article 519) and that intercourse with minors of fourteen was automatically considered abuse according to law.

4. ANALYSIS. CONFIRMING HEGEMONIC DISCOURSE AND ITS “DISCURSIVE LIMITS”

All the analysed articles showcase a clear discursive focus on the figure of Indro Montanelli, while rhetorical strategies that turn the narrative focus on the figure of the victim are absent. That can be interpreted as a betrayal of Non Una Di Meno's performative action, which, as already stated, aimed at assigning new visibility to the 12-year-old girl that the Italian journalist subjugated as his “madame”. This is clear from the fact that the girl's name, Destà, is never mentioned in the corpus and by the overwhelming presence of syntactic constructions where Montanelli appears in the role of the subject and Destà in that of the object. In light of existing scholarship (Abis & Orrù, 2017, p. 21;

Boyle, 2005, p. 84; Bullock & Cubert, 2002, p. 493; Mandolini, 2019, p. 262; McNeill, 1992; Meyers, 1996, pp. 65–66), this is among the most widespread tendencies in media coverage of gender-based violence, and it can be described as problematic because it fails to acknowledge female subjectivity and, consequently, the victim's experience of violence. However, this propensity to privilege an implicit or explicit accusation of the perpetrator highlights the general criticism with which Montanelli's deeds are treated, which testifies to the generally positive impact that Non Una Di Meno's operation seems to have had on the portrayal, by Italian online newspapers, of Montanelli's figure as problematic and, consequently, of the colonial enterprise he participated in as exploitative.

Despite this overall positive impact, the analysis suggests the presence of a significant bias towards the performance of the pink paint, which is often described as a form of vandalism and deprived of its aesthetic values. If we exclude the left-wing *Il Manifesto*, all the newspapers of the corpus label the action of throwing washable pink paint on the journalist's statue as an act of vandalism, smearing or uncivilised behaviour. The recurrence of the verb "imbrattare", which in Italian means "to smear" and is generally associated with the negative act of making something dirty or visually unpleasant, is striking as it is used in nine out of 10 articles (*Il Post*; *Il Giorno*; *Il Giornale*; *Milano Today*; *La Repubblica*; *Fanpage*; *Globalist*; *Ansa*; *Il Corriere della Sera*) and it recurs more than once in most of them. On a similar note, references to vandalism are common as the word or its derivatives is used by seven newspapers (*Il Corriere della Sera*; *Milano Today*; *Ansa*; *Globalist*; *La Repubblica*; *Il Giornale*; *Il Giorno*). If in three of them (*Ansa*; *Globalist*; *La Repubblica*), the inclusion of the term is the result of the reproduction of other subjects' or associations' statements, in the remaining four (*Il Corriere della Sera*; *Milano Today*; *Il Giornale*; *Il Giorno*), it appears as a clear lexical choice of the journalist. In the case of the second group of articles, the word "vandalism" is clearly employed to describe the act and, consequently, to belittle the feminist collective's initiative of organising a demonstration. Examples include these taken from *Il Giorno* and *Il Corriere della Sera*, where it is clear the journalist's intention to present Non Una Di Meno's operation as vandalism:

on March 8, a demonstration with 15,000 people took the streets of the city to reclaim rights for women: but the event organised by *Non Una Di Meno* in Milan also included a vandalising act against the statue dedicated to Indro Montanelli. (*Il Giorno*, March 9, 2019)

The commemoration for the day dedicated to women last Friday was characterised not only by the parade that counted on the presence of 15,000 people but also by acts of vandalism. Among these was the smearing of Montanelli's statue. On Saturday morning, the workers of Amsa intervened to clean it. (*Il Corriere della Sera*, March 9, 2019)

This depiction of the artistic operation as smearing and vandalism, together with the use of the trope of the uncivilised behaviour (which recurs once in the corpus, namely in the article published by *Milano Today*), is generally associated with a tendency to

insist on the semantic category of cleanness. *Il Corriere della Sera's* article, for example, is completely centred on the description of the cleaning process that the city council of Milan ordered a day after the feminist collective's act. Similarly, *Milano Today* starts by reporting the news of the cleaning and continues by treating the act as mischief. The repetition of this trope or collective symbol exhibits the reporters' decision to furtherly confirm the categorisation of the feminist collective's performance as a staining and adulterating act that needed to be washed out and polished. Moreover, only one article (*Il Post*) mentions the fact that the pink paint was washable. This omission is a non-insignificant detail that clearly would have restricted the possibility of labelling the action as uncivilised vandalism.

In the corpus, textual references to the aesthetic dimension of the operation ideated by the Italian feminist collective are rare, and, when present, they are never explicit. Notwithstanding the fact that, at a scholarly level, the operation can be easily labelled as a form of activism or art activism, which is to say, an activist-based action that employs the tools of artistic creation, thus directly interfering with the aesthetic and symbolic spheres of political communication (Groys, 2014, p. 1), this aspect is almost completely erased from the newspaper coverage of the event. A vaguely aesthetic description of the act of throwing washable pink paint on Montanelli's monument is made in a statement released by I sentinelli di Milano, a Milanese group that supported Non Una Di Meno in the organisation of the street protest. This declaration, which is often reported in the analysed articles, reads: "Indro Montanelli's statue became pink in order to cover the black of the horrible things he did in his life. We shouldn't forget" (I sentinelli di Milano, 2019). Here, the insistence on the choice of pink versus black colours that clearly underpins the activist action is highlighted and used rhetorically to suggest a link between the aesthetic and the political dimensions, which is precisely the aim of activism. However, the reference to activism remains cryptic and implicit, which does not allow to consider the reproduction of the statement as an actual recognition of the protest as a form of activism.

Another aspect that the analysis of the corpus showcased is the propensity of some newspapers to condemn the action as vandalism on the plane of textual discourse while, at the same time, legitimising it as aesthetically relevant at a visual level. This is made by means of photo galleries that journalists include in their articles and that document in detail the activist action, visually treating it as an object that deserves aesthetic contemplation, as in the cases of *Il Giorno* and *La Repubblica*. This treatment is made clear by the photographers' selection of different framings, contexts and lights, which assign the half-pink statue multiple aesthetic connotations and represent it as an object of photographic interest. This is strikingly emblematised by a picture taken from the newspaper *La Repubblica*, where two passers-by are caught while taking a photograph of the re-symbolised monument. Curiously enough, *Il Giorno's* photo gallery accompanies the pictures with a caption that reproduces, at a textual level, the accusations of vandalism, as the statue is described as "imbrattata di rosa" (smearred with pink paint). This contradictory discursivity, which avails of different modalities (the textual and the visual) to communicate opposite messages, can be considered emblematic of the tendencies that regulate the entire corpus of articles analysed, where a propensity to consider Non Una Di Meno's accusations against

Montanelli and his deeds is paradoxically counterbalanced by a discursive resistance towards the feminist group's methods and activities.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis clearly showcases the co-existence, in the reporting practices employed by journalists who covered the case of March 8, 2019, of two opposite discursive directions: on the one side, the neat condemnation of Montanelli's behaviour, which can be interpreted as the result of Non Una Di Meno's effort to challenge with a counter-discourse the rhetoric of the good Italian coloniser. On the other side, a propensity to disregard the aesthetic dimension of the activist operation ideated by the feminist collective, which is only partially and indirectly nuanced by the presence of scattered aesthetic depictions of the painted statue. This last propensity can be labelled as a "discursive limit" (Jäger & Maier, 2009, p. 47) because it imposes a taboo, circumscribes the possibilities of the discourse by implicitly saying that it is not possible to go as far as labelling the collective's action as art. This discursive restriction is recursively implemented by means of frequent references to the semantic areas of vandalism, smearing, uncivilised behaviour and dirtiness. The failure to recognise the activists' operation as artistic is particularly problematic because it highlights the journalists' inability to accept any visible change in the regime of iconicity that dominates the city in relation to the Italian past. This, in turn, corresponds to affirming the inalterability of the symbolic order that legitimises the cultural memory of Italians as good colonisers. In light of this co-existence of opposite discursive stances, Chantal Mouffe's ideas of irreconcilability and antagonistic discursive processes can be applied to the case of Montanelli's statue, where the city, as well as the more traditional platform of the text, is clearly a battleground for the slow and gradual affirmation of new, more respectful, inclusive and truthful, historical narratives. If looked at from this perspective, Non Una Di Meno's activist practice proved successful as it achieved the goal that, according to Mouffe (2007), should guide critical art, that type of art "that foments dissensus, that makes visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate" (p. 4).

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND THE RAISING OF INEQUALITY: THE ROMANI COMMUNITIES AND THE MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

The Romani people are a minority that has been historically excluded, neglected, and persecuted in the different countries where they are settled, especially if we consider the context of their arrival in Europe and the colonization processes developed by European nations. Thus, this paper sheds light on how the Romani communities have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic from the communication and health perspective and provides a critical view of the abovementioned processes. We discuss theoretically how these ethnicities are crossed by multiple oppressions that place them in an unequal situation and the role of communication in their social inclusion or the maintenance of their exclusion. We highlight how their invisibility and how historical stereotypes were highlighted during the pandemic, deepening the unequal relations. From a critical perspective on discursive relations, we analyzed two journalistic reports from 2020, the local newspaper *O Popular* in Brazil and the national newspaper *ABC* in Spain. Some results suggest that the Romani population has been somewhat held accountable for disseminating the virus. Moreover, they seem to have been silenced as subjects capable of articulating and reflecting on their conditions and situations in the pandemic context, showing similarities in the portrayal of the Romani people in the Ibero-American context.

KEYWORDS

Romani people, communication, health, inequalities, COVID-19

A PANDEMIA DA COVID-19 E A POTENCIALIZAÇÃO DAS DESIGUALDADES: COMUNIDADES CIGANAS E MEIOS DE COMUNICAÇÃO

RESUMO

Os povos ciganos são uma minoria historicamente excluída, invisibilizada e perseguida nos diferentes países onde se encontram, especialmente se considerarmos o contexto de sua chegada à Europa e os processos de colonização desenvolvidos por esse continente. Diante disso, trabalhamos neste texto os modos como as comunidades ciganas estão sendo impactadas pela pandemia da COVID-19, a partir de discussões das áreas da comunicação e da saúde, bem como de uma visão crítica dos processos mencionados anteriormente. Refletimos teoricamente sobre como essas etnias são atravessadas por múltiplas opressões que as colocam em situação de desigualdade e qual o papel da comunicação em sua inclusão social ou na manutenção de

sua exclusão. Destacamos como sua invisibilidade e estereótipos históricos foram aflorados durante a pandemia, aprofundando as relações de desigualdades. A partir de um olhar crítico sobre as relações discursivas, analisamos duas reportagens jornalísticas publicadas ainda em 2020, uma, no Brasil, do jornal goiano *O Popular*, e outra, em Espanha, do jornal ABC de circulação nacional. A culpabilização das populações ciganas pela disseminação do vírus e seu silenciamento enquanto sujeitos capazes de articular e de refletir discursivamente sobre suas condições e situações no contexto da pandemia foram alguns dos resultados encontrados, mostrando semelhanças nas representações dos povos ciganos no contexto ibero-americano.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

povos ciganos, comunicação, saúde, desigualdades, COVID-19

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, we witness the most significant technological advances ever seen. At the same time, millions of people suffer from hunger, and poverty devastates the population worldwide. If poverty is the worst aspect of inequalities (Therborn, 2001), hunger is the worst aspect of poverty. So much so that the United Nations created the millennium development goals in 2000, where Goal 1 is to eradicate poverty and Goal 2 is to end hunger. Only in Goal 10 the expression “reduce inequality” (Roma, 2019, p. 39) is mentioned. Since the World Health Organization declared a pandemic due to the new coronavirus in 2020, this context gained new outlines and proportions. Many Romani people have struggled to guarantee food security, a situation condemned by Brazilian and Spanish activists and researchers in public notices (Aluizio, 2020; Khetane, 2020).

According to Santos (2010), the world is divided by yawning gaps: on the other side are the oppressed by modernity and its three primary forms — capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and colonialism; on this side, a minority that enjoys inclusion through the consumption, mostly white Europeans and their descendants. Those on one side, such as the Romani¹, Santos (2010) calls them “communities of the South”. The “South” does not only refer to the Southern countries. The dominant North and the excluded South exist in any country.

¹ The construction of their identities and cultures does not follow a homogeneous process among the different Romani ethnicities and groups. There are multiple identities, different groups, and subgroups that vary according to the region and the country where they live, and they are used to identify themselves in three ways: (a) “the Rom, or Roma, who speak the Romani language; they are divided into many subgroups”; (b) “the Sinti, who speak Sinto; also called Manouch”; and (c) “the Kalon, Kalon or Kalé, who speak the Caló language” (Moonen, 2011, p. 12). Following Moonen (2011, p. 12), bibliographic references do not reach an agreement about how to write the Romani self denominations. As the author, we use the Convention of Writing Tribal names (1953), approved in the first Brazilian Meeting of Anthropology, choosing to use “the Rom” and not “the Roma”; in the same way “the Kalon”, “the Sinti”, among others, without flexing the end into plural. According to Silva Júnior (2018, p. 40), the word “cigano” standardize different ethnicities under the same name, and in such a manner in many European languages (gypsy in English, or *gitano* in Spanish, for instance), was charged with negative stereotypes and semantics. Such a situation motivated the European Romani movement to propose a change, replacing “cigano” and the equivalents in the European languages with the term “Romá”. However, this terminology is questioned by the Kalon and Sinti, which do not feel represented because it pertains to the way groups and subgroups from Rom ethnicity designate themselves. In the author’s words (Silva Júnior, 2018), “even though there is an inclination to designate all Romani ethnicities as Rom or Romá, including a pointer of the United Nations to it; we cannot classify them in this way” (p. 46). As explained by Silva Júnior (2018, p. 41), the word “Romani” is a patronymic of “Romá” also used to name the language of the Rom groups. It could not be used to classify all the Romani ethnicities, but due to a fluidity issue, we will use it as a synonym of the term “ciganos” and point to the Romani from all ethnicities. Moreover, as we are talking about different Romani ethnicities and identities, we use the words in Portuguese always in the plural to depict this diversity, such as “Romani people”, “Romani communities”, and “Romani person”.

It is the geopolitics of knowledge (Dussel, 2005) that naturalized oppressions against other people and globalization as a new pattern of world power, whose classification of the population is based on the idea of race (Mignolo, 2005). Through coloniality of being (Maldonado-Torres, 2008), the European-hetero-Christian-bourgeois-man was constructed as the peak of evolution, which defines who is or is not human.

According to Bourdieu (1989), inequality can be measured by the distribution of economic or cultural capital among groups. Barata (2009) ponders that “when we talk about social inequality, we normally refer to situations that involve some degree of injustice” (p. 12). These problems can be overcome, but they are not due to a political choice. They are tied to social organization and reflect the iniquity in societies. Then, inequality is an essential factor in comprehending the Romani population’s situation.

In this context, in which multiple forms of social, educational, economic, and cultural inequalities had already an impact on the Romani people (Silva Júnior, 2018) and the COVID-19 pandemic deepening them, we try to comprehend how the media portray the pandemic impact in these groups and how it collaborates to the discursive construction of these realities. To make these analyses, we draw on the theoretical discussion about the historical processes of construction of ethnic-racial inequality in the Romani communities and the role of stereotypes to analyze news reports that approach the Romani issue in the context of the pandemic in two newspapers, a Brazilian and a Spanish one.

2. ETHNIC-RACIAL INEQUALITIES: THE CASE OF THE ROMANI COMMUNITIES

In Europe, the Romani populations were forced to adapt their culture to the sanctions they suffered (Sierra, 2017). Their mobility was condemned, while their stay in certain territories was denied. When the European nations were busy with the Romani, they treated them as enslaved people or a problem, forbidding the manifestations of their culture (Fienbork et al., 1992/1998). At the same time, slavery labor was forced on the African and American continents; Europe implemented measures against the Romani, such as their expulsion from Portugal, England, the Netherlands, Venice, and Milan; or the implementation of forms of slavery in Spain, England, and Moldova (Matache, 2014).

They were accused of practicing witchery, bringing epidemics, forging currency, starting fires, having a different aspect, but above all, being strange. And even today, the Roma are scapegoats when, in times of social and economic crisis, it is necessary to hold them accountable to draw attention away from the real problems. (Fienbork et al., 1992/1998, pp. 14–15)

Because of the persecution, the Romani people reached the European colonies (Río, 2017). In Spain, the banishment was seen as ineffective: it was believed they could change the constitution and security in America (Gómez, 2017). In Brazil, the Romani trajectory is connected to the colonialist policy of Portugal. Innumerable antigypsyism policies sought genocide, expulsion, or sedentarization (Borges, 2007). The lusophone country applied three types of exile: the colonial, the internal, and the galleys (Menini, 2014). Such practice happened during the colonial period.

Along with the expulsion, Portuguese authorities implemented norms that persecuted the Romani populations in the colony (Costa, 2012). Among them are the episodes of the so-called “Romani scurreries”, when the police invaded camps and killed many people (Teixeira, 2008). This persecution happened in all the states. The scurreries appeased after 1950, but they never stopped. From the 1960s, the rural exodus, which impacted the Brazilian population affected the Romani communities, most of whom abandoned their nomadism in the country to take up residence in the urban peripheries (Silva Júnior, 2009).

Such discrimination against the Romani populations is called “antigypsyism” or “romaphobia” (Bastos, 2012), which includes the construction of Romani portrayal as the eternal foreigner and the disqualification through stereotypes, with their identities associated with marginalization and poverty. To a great extent, such an image is reinforced with productions of academics and experts who concentrate their analyses on the Romani limitations as a collective, which would be consequences of the cultural aspects of the group (Mirga-Kruszelnicka, 2015).

The means of production of symbolic content, such as arts, science, literature, traditional media, common sense, and the Western imaginary, including those of Spain and Brazil, have mostly reinforced stereotypes (Silva Júnior, 2018). Stereotypes about the Romani population strengthen generalizations of individual negative experiences to the entire group. The dominant society ascribes deviant behaviors to the Romani collective (Fazito, 2006). When seen in non-Roma, they blame the individual, not the collective (Garriga, 2000). While “the positive life experiences with the Romani people are classified as an anecdote, exceptional or atypical facts” (Oleaque, 2014, pp. 67–68).

A considerable part of the power relations is processed through the attribution of identity to the other and the acceptance/rejection/strategic management of this identity (Araújo, 2002). “Who has the power of representing, has the power to define/classify and determine the identity” (Silva et al., 2000, p. 91). When we approach the relationship between Romani communities and state institutions, media outlets, or other institutions, we are dealing with a struggle for symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1989). Then, we understand that the symbolic violence produced by stereotypes was used to justify social inequalities and the Romani people’s exclusion processes.

2.1. THE PLACE OF THE MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE GENERIC “GYPSIES”

The media plays a fundamental role in the construction of public debates, contributing to the consolidation of narratives about social groups and influencing the construction of their identities and relations between the dominant society and the minorities. However, frequently, instead of contesting stereotypes about minorities², hegemonic media generate dominant negative messages about them. One of the consequences of this process is that minorities themselves internalize these stigmatized images, assuming stereotypes

² See the works of Willem (2010) and Ross and Playdon (2001) on how different minorities in different countries are treated through stereotypes in the hegemonic media.

or experiencing low self-esteem (Ross, 2001; Willem, 2010). According to Willem (2010), the stereotypes disseminated in the media are stronger than those of daily situations because the messages are produced in a sophisticated and professional manner.

These messages create what Bonomo et al. (2017) call “indirect contact” between the majority group and the minorities. In this study about the Romani populations in the state of Espírito Santo, in Brazil, for instance, the level of contact and knowledge of the participants related to this ethnic minority is very low, emerging primarily through movies and/or soap operas; in other words, indirectly. That reinforces the centrality of the hegemonic media in this process.

Overall, the works that analyze the representation of the Romani populations in the media can be summarized in two ideas: the recurrent presence of stereotypes based on folklore and a linear relation of this group with conflictual situations (Silva Júnior, 2020). Oleaque (2014) identifies, in his research about the Spanish press, that the individuals portrayed are always read from a collectivization point of view coupled with de-personalization. The word that is the most related to gypsies is “families”; followed by references to “clan”, “ethnicity”, and “race”. A good part of the analyzed material is related to conflictual situations. When it is related to conquests or talents, the individual is highlighted as an exception or a folklore perspective. In the press reports related to “problems”, which are presented as excuses to question political actions, the Romani subjects usually have a passive role. In some cases, they are portrayed as responsible for the “problems” that affect the dominant society. We can notice there is little room for the Romani people, and when they are interviewed, they are usually associated with references that ridicule them or reinforce marginalized experiences (Oleaque, 2014).

In a work that analyzed the Spanish newspapers *El País* and *El Mundo* between 2017 and 2019, Figueira-Cardoso et al. (2021) confirmed the existence of stereotypes relating “the Romani to the artistic world”, in which “artistic-cultural products associated with Romanipen” (p. 224) are extolled while the subject itself is made invisible and excluded, sometimes, associating them to criminality (p. 225). The authors also identified “contents that denounce the unequal conditions of access to goods and services by members from Romani groups, as well as the discriminatory practices of which they are frequently the target” (Figueira-Cardoso et al., 2021, p. 225). In these cases, there is a more significant incidence of “narratives of Romani about their own experiences” (Figueira-Cardoso et al., 2021, p. 225), showing some progress concerning previous periods, as in Oleaque’s (2014) work. The analyzed material coincided with the election of four Romani deputies to the Spanish congress (Gonçalves, 2019).

In Brazil, Miranda (2017) identified a “scarcity of news related to the ethnicity and the recurrence of thematics related to crimes allegedly committed by individuals of Romani origin, rarely identified by given names” (p. 140) in pieces of news analyzed between 2014 and 2015. All of them were published on sites or portals with local coverage, showing the absence of this minority in the media news within the national range.

To the author,

the use of the generic term “gypsy” names the individual as much as the ethnic group, encouraging the perception that all individuals of Romani origin would be identical and reinforcing the stereotype of the out-of-law Romani or the ethnicity inclined to break the law, being an identity determiner and therefore guilty even before being judged. (Miranda, 2017, p. 145)

We can see a more prominent reference to the Romani people in the Spanish press if we compare it with the Brazilian reality; at the same time, both countries associate this group with criminality. The more extensive variety of themes approached in Spain, giving room to political issues, could influence special media coverage about how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the Romani communities. However, as discussed previously, when it is related to a world health crisis, minorities can easily be given the role of scapegoats, reinforcing stereotypes and worsening the unequal social conditions they already experience.

3. THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS ON A CRITICAL METHODOLOGY

Discursive relations are not symmetrical. There are negotiations and conflicts so that a point of view becomes hegemonic (Araújo, 2002). The right to speak and to be listened to is a dispute, and the symbolic power is at stake (Bourdieu, 1989). Due to a series of mediations, some interlocutors retain a more significant part of this power and become hegemonic voices. Others, lacking the economic and symbolic capital, stay aside from discourses, having their voices dismissed or silenced (Araújo, 2002).

Structurally, this right is related to public policies, which constitute each other only when they are circulated and appropriated (Araújo & Cardoso, 2007). In other words, the right to communication is not dissociated from the right to health and the notion of citizenship. There is a strong relationship between communication and inequality, expressed by invisibility and silencing (Silva Júnior, 2018). Without visibility, there are no public policies, financial resources, or proper services (Araújo, 2002).

Thus, communication can aid in behalf of justice as much as the maintenance of inequalities. This symbolic market is an infinite and continuous flow, composed of three elements: the production of symbolic goods, their circulation, and appropriation (Araújo, 2002). It operates in any communicative act, including those produced by the media, public policies, and social fights. This process is fundamental to constructing a critical analysis of the relationship between COVID-19 and the Romani communities.

In this context, we propose the study of two cases related to the coverage made by newspapers about the pandemic in Romani communities, in Brazil and Spain, in 2020. The choice of the two countries is due firstly to the authors' previous fieldwork experience in these places. Such experience expands and delves into the selected material's analysis due to a broader historical, social and cultural knowledge of the chosen countries. Moreover, the choice evidences two different contexts in the relation between state,

Romani people, and colonization. While Brazil represents the exile policies practiced by Portugal, expelling the Romani population to its colonies' lands (Río, 2017), Spain assumed a different stance believing the Romani population could adulterate the constitution of America and its security (Gómez, 2017).

We reflect on whether these different stances concerning the Romani people in both continents could change how these communities are treated by society and portrayed by the media. We seek to comprehend the discursive place of these communication outlets and that demanded by the Romani communities in a context of a health crisis. In this debate, we address the idea that communication is part of practices stemming from health policies. Moreover, we seek to comprehend through the analyzed texts how the selected newspapers approach the Romani communities in the COVID-19 pandemic context, what space was given to them, and to what extent the construction process of this “other gypsy” is broken or reproduced.

In the Spanish case, we chose an example that had a great repercussion among Romani associations and activists. The analyzed material features a journalistic report published on two pages of the newspaper. At least 13 social media pages of Romani activists and associations in Spain denounced the approach chosen by the *ABC* newspaper, which is over 100 years old and represents the conservative view in the country.

From Brazil, we introduce a case in the city of Trindade, in the state of Goiás, that had repercussions in the local media. We opted for this case because the agenda “Romani and pandemic” is absent in the main communication outlets from the national press. *O Popular* is a newspaper that dedicated a relevant space to approaching the Romani people during the pandemic in 2020. The subject surfaced after the articulation of Romani militants and researchers from this field with the newspaper editorial room (Longo, 2020). After that, the topic was highlighted on the G1 Goiás portal (Oliveira, 2020) and the local TV news of Globo enterprise.

4. THE NEWS REPORTS OF THE NEWSPAPERS *ABC* IN SPAIN, AND *O POPULAR*, IN BRAZIL

In Spain, the coronavirus pandemic was followed by racist acts, and with the Romani population, that was not different. The cases of blaming the Romani communities for the virus diffusion were spread through WhatsApp and the media. Activists and Romani institutions faced two challenges: mobilization to guarantee meals and minimum incomes to those who had their economic life affected by social distancing, especially those working in commerce, and to fight disinformation and hate speech related to the coronavirus.

The mobilization resulted in the production of articles and reports denouncing the approaches, with reflections about racism and the pandemic. Some examples: the news from the fact-checking page Newtral, titled “La Guardia Civil Niega que un Grupo de Vecinos ‘Gitanos de Haro’ Hayan Rechazado ‘Seguir los Protocolos de Sanidad’” (The Civil Police Denies That a Group of Neighbors “Romani From Haro” Had Refused to “Follow Health Protocols”; Maroñas, 2020); the news from El Cierre Digital, with the title

“Santoña: Acusan Injustamente a los Gitanos de la Localidad de Transmitir el Coronavirus” (Santoña: The Local Romani People Are Unfairly Accused of Transmitting Coronavirus; J. M. Fernández, 2020); or the news from “No Te Creas Estos Audios de WhatsApp que Siembran el Pánico Sobre el Coronavirus” (Don’t Believe the WhatsApp Audios That Sow Panic About the Coronavirus; Méndez, 2020). On the other hand, Romani associations produced pieces for condemning racist episodes, such as Fakali, which had one of their notes reverberated on *La Vanguardia* (EFE, 2020) and Europa Press (*Asociaciones de Mujeres Gitana Alerta de Episodios “Racistas y Antigitanos” Durante la Crisis del COVID-19*, 2020).

The case that had more repercussions was the journalist’s report on the cover of the newspaper *ABC Sevilla* (“El Confinamiento Para Frenar el Coronavirus Fracasa en los Barrios Marginales de Sevilla”, March, 2020), the Spanish autonomous community with an enormous Romani population. The photo, which fills all the cover, shows a policeman with his back to the camera in a blurred foreground. In the background, four women in an apartment window raise their hands outside, and their expressions can be interpreted as laughter or protest. The caption says: “neighbors of Tres Mil neighborhood reprimand agents that compelled them to remain in their homes” The title reads: “the hard lockdown of marginal Sevilla – the most troubled neighborhoods disobey the order not to go out”.

Las Tres Mil Viviendas is a known neighborhood in Sevilla, built during the Franco dictatorship in its urban policies developed between 1960 and 1970 to combat the growth of people living in shacks (called *chabolismo*), reaching the already excluded Romani families (Gonçalves, 2019). These neighborhoods degraded fast due to the high concentration of families, remote locations, and inadequate infrastructure.

The cover journalist report of the newspaper *ABC* stands in this context. Despite not mentioning words like “gypsy” in the main report, it is amply known in Spain that the neighborhood Las Tres Mil Viviendas is one of the biggest Romani ghettos in the country³. The journalist report “El Confinamiento Para Frenar el Coronavirus Fracasa en los Barrios Marginales de Sevilla” (The Lockdown to Stop the Virus Fails in Marginal Neighborhoods; March 20, 2020), by Silvia Tubio, begins by opposing “us” and “they”. On one side, the “Sevilla confined in their houses”, which makes an effort to stop the virus from spreading, and on the other, “the troubled neighbourhood”, which disregards orders (p. 22).

The text gives some examples of “noncivic behaviors” in other peripheral neighborhoods, such as the detention of five people in the region called “Los Pajaritos”, another neighborhood with a concentration of Romani population, after a conflict with the police. The reporter uses the term “clan” to identify the involved people. The journalistic report features the declarations of the commissioned Jaime Bretón, responsible for the South Polygon, zone where the neighborhood is located, referring to the family clans⁴ to blame those people who do not adjust to the recommendations from the authorities.

The journalistic text ends by relating non-compliance of lockdown with social exclusion. However, the accusation falls on only a particular group of neighbors. The only

³ To read more, see Silvia Agüero Fernández (2018).

⁴ A very used term in Spanish journalism to refer to the Romani communities (Oleaque, 2014).

neighbor speech quoted is not named. She is identified as a neighbor and portrayed in an infantilized context by narrating her attitude of joking and applauding while she returns to the streets as soon as the police leave the scene. The scene contrasts with the seriousness of the phrase she says: “if we do not have anything to eat, officer. We will have to go out” (p. 22).

In the related text, the title “La Iglesia Evangélica Mantiene los Cultos” (Evangelical Church Keeps the Cults; March 20, 2020), we find the only mentions of “gypsy ethnicity”. In this text, the reporter mixed information about religious celebrations during the lockdown and a contagion case in a vigil when the government had not yet determined the national quarantine. The situation had repercussions on the media because it was one of Spain’s first big centers of contagion. However, it generated much false information and hate speech against the Romani population because two audios circulated on WhatsApp alleging that the infected Romani families refused to follow the health protocols.

In Brazil, despite the pandemic being largely present in all mainstream media, the Romani populations are absent from this scene. National content was published about the subject through journalistic reports related to scientific institutions, alternative media, and Romani movements (Silva Júnior & Gonçalves, 2021). Thus, we opted to focus on a case that was in the spotlight in the local mainstream media, referring to a community of Kalo ethnicity from the city Trindade, in Goiás, circulating in the newspaper *O Popular*, on the news portal G1 Goiás and the TV Anhanguera, affiliated to Globo. We participated in the articulation process to expose their situation in the media through contact with the newspaper *O Popular*.

The Romani community of Trindade has lived in the city for more than 100 years, concentrated in the neighborhoods of Vila Pai Eterno and Samara, formed by nearly 1,200 people. The case came to our attention through the WhatsApp group “Romani Studies”, of which we are members, and gathers Brazilian and foreign researchers.

We talked to two community leaders, the couple Simone and Erli, intermediating with the journalist from *O Popular*, that had a phone conversation with the article’s author for more than 1 hour and received documents on the subject, including the *Nota Pública: Pesquisadores e Ativistas Alertam Para Racismo Contra Grupos Ciganos Durante a Pandemia e Cobram Plano Emergencial* (Public Notice: Researchers and Activists Denounce Racism Against Roma Groups in Brazil During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Demand an Emergency Plan; Aluizio, 2020), that was not mentioned in the journalistic report, whose title is “Uma Comunidade em Pânico” (A Community Panicking), published on 22 July 2020. Among the sources used, there is a more prominent highlight to the so-called official sources, represented here by Trindade city hall, included in the first paragraph and the subheading “Trindade city hall states to have given support”. Representatives of this administrative agency detail how they provided quality service to the Romani people that live in the city. They also say that the responsibility of the contagions was of the community itself when they had a party gathering the people together. On the other hand, Aluizio Azevedo’s and the community leaders’ speeches are less present in the text, in an inferior position since the first paragraphs are more critical in a journalistic press text.

The journalistic report begins with an objective title, and a contextualization of the panic people live in the Romani community. However, the subheading has the first reference to a stereotype of what would be, according to the text, an identity trait: “more than 50 people of a Romani group from Trindade, whose festive meetings are one of their cultural characteristics, were infected with the coronavirus. A man died” (p. 11). The reporter describes the community anguish, tries to contextualize how big the community is, and, without quoting sources, says the community leaders denounced not having access to the service due to the prejudice in the health system.

Nevertheless, the final word is given to the city hall, which contests the information, asserting that they have provided the necessary service and blames the people from the community, reaffirming the stereotype of “festive people”: “the municipal health department says that since the pandemic began, it has assisted the Romani people and has increased the attention after a party that happened in June, which would have contributed to the dissemination of coronavirus (SAR-Cov-2) in the community” (p. 11).

There is the voice of three leaders of the Romani community from Trindade in the text: Erli Gomes da Silva, Simone Soares da Costa, and Júlio César. They are all used to confirm the version of the party stereotype. In the third paragraph, for instance, Erli and Simone have their speeches constructed to reinforce that the trait of the Romani collectivity is responsible for the contagion. In the fifth paragraph, the voice highlighted is of a priest of a Presbyterian church. The link of an Evangelical religious institution acting in the Romani communities is a clear reality in Brazil and Spain, as we also saw in the previous analyses of the *ABC* newspaper.

Another voice mentioned in the sixth paragraph is the National Secretary of Promotion Policies of Racial Equality, Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights, Sandra Terena, who, according to the journalistic report, would have been mobilized by activists and researchers of Romani culture to overhaul the fact. This paragraph, to denounce the omission of the Federal Government and the city hall, also features a speech by Aluizio de Azevedo, one of the sources used to represent the voice of the Romani communities.

An excerpt of this paragraph includes the words of the article’s author in the following terms:

from what I heard until now, nothing happened, Trindade city hall keeps very silent, as well as the Federal Government, and the community is terrified. And the worst is that those in better conditions are leaving the city and may infect other people in different places, says Aluizio de Azevedo, a Kaló Romani. (p. 11)

This speech was taken out of context and distorted to blame the Romani victims. The lack of reference to the public notice, for instance, makes the contextualization of the Romani communities’ situation difficult since their displacement is vital even to their survival, considering that door-to-door sales are the primary source of income for the majority of people from these ethnicities. Therefore, traveling is a matter of income.

Moreover, contrary to the journalistic report, Aluizio de Azevedo did not attend and accompany Terena's meeting or visit to Trindade. Instead, he participated in April, alongside Romani activists from all over the country, in a virtual meeting with the secretary, when she stated that the Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights would make staple food baskets and hygiene kits available to the Romani communities, but would not meet all the demand because they were not enough resources.

Therefore, we noticed that the approach of both the newspapers, *ABC* from Spain and *O Popular* from Brazil, reproduced negative images about the Romani people when the subject is their relation with the pandemic, further reinforcing old stereotypes in the social imaginary in both countries.

5. STRATEGIES TO INVISIBILITY AND SILENCING: SOME FINAL WORDS

Most symbolic representation systems, such as arts, cinema, literature, theatre, dominant media, and even hegemonic science or common sense, reproduce stereotypes and racism of a devastating and harmful collective imaginary related to the Romani communities. Such representations justify and expand social exclusion, poverty, or extermination/genocide. These historical exclusion processes subjugated the Romani populations for more than five centuries and are still valid in other formats and platforms.

Both journalistic reports confirmed that the mass media has an essential role in keeping the Romani voices silent. There are no Romani characters or narratives about their ways of life, customs, or traditions. When there are, they are stereotyped, have their voices diminished, or are made irrelevant on a subject where they should play a key role.

The expulsion policies that led to millenary nomadism of the Romani communities that became a cultural element are part of the coloniality of power (Mignolo, 2007). The persecution policies, physical violence against the Romani people, and structural racism in public services, including health and communication, are some reflections on excluding the Romani people from citizenship.

From the coloniality of knowledge point of view (Lander, 2005), the Romani invisibility is manifested in science, as the Romani people are absent from research or, when present, they have their voices silenced in the official history, omitting their contribution to the construction of Brazilian identity and culture or, in the case of Spain, being used in a way that suits the objectives of the nation. This colonization is materialized, for instance, in the deletion of the Romani narratives, which are not referred on books and school curricula and are not considered by the hegemonic paradigm, a situation that happens in Brazil (Silva Júnior, 2009).

From the colonial perspective of being (Maldonado-Torres, 2008), invisibility is reflected in the processes of stereotyping, silencing, and racially demising. These tactics are used in all symbolic products of hegemonic media, such as in both journalistic approaches analyzed. Such processes affect the social imaginary of different societies, feeding prejudices and racism in the policies of public professionals and services.

In the journalistic reports, the victims themselves are to blame for the COVID-19 contagion. At the same time, public authorities are exempted from their responsibilities, such as the exclusion, for centuries, of the Romani communities, namely from the health service. We verified that health system managers are given priority, endorsing the right to speak and the truth prerogative, defining dominant narratives. However, like Silva Júnior (2018), we comprehend that the Romani people “fight for inclusion, pronouncing and enacting tactics of resistance to remain in the dispute for symbolic power and to conquer the right to health, communication, and citizenship” (p. 19).

Translation: Gabriela Marques Gonçalves and Amanda Rodrigues Ferreira

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TOWARDS A HISTORY OF PORTUGUESE LITERARY JOURNALISM: REPORTERS AND WRITERS THROUGHOUT TIME

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ABSTRACT

Journalism and literature have always maintained a close relationship. While some literary works resemble the journalistic style of reporting on the present, some written reports are true literary works thanks to a narrative that exceeds the techniques of conventional journalism. It is within this framework that one can talk about literary journalism, journalism written by journalists (and not journalism written by writers or about journalists), which, following the rules and requirements that define the profession, makes room for the use of techniques typically associated with literature. Portugal has a long literary journalism history, and journalists who are distinguished by this style. This study seeks to offer a diachronic view of Portuguese literary journalism through an analysis of its development, from the end of the 19th century and across the First Republic, the Estado Novo, after April 25, to the present day. At the same time, we will consider different examples of international literary journalism to establish a possible definition for the topic.

KEYWORDS

literary journalism, history, communication, literature

PARA UMA HISTÓRIA DO JORNALISMO LITERÁRIO PORTUGUÊS: REPÓRTERES E ESCRITORES AO LONGO DO TEMPO

RESUMO

O jornalismo e a literatura mantêm desde sempre uma relação de certa proximidade. Se algumas obras literárias se aproximam do registo jornalístico de relato sobre o presente, também certas reportagens escritas parecem autênticas obras literárias graças a uma narrativa que excede as técnicas do jornalismo convencional. É neste enquadramento que se pode falar de jornalismo literário, um jornalismo escrito por jornalistas (e não jornalismo escrito por escritores ou sobre jornalistas), que, seguindo as regras e exigências que definem a profissão, abre espaço para o uso de técnicas tipicamente associadas à literatura. Portugal possui uma longa história de jornalismo literário e de jornalistas que se distinguem por este estilo. Neste sentido, este estudo procura oferecer uma visão diacrónica do jornalismo literário português através de uma análise do seu desenvolvimento, desde o fim do século XIX e atravessando a Primeira República, o Estado Novo, o pós-25 de Abril, até à atualidade. Ao mesmo tempo, considera-se diferentes exemplos de jornalismo literário internacional de forma a estabelecer uma definição possível para o tema.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

jornalismo literário, história, comunicação, literatura

1. INTRODUCTION: PORTUGUESE LITERARY JOURNALISM IN THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PANORAMA

The study of international literary journalism has been growing considerably in recent decades, mostly due to the efforts of research groups such as the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies, founded in 2006 and the biannual *Literary Journalism Studies* published since 2009. Some of its renowned members, such as John Hartsock, John Bak and Bill Reynolds, have edited important works that seek to give a global view on this theme, such as, for example, *Literary Journalism Across the Globe* (Bak & Reynolds, 2011) and the book *Routledge Companion to World Literary Journalism* (Bak & Reynolds, 2023). We should clarify that “literary journalism” means written investigative journalism, typically of larger dimensions and with literary content, produced through factual, incisive and rigorous reporting. As literary journalism is sometimes difficult to define even by the scholasticism dedicated to this topic¹, perhaps the best way to approach the concept is through practical examples.

In this context, we will use the fires that afflicted Portugal in 2017 in the Castanheira de Pera area as a starting point. Several articles were written about this tragic moment in recent history, and Portuguese journalism followed this event closely to inform on this topic. While some newsrooms sought a more sensationalist approach (as was the case of the TVI channel, which the Portuguese Regulatory Authority for the Media and the Syndicate of Journalists criticised), others sought to report the tragic episode through stories close to the people there, the lives lost and the desolate scenery. An example of this can be found in the report by Ricardo Marques (2017) for the *Expresso* “A Estrada Mais Triste de Portugal” (The Saddest Road in Portugal). This report does not necessarily inform more than a live broadcast on television or an informative statistic, or even one of several articles published at the time. Nevertheless, the intention of this work was not this type of information but rather an effort to tell a real story that can sensitise the reader. Another example of literary journalism is Patrícia Carvalho’s (2018) book *Ainda Aqui Estou* (I Am Still Here). Both examples fit in this search for closeness to the event and its protagonists, something that defines literary journalism, with the result being:

stories that stay with us, and (...) they may even read better over time. And so, the best characterisation of literary journalism may ultimately be the definition that Ezra Pound gave for literature itself: “news that stay news”.
(Kerrane, 1998, p. 20)

In this sense, we can say that there is a type of journalism that follows the inverted pyramid line and is straightforward in delivering information, which is essential for day-to-day knowledge. On the other hand, a larger investigation, a report that must be written to tell a story of an event or share a perspective and whose writing is descriptive and investigative, will be closer to what we define as “literary journalism”. The book *Hiroshima* by John Hersey (1946), and *Fractured Lands*, by Scott Anderson (2017) are examples of

¹ One of the leading authors in this area explained this genre as something that “you-know-it-when-you-see-it-form” (Kramer, 1995, p. 22).

that. Both works portray two complex events and deal with them in a close and humane approach, far from what we find in the so-called conventional journalism. The first is a report on the atomic bomb in Hiroshima, the before and after. The second addresses the development of the Arab Spring and its consequences until the migratory crisis. There are thousands of journalistic articles on both topics. However, John Hersey (1946) and Scott Anderson (2017) stand out in the coverage of both events, and their journalistic investigations can still be found in book format today. On the other hand, the various articles published in newspapers at the time about Hiroshima or the Middle East became difficult to access over time.

What makes these two examples timeless works is their focus on the human side of the story and the way they stay with us, regardless of uncovering new facts or data that complement the event in focus. Hersey's reporting (1946), adapted from her work for *The New Yorker*, and Anderson's (2017), adapted from the original for *New York Times*, are, as mentioned before, "news that stay news" (Kerrane, 1998, p. 20). In a way, the literary journalism of these two authors reflects what can be understood as good examples of what this genre represents: a journalism that remains and leaves something with the reader through its technique and literary style, pertinence and relevance in the investigation.

Having said that, as we are closer to a definition of literary journalism, this approach will now seek to contribute to studying this reality in the national field. Although Portuguese-language literary journalism has been the focus of recent studies², the national context and its long history still lack a more detailed study that can contribute to a more integrated and contextual view beyond focusing on a single author or a specific period. For these purposes, we will consider different moments in national history so as to highlight some of the most important Portuguese literary journalists, taking into account not only their reports but also the researchers who have already addressed this topic in previous studies.

2. PORTUGUESE LITERARY JOURNALISM AND ITS ORIGINS

Studying Portuguese literary journalism allows, in this sense, to recognise and value the literary and investigative capacity of Portuguese journalists, highlighting the importance of this reporting for the history of national journalism. In this sense, and to enable a brief chronological analysis of the beginnings of Portuguese literary journalism, we will now consider the last decades of the 19th century and the first steps of national literary journalism during this period³. It is important to note that, on an economic and social level, Portugal underwent clear transformations at this time that allowed unique advances in the evolution of news communication and journalism in the national field, in part,

² It should be noted that the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies has dedicated the edition of *Literary Journalism Studies*, Volume 12, Number 1 of 2020, to Lusophone literary journalism.

³ Take into account that those who study Portuguese literary journalism (Coutinho, 2018; Rosa, 2019; Soares, 2011) tend to point to authors from the end of the 19th century as the beginning of this genre in Portugal, a period that this study takes as a starting point to start its research.

due to the development of railways, the expansion of paved streets and the implementation of the telegraph. At the same time, in economic terms, great developments took place throughout the country, so profound that Ramalho Ortigão (1887) would profess:

one could say that our parents died for us much more completely than their grandparents and great-grandparents died for them, taking with them, as they disappeared, everything that surrounded them in life: the house, the garden, the street they inhabited. (p. 160)

Even so, Portugal could not compete with the rest of Europe, reaching the end of the 19th century in a clear economic and social crisis. Interestingly, it was during this period that Portugal met an intellectual generation never seen before, known today as the “70s Generation”. Isabel Soares (2011) highlights four authors of this generation — Eça de Queirós, Ramalho Ortigão, Oliveira Martins and Jaime Batalha Reis — whose narratives, in her perspective, fall within a possible origin of Portuguese literary journalism and therefore deserve to be highlighted. Influenced by the richest nation in Europe at the time — England — these authors were inspired by fictional literature, non-fiction and English journalism. Although the influence that England had on these authors is undeniable, it is important to note that each one had a different vision of this country:

Ramalho Ortigão and Oliveira Martins described Great Britain and those who lived there as travellers who, while passing through, appreciate social phenomena (...). Eça de Queirós and Jaime Batalha Reis not only told us about the experience of those who stayed in these places for a long time but also proposed an analysis of international politics. (Marinho, 1988, p. 11)

Part of this fascination with England began with the influence of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, a publication whose irreverent and sensationalist language shocked the press at the time, partly because of its choice of topics outside the public sphere (such as the prostitution in the streets of London). The magazine was described at the time as *new journalism* (Kerrane, 1998, p. 17)⁴. Crossing borders and influencing readers, the *Pall Mall Gazette* would eventually impact many members of the “70s generation”. The four authors mentioned earlier are mostly known for contributing to national literature (except for Oliveira Martins). Their journalistic contributions will be considered here, particularly through the influence of journalism designed in the United Kingdom and the relationship that these authors had with reality.

From the perspective of Soares (2011), the following narratives by each author fit what we define as “literary journalism”: by Eça de Queirós (2000), the book *Cartas de Inglaterra e Crónicas de Londres* (Letters From England and Chronicles From London), a set of narratives from the collaboration for the newspaper *A Actualidade* in 1877/1878 (*Cartas de Inglaterra*; Letter from England) and for the *Gazeta de Notícias* do Rio de Janeiro in

⁴ Journalist and writer Tom Wolfe (1973) would come almost a century later to give the same name of a new journalism to the reports he compiled in the book *New Journalism*. It should be noted that the publications of the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the journalists of North-American new journalism from the 1970s are not linked.

the 1880s (*Crónicas de Londres*; Chronicles From London); from Ramalho Ortigão (1943), *John Bull: O Processo Gordon Cumming, Lord Salisbury e Correlativos Desgostos* (John Bull: The Gordon Cumming Process, Lord Salisbury and Correlative Disgusts) stands out; from Jaime Batalha Reis (1988), we have his articles written in 1888 and between 1893 and 1896 for the *Revista Inglesa: Crónicas* (English Magazine: Chronicles), and, finally, Oliveira Martins (1951), the articles about his trip to England in 1892, published in *A Inglaterra de Hoje: Cartas de um Viajante* (England Today: Letters from a Traveller).

It should be noted that literary journalism, in its genesis, is deeply influenced by travel journalism and, typically, it is the result of a media construct less constrained by time and number of words, thus enabling the creation of reportage with a larger dimension. However, in this field, as Soares (2011, pp. 118–133) argues, each of these authors has in their journalistic writings a tenuous connection with facts and, in their journalistic approach, they possess an interventionist and provocative nature. It should be noted at this point that the journalistic narrative of these authors is a product of their times and the ethical code of factuality, impartiality and justice that we tend to associate with today's quality journalism was far from the minds and practices of journalists and newsrooms at the end of the 19th century. In this sense, although it is important to mention these four authors and their contributions to the development of Portuguese journalism, it is essential to recognise the tenuous relationship between their journalistic work and the facts and the reality of the reported facts. The concept of literary journalism is something modern. Therefore, it is important to point out that this study considers the journalistic and literary contributions of these authors (and others)⁵, although, in a more recent vision of precision and rigour, their works do not necessarily fit the notion of journalism.

Now, according to Siegel (2016), literary journalism prevails in times of socio-political crisis, and the truth is that this argument also fits the Portuguese reality. Indeed, with the end of monarchy and the troubled times of the First Republic, we find more examples of literary journalism, which align with a modern definition of the genre. An example of this can be found in the reports by Hermano Neves for the newspaper *O Mundo* during the October 1910 revolution. It is important to say that Hermano Neves was a self-proclaimed republican, and even before the revolution, he manifested this affiliation. As António Ventura (1910) points out about Hermano Neves:

in 1904 he decided to go to Germany (...) [where] he worked and studied medicine (...). By then, he had already embraced the republican ideal. When the Portuguese ambassador in the German capital (...) [informed] that King Carlos had granted him a scholarship, Hermano refused it, saying: “I ask you to thank His Majesty for his kind consideration, but I cannot accept the pension because I am a republican”. (p. IV)

⁵ Fialho de Almeida, whose literary journalism was studied in Vanda Rosa's doctoral thesis (2019), stands out. Equally, we should reference the authors listed by Armando Baptista-Bastos (2002) in his analysis of the connection between journalism and literature, highlighting: Almeida Garrett, Alexandre Herculano, Camilo Castelo Branco, Silva Pinto, Guilherme de Azevedo and Fialho de Almeida (p. VII).

It is important to note that such affiliation does not seem to constitute a problem that compromises the veracity of his work and the facts of the narrated event. However, his republicanism is present and seems to, at times, speak louder, resulting in a clear enthusiasm throughout his coverage.

Constructed as a great reportage, the work of Hermano Neves (1910) narrates the events of the revolution while informing the reader about its background and the different republican groups that led to that moment. However, it is perhaps the constant inclusion of dialogues and interviews that makes Neves' work so appealing and striking, as it often gives voice to the military and officers who made the revolution, giving the feeling of disorganisation that strangely works. These reports that would be compiled in the same year in the book *Como Triunphou a Republica* (How the Republic Triumphed; H. Neves, 1910) represent only part of Hermano Neves' contribution to Portuguese literary journalism, and the truth is that he would continue to make history throughout his career. An example of his contribution can also be seen in the early years of the new regime and in what would be one of the most tragic international conflicts for Portugal and the First Republic: the Portuguese participation in the First World War. Once again, the contribution of Hermano Neves can be seen in his work for the newspaper *A Capital*, with the editorial team making the historic decision to send a Portuguese reporter to specifically cover the conflict (something that had not happened until then). Other Portuguese newsrooms followed by making a similar decision and whose result represents, to a great extent, the coverage that should be considered literary journalism⁶.

Also linked to an event that marked the history of Portugal is another literary journalist: Reinaldo Ferreira, or, as he became known to the public back then, Reporter X. It is important to note that still today, this journalist is subject to scrutiny and analysis due to the tenuous connection between his narratives and facts. Albeit, his contribution to reporting in Portugal is praised (Godinho, 2009, p. 135), even though his dubious deontology and invention in some of his reports inevitably show the fiction of his work (Sucena, 1996, pp. 34–35). Concerning this matter, it is important to refer to his December 15, 1918 article for *O Século* (Reinaldo, 1918), where he portrays the last moments of Sidónio Pais' life and the commotion generated after the shot that took his life. Amid fear and terror, Reinaldo heard the last words of the military man who had become the president of the Portuguese republic: "I die, but I die well! Save the Homeland...". Reinaldo Ferreira (1918) would have been the only person to hear these words, or at least the only reporter to have the scoop, but given his reputation for inventing moments and adding scenes to his reports, we know today that this article, like many others, cannot be taken seriously (Ferreira, 1974, pp. 99–100). It is undeniable that Repórter X contributed to Portuguese literary journalism and written reportage, but the way he dealt with facts compromises the necessary factuality that defines the genre.

Also, in this period, it is important to highlight the impact of the Sidónio Pais regime and how its end coincides with the troubled first 8 years of the Portuguese First

⁶ At this point, see also José Augusto Correia and Luís Câmara dos Reis for the newspaper *Diário de Notícias* and Paulo Osório for *O Século*.

Republic: “only one word defines the Portuguese situation after the war - crisis” (Aniceto, 2007, p. 102). Politically, Portugal was going through an undeniable instability at the time (Page, 2002/2008, p. 253) that would culminate on October 19, 1921, when a group of republican guards, sailors and armed civilians rebelled against the republican regime and, taking weapons, spread terror and blood through the streets of Lisbon. Without the strength to face this insurrection, António Granjo, then president of the ministry, handed in his letter of resignation and left the head of government. What happened next became known as the “bloody night” when a rebel group arrested several prominent figures of the First Republic and committed several murders. Among the victims were Machado Santos, José Carlos da Maia, Commander Freitas da Silva, Colonel Botelho Vascos and António Granjo. The following day, Lisbon woke up with the consequences of this cruel and violent event in Portuguese history and immediately, several journalists sought to record this moment.

From the reports of the time, it is worth mentioning the work of Consiglieri Sá Pereira (1924), which begins with the context that led to the “bloody night”, followed by the story of António Granjo and how he sought refuge. Having been hiding in the house of Francisco Cunha Leal, a former Portuguese military and politician, António Granjo is eventually found and, after being promised amnesty by the rebels, Leal and Granjo are taken to the docks where the former head of government is murdered. Francisco Cunha Leal is one of the main sources of this work, and it is in the sequencing of the different moments of António Granjo’s day and in the inclusion of long dialogues that we have in *Noite Sangrenta* (Bloody Night) by Consiglieri Sá Pereira (1924), a unique example of Portuguese literary journalism. Curiously, this work, like the work mentioned above by Hermano Neves (1910) on the revolution that would give rise to the First Republic, was also published in book form, a format not usually reserved for journalistic investigations but which has remained, still today, a livelihood for literary journalists. This fact did not escape Sá Pereira (1924), who added the following note at the beginning of the book *Noite Sangrenta*:

here you have, reader (...), the world of my conscience. Here you have the feelings of various kinds that impelled me to produce not a Book, and the name would be inappropriate (...), but a review of events that, by chance, I had professional interference. Forgive its mistakes. Praise its willingness to be right. (p. 7)

3. DICTATORSHIP, CENSORSHIP AND LITERARY JOURNALISM IN THE NEW POLITICAL REGIME

In a way, the “bloody night” would be a harbinger of the coup d’état of May 28, 1926, and the dictatorship that would follow. Moreover, in this vertigo of change, we have yet another outstanding example of Portuguese literary journalism, the work *Viagem à Volta das Ditaduras* (Journey Around the Dictatorships; Ferro, 1927), which contains a collection of reports by António Ferro made in three countries — Spain, Italy and Turkey

—, originally published in the *Diário de Notícias* before the May 1926 coup. Ferro's impact on the following decades of the Portuguese dictatorship is undeniable, given his role in *Estado Novo's* National Propaganda Secretariat. However, through his journalistic work, we have another perspective. This time in the context of the international scene and the fascination with the figure of the dictator. Through an analysis of three dictatorial regimes and their respective political figures, António Ferro's narrative (1927) offers a curious context for each moment, especially in the interviews in this book, where we discover not only the personalities interviewed but also the reporter himself. At various times, for example, when Ferro (1927) attends the celebrations in Rome in 1923 on the occasion of the first anniversary of the march that brought Mussolini to power, it is possible to discern in his words a clear personal fascination:

it's nine o'clock in the morning. Around Piazza del Popolo is an uproar of Hallelujah and a mumbling of drums (...). It starts to heat up. The festive and joyful Sun raised a few more flags of light (...). I hear the sky sing. (...) The procession approaches. Fascism will go through (...). *Il Duce* takes his place at the head of the procession. (pp. 60–61)

It is difficult to disassociate the journalist from the reported moment and from his obvious fascination with Mussolini and the fascism he represents, something that becomes clear throughout the three interviews that Ferro (1927) conducted with the dictator. The truth is that this narrative is a product of his time, praised at the time by Manuel Bueno, a Spanish journalist and intellectual belonging to the group of writers, essayists and poets known as the “Generation of 98”. Bueno (translated in Acciaiuoli, 2013)⁷ identifies Ferro's report as a “literary report”:

literary reportage [is] (...) a genre that touches, through its tangent borders, the novel, history and criticism. It requires a power of observation (...), a culture (...), and a very clear sense to appreciate the value of a fact and measure its consequences. (...) [Ferro is] a literate who makes a report [and who] gives the genre a nobility that elevates it to a higher level. (p. 45)

António Ferro (1933) would continue his interviews, this time with Salazar for *Diário de Notícias*, which were later published in the book *Salazar, o Homem e a Obra* (Salazar, the Man and the Work; Ferro, 1933), once again a work that reflects the fascination of this author towards the dictator and an example to consider when we talk about literary journalism in line with the ideology of the *Estado Novo*.

At this point, one of the most representative examples of the impact of the *Estado Novo* policies on media production can be found in a 1936 report written by Mário Neves (1985), interestingly the son of the journalist Hermano Neves, already mentioned here as one of the first Portuguese literary journalists. In 1936, Portugal was already under a new dictatorial political regime for 1 decade, consolidated in 1933 with the approval of

⁷ Translated from the original article by Bueno for the Spanish newspaper from Madrid, *ABC*, on May 23, 1930, Number 8.551.

the new constitution. On the other hand, Spain now faced a conflict between republicans and nationalists, the latter led by the one who would become the future Spanish dictator. When the Spanish civil war began in July 1936, Portugal's interest was immediate, and in a short period of time, Portuguese newsrooms began sending journalists across borders. Journalist Mário Neves, at the time still young in the profession, was sent in August of that year to cover the armed conflict in the city of Badajoz, one of the most important bastions of the Spanish republican forces and broad interest and concern for Portugal given its territorial proximity.

Initially, on the Portuguese border, the young journalist watches the conflicts in the Spanish city from afar and the movement of nationalist troops that were approaching. Through the analysis of the various articles by Mário Neves (1985) on Badajoz, it is possible to see a development in his writing, where in article after article, his journalistic approach develops with his field experience: first somewhat timidly describing the number of refugees approaching the border, then the air raids and the panic of those fleeing to Portugal, then with interviews and tense moments with the troops at the border. Interestingly, two aspects make this report a peculiar example of Portuguese literary journalism: on the one hand, the clear innocence of the journalist turns into uncertainty and later into shock and determination, making the reader live and understand this journey of sensations alongside the author; and, on the other hand, the history of its publication. Neves' articles published from August 11 to 17 culminated in his entry into Badajoz after the final battle between republican and nationalist forces. From the report on August 15, Neves' descriptions take on a more sober tone, something that grows and culminates in his last report on August 17. In the latter, he promises never to return to Badajoz after watching the slaughter's result and the pile of bodies burning on an improvised pyre; the solution found to deal with the impossibility of burying all the victims of the conflict, many of them already in advanced stages of decomposition.

This report's publication story is so important to understand the history of Portuguese literary journalism during the Portuguese dictatorship because this last report was never published in the *Diário de Notícias*; it was by censorship. This report, like so many others of the time, is just one example of the influence of the *Estado Novo* on freedom of national expression and the history of literary journalism at that time, but it is also an example of how censorship did not always act in a coordinated manner (Ramos, 2009, pp. 652–654). At this point, it is curious to note that only the article of August 17 was cut and not the others, something that Iva Delgado (1985, p. 70) argues is perhaps because national censorship was still in an embryonic stage in 1936. We know today that Portugal actively supported Francisco Franco's victory (Ramos, 2009, p. 70), so there was no interest in focusing on descriptions of violence by nationalist forces. In this sense, Mário Neves' report in 1936 is one of several examples of censorship in the years of the Spanish Civil War and in the decades that followed during the dictatorships of the Iberian Peninsula. It should be noted that all these reports by Mário Neves in Badajoz, including the censored report, would end up being published only after the end of the dictatorship in the book *A Chacina de Badajoz* (The Badajoz Slaughter; M. Neves, 1985), which also includes historical analyses of this event.

In a way, this work by Neves (1985) and the context in which it was written and received reflects a curious factor in literary journalism and explains why this journalistic genre has survived to the present day. Concerning the war in Badajoz and the Spanish Civil War as a whole, it is worth noting that numerous reports focused on this theme in various newspapers worldwide. However, as we saw earlier, certain reports are still celebrated and reprinted today, not necessarily because of the amount of information they contain but rather because of the way they investigate the event in question and expose the history of different individuals and past moments. The impact and relevance of Mário Neves' piece are based on the same principle: the exposure of information in an affected way that tries to do justice to the observed events and their impact on those present. When Mário Neves (1985), in this piece about Badajoz, presents us with the last moment of the article that would end up being cut by the censor, it is impossible not to feel the reported terror:

the authorities are the first to disclose (...) that the executions are very high. So what do they do with bodies? (...) There are so many dead that it is impossible to give them immediate burial. Only mass incineration can prevent the accumulated bodies from rotting (...). The fire has been burning for ten hours. A horrible smell penetrates our nostrils to the point that it almost turns our stomachs. Every now and then, you hear a kind of sinister crackling of wood. No artist, no matter how brilliant, would be able to reproduce this impressive Dantesque vision. (pp. 47–48)

This description does not and should not define literary journalism in general or how to practice it, but the sincerity and humanism of this and other reports must have room to exist in journalism to better transcribe the truth and complexity of the observed reality. Perhaps the best way to describe the importance of this report by Mário Neves (1985), his voice and journalistic choices is through the journalist Michael Herr (1977), who stated about journalism in armed conflicts, in his case about the war of Vietnam, the following: “conventional journalism could no more reveal this war than conventional firepower could win it” (p. 218).

It is no coincidence that until now, different works of literary journalism have been linked to armed conflicts. The truth is that, as mentioned earlier, moments of socio-political crisis leverage the development and writing of this genre and Portugal, in this regard, is no exception. In this sense, if the censorship and neutrality of Portugal in the Second World War can help explain the difficulty in finding examples of Portuguese literary journalism about this event, the truth is that the same did not happen during the Portuguese colonial war, where we find several examples of literary journalism. Consider, for example, the work of Artur Maciel (1963) entitled *Angola Heróica* (Heroic Angola). Working at the time for the *Diário de Notícias*, Maciel (1963) presents in this book a journalistic work that even he has trouble defining, as he mentions in the introduction:

I hesitated to collect the chronicles that fill the pages of this volume in a book. Writings to be published in a newspaper – as they were, in the *Diário de Notícias* – show, in many ways, the peculiar characteristics of a reportage. Which might seem out of place within the normal requirements for a book. (p. 15)

Artur Maciel (1963) recognises that this book is journalism in book format, which was already mentioned as being common in literary journalism, but the Portuguese journalist considers it strange. His justification for this strangeness is that the report is something we find in newspapers and that, if we read it in books of reportage, the reader may get lost because of the long investigation. In his explanation, Maciel (1963) notes:

there will possibly be information and commentary material in them that goes beyond the inherent ephemerality of the journalistic article (...). When a report is lengthy, either by the size of each chronicle or the time lapse between their publication, many readers, against purposes and desires, limit their readings to only one part. (pp. 15–16)

Indeed, this long report by Artur Maciel (1963), produced after 120 days following the Portuguese army, offers us a facet of the colonial war that, for all intents and purposes, is a portrait of its time and the language allowed to Portuguese journalism during the colonial conflict. For example, it is worth noting that, throughout the book, Maciel refers to the Portuguese struggle as a war against terrorism and the rebels in Angola, an expression of the time. Like others of the time, this work's relevance is partly centred on the need to consider this narrative as the possible output of its time. That is, if we coexist with literature from different mentalities and periods, even if their topics are strange or uncomfortable a posteriori, we must still analyse them as products of a different period. This point of view can and should also be considered with literary journalism to understand its potential and importance as a report from the moment it is conceived and for the subsequent generations that revisit it.

Thus, it should be noted that, in the 1960s, journalism in Portugal began to evolve and change with the slow introduction of women into journalistic frameworks⁸, and the same happened with Portuguese literary journalism. An example of these new and necessary voices of Portuguese literary journalism can be found, for example, in the writing of Edite Soeiro (1968a, 1968b, 1968c), a historical figure in national journalism. Considering her coverage of the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico for the *Jornal Notícias*, Edite Soeiro (1968a, 1968b, 1968c), with this work, was the first woman in Portugal to be sent to cover this event (also the first female Portuguese journalist to write about sports in Portugal). Edite Soeiro, like other reporters, would contribute to the development of national literary journalism, although the real turning point would be the revolution that would take place in 1974.

⁸ Consider the work of Isabel Ventura (2012), *As Primeiras Mulheres Repórteres* (The First Women Reporters), and that of Baptista and Correia (2009), *Memórias Vivas do Jornalismo* (Living Memories of Journalism).

4. THE END OF THE DICTATORSHIP AND THE POST-REVOLUTION PORTUGUESE LITERARY JOURNALISM

With the 1974 revolution, not only did the national panorama change definitively, but so did journalism as a whole, and thus, literary journalism that would be practised in this new freedom. It is undeniable that Portuguese journalism reacted profoundly to these changes, even if this transformation did not happen naturally. In the beginning, some journalists even admitted the difficulty of adapting to the new times (Baptista & Correia, 2007, p. 330). At this point, consider, for example, the vision of journalist Alice Vieira, one of the most outstanding figures in national journalism, who admitted in an interview with Isabel Ventura (2007) that doing journalism without censorship after the revolution period:

was hard. Being able to write normally about everything was difficult. We were so used to that – suddenly, we could write the names of people who were completely forbidden before, and we could talk about everything. (...)
) Even today, a phone call early in the morning startles me, and it's been 30 years. (p. 56)

Again, on the new times after the Carnation Revolution and the challenges for Portuguese journalists, it is worth noting Adriano Rodrigues' (1980) point of view about the end of the 1970s, when he refers to the promise of change: “after a time of euphoria, right after April 25 1974, media are now faced with a deep crisis in Portugal. For this crisis, in fact, there are no unambiguous and indisputable solutions” (p. 7).

After decades of being a country closed in on itself and with limitations to new ideas and influences, Portugal sees itself after April 25 facing progressive freedom and the subsequent need to discuss topics in the public sphere that were previously prohibited or treated as taboo and a social scandal. With this new market, different publications that prioritised long reports and different formats allowed Portuguese literary journalism to grow substantially.

An example of this type of publication can be found in *Cadernos de Reportagem* (Reportage Notebooks), a publication dedicated to investigative journalism. Under the direction of Fernando Dacosta, this publication defined itself in the first issue as being something “between a newspaper and a book, reconciling the accessibility of the first and the depth of the second”, focusing on “national themes that, due to their daring, marginality, disturbance and challenge are not reported within in our press” (Melo, 1983, p. 62). Indeed, each issue focused on a long report on the Portuguese reality and always with themes that were usually complex and outside their time range: in the first issue, we have a report on homosexuality in Portugal written by Guilherme de Melo; in the second, a profile of Zeca Afonso by Viriato Teles; in the third, a report on national abortion cases written by Maria Antónia Fiadeiro; in the fourth, the theme of esoterism by João Aguiar; in the fifth issue, we have a profile of a criminal written by Jorge Trabulo Marques; and, finally, the last issue on returnees from the former colonies written by Fernando Dacosta. Starting in June 1983 and ending in October 1984, the construction of this publication

partly recalls special issues of the *New Yorker* or *Esquire* magazines, that is, contemporary international publications focused on long reports and that made literary journalism famous in their respective realities.

Of the six issues of *Cadernos de Reportagem*, the articles by Guilherme de Melo (1983) and Maria Antónia Fiadeiro (1983) stand out, with these two being ultimate examples of Portuguese literary journalism that focus on complicated topics that should be researched. Even though *Cadernos de Reportagem* did not have a follow-up, we can see that this type of publication of specialised magazines, which focused on long written reports, eventually found space in the Portuguese press, particularly in the following decade. In fact, in this field, it is important to highlight the appearance of three specific magazines in the Portuguese panorama: *Grande Reportagem*, especially since its relaunch in 1989; *Público*, since its launch in 1990, especially with the now-extinct supplement called *Revista 2*; and *Visão*, from 1993 onwards. These three magazines, among others, allowed for the publication of long reports and a new generation of reporters who would succeed in the national panorama and change Portuguese literary journalism of the 1990s and the 21st century.

5. CONCLUSION: PORTUGUESE LITERARY JOURNALISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

When referring to *Público* newspaper, it is important to highlight two of the several literary journalists: Alexandra Lucas Coelho and Paulo Moura (both of whom ended their contract with this publication in 2017). Both journalists had a strong connection with *Público*, with both having some of their most remarkable reports already in book form, once again reinforcing the importance of this format for the survival of contemporary literary journalism.

Consider Alexandra Lucas Coelho first, a journalist whose writing style changes considerably from book to book. In her book *Tahrir!* (Coelho, 2011), for example, she captures the first moments of the Egyptian revolution in February 2011. Written on the spot and without the support of its editorial staff in Lisbon, this book stems from the journalist's desire to capture the story while it is happening with the perspective and rigour of her profession. Consider another of her books, *Vai, Brasil* (Go Brazil; Coelho, 2013), where some of her chronicles are compiled. This work could be considered not literary journalism, and, in fact, we find in this book several narratives more in line with opinion articles and chronicles, sometimes with a humorous tone. Even so, this work also has reportage moments, such as when Alexandra Lucas Coelho (2013) enters the Amazon Forest by boat and describes the scenario and the people with whom she interacts. In the words of the journalist, this change of style is something she does on purpose, as she identifies her writing as something in constant mutation, something that is in continuous movement:

what I feel and hope keeps happening is that it is something in “motion”.
And I hope it stays that way, I hope so. (...) At a certain point, I started (...)
) precisely trying not to settle down, not to settle into a formula. That is very

important to me; formulas don't interest me at all. Formulas are interesting to try once, and we move on. (Coutinho, 2018, p. 531)

Paulo Moura (2013) seeks a similar perspective in his work, letting the story influence his way of writing and not the opposite. An example of this can be found in his book *Longe do Mar* (Far From the Sea; Moura, 2013), which has a compilation of a series of reports that Moura wrote at different times in his career, always to follow stories through the countryside of Portugal — a format that the journalist would repeat in *Extremo Ocidental* (Western Edge; Moura, 2016), this time along the Portuguese coast. In *Longe do Mar* (Moura, 2013), the different reports sometimes follow distant structures: in “Iria”, the narrative looks like a report written over a long period in which the author admits a near fixation with a story that he cannot manage to finish; in “A Menina que Amou Demais” (The Girl Who Loved Too Much), the narrative appears more as if it were a short story, and it is actually a report on the tragic story of Joana Fulgêncio; in the narrative “Por Amor, em Forros de Arrão” (For Love, in Forros de Arrão), the author follows an unusual line for journalism and creates a report in a structure closer to the theatre, once again showing the extent of his writing. This almost unpredictability in style turns each of these stories, and so many others by Paulo Moura, into something appealing that captures the reader's attention as if it were a novel, never leaving aside the thoroughness and rigour that define the report and investigation that we find in literary journalism.

To conclude this study on the history of Portuguese literary journalism, it is important to recognise and once again reiterate its long evolution over time and its relevance for the national panorama until the present day. At the same time, it is important to note that a study on literary journalism is also a study of the history of journalism and how different journalists choose to tell stories with a detailed, humanistic and descriptive narrative. A genre that journalist Pedro Rosa Mendes (as quoted in the introductory notes to the book by Bak & Reynolds, 2011) would define as follows: “literary reportage is a commitment with reality through a novelist's eye but with a journalist's discipline” (p. VII).

Translation: Manuel Carvalho Coutinho

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THE JOURNALISTIC NARRATIVE ON TWITTER OF A (NON)ATTACK IN PORTUGAL

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ABSTRACT

Thursday, February 10, 2022, “an 18-year-old student was arrested this Thursday by the Judiciary Police suspect of the crime of terrorism, as he had been planning to attack his colleagues at the Faculty of Science of the University of Lisbon for months” (Henriques et al., 2022, para. 1). A case without parallel in Portugal, in a media context characterised by immediate consumption and the growing importance of social networks and social media, such as Twitter, even in information dissemination. We start from the perception of Twitter as a relevant platform for contemporary journalism that connects information flows between parties (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Sadler, 2018). Some 3,577 tweets were extracted within 1 week since the occurrence from the five official Twitter accounts with the most followers of journalistic/information nature in Portugal. Of those, only 104 tweets focus on this particular case, with *Correio da Manhã* showing three times as many tweets as *Expresso*. This work uses a qualitative approach to perform a discourse analysis using word clouds, visually representing the frequency of terms. Determining the narratives, including macro and micro-narratives (Lits, 2015; Motta, 2013), serves as guidelines for identifying the macro-narrative of an attack on a faculty of the University of Lisbon. Although common in the general corpus, the terrorism narrative is not central since it is found in a non-uniform way among the five-word clouds, only identified in the word clouds of SIC Notícias, *Jornal de Notícias* and *Correio da Manhã*. The analysis seeks to help develop insights about the narratives employed to provide and construct meaning to the media coverage of this unmatched case in Portugal.

KEYWORDS

narrative, Twitter, Portugal, terrorism, Orientalism

A NARRATIVA JORNALÍSTICA NO TWITTER DE UM (NÃO) ATENTADO EM PORTUGAL

RESUMO

Quinta-feira, dia 10 de fevereiro de 2022, “um estudante de 18 anos foi detido esta quinta-feira pela Polícia Judiciária suspeito do crime de terrorismo, já que estaria há meses a planear atacar os colegas da Faculdade de Ciências da Universidade de Lisboa” (Henriques et al., 2022, para. 1). Um caso sem grande paralelo em Portugal, num contexto mediático caracterizado pelo que é imediato e pela crescente importância das redes sociais e média sociais, como o Twitter, inclusive para a circulação de informação. Parte-se de um entendimento do Twitter como uma plataforma relevante para o jornalismo contemporâneo que conecta fluxos de informação entre partes (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Sadler, 2018). Foram extraídos 3.577 tweets no espaço de 1 semana desde o caso, das cinco contas oficiais no Twitter com mais seguidores, de cariz jornalístico/informativo em Portugal. Desses, apenas 104 tweets se focam neste particular caso, destacando-se o facto de o *Correio da Manhã* apresentar o triplo de tweets do *Expresso*. Este

trabalho utiliza uma abordagem qualitativa para realizar uma análise discursiva, com recurso a nuvens de palavras, que representam visualmente a frequência de termos. A identificação de narrativas, inclusive macro e micronarrativas (Lits, 2015; Motta, 2013), orienta este trabalho, que resulta na identificação da macronarrativa da existência de um ataque numa faculdade da Universidade de Lisboa. A narrativa do terrorismo, apesar de comum no corpus geral não é central, já que se encontra de forma não uniforme entre as cinco nuvens de palavras, sendo identificada nas nuvens de palavras da SIC Notícias, do *Jornal de Notícias* e do *Correio da Manhã*. A análise desenvolvida procura auxiliar o desenvolvimento de entendimentos sobre as narrativas utilizadas para dar e construir sentido à cobertura mediática deste caso específico sem grande comparação em Portugal.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

narrativa, Twitter, Portugal, terrorismo, orientalismo

1. INTRODUCTION

The present world is progressively and rapidly becoming increasingly technological, particularly assuming digital forms and formats. Digital spaces can be perceived as differentiated from physical media spaces, namely because those spaces can be accessed from an increasing myriad of physical objects. Digitalisation implies changes in the processes of media consumption, namely at the level of information consumption. Media can be seen as ways of encoding and transmitting information, which can be differentiated by the type of information encoded and by how the information is transmitted (Ryan, 2021b). Nowadays, information is transmitted and retransmitted on social platforms, such as social media networks (van Dijck & Poell, 2013), which leads to an interest in identifying and even understanding media narratives on social platforms in the coverage of mediatised cases.

Within the social platforms, Twitter stands out in this context by allowing vast and immediate dissemination of information (Kwak et al., 2010; Maireder & Ausserhofer, 2014). Twitter also stands out because of this wide-reaching capacity to circulate information in a new communication channel with a predominantly informal basis, thus being an entirely new media phenomenon (Ryan, 2021a; Zhao & Rosson, 2009), unlike other digital phenomena that have replaced previous analogue formats.

Media storytelling has gained, in recent years, new formats and, consequently, new uses due to the very characteristics of platforms like Twitter (Lits, 2015), namely by restricting the limit of characters in each tweet (Bhattacharya & Ram, 2012). This transformation points to Ryan's (2012) idea that linguistic skills, narrative capacity, and human culture evolve in a symbiotic relationship. Social platforms such as Twitter make it possible to reach a vast number of receptors (Reis, 2018). Twitter is restricted, more than other social platforms, to written language — but limited to a small number of characters, as mentioned — which is also significant from a perspective of the narrative capacities and limitations of this media. Hence, there is a growing interest in the narratological study of Twitter taking into account its impact on society, as in the discursive narratives of

politicians (Tellidis & Kappler, 2016), and taking into special consideration the fact that Twitter itself is an important locus of online radicalisation (Bastug et al., 2020).

This research focuses particularly on the case that occurred on February 10, 2022, in which “an 18-year-old student was arrested (...) Thursday by the Judiciary Police suspect of the crime of terrorism, as he had been planning to attack his colleagues at the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Lisbon for months” (Henriques et al., 2022, para. 1). It builds on Motta’s (2013) assumption of the importance of studies on narratives since “studying and retelling them gives meaning to human life” (p. 62). Through discourse analysis, it is sought to identify macro and micro-narratives in the tweets of the five official Portuguese Twitter accounts of journalistic/informative nature with the largest number of followers. In this sense, this research is guided by the following research questions:

1. In what way was this event characterised on Twitter?
2. Does a journalistic narrative associated with terrorism stand out?
3. Are there nuances in the narratives followed by the different media?

2. STATE OF THE ART

2.1. JOURNALISM, NARRATIVE AND TWITTER

The alarming idea that journalism is “dying” (Neveu, 2014) has been proclaimed and disseminated. Even if this idea is, in itself, a reflection of the sensationalism that sometimes overtakes journalism itself, there is a reflection to be carried out. Journalism has been challenged, namely by shifts in the processes of transmission, retransmission and circulation of information in digital spaces. Authors such as Lits (2015) and Neveu (2014) advocate the need for a redefinition of the journalism profession that emphasises the narrative model. While Keeble (2018) seeks the valorisation of narrative journalism — also called “literary journalism” — by considering that all journalism tends to be narrative. In this regard, it is possible to indicate that “narrative is, in fact, the privileged mode of the press discourse” (Peixinho, 2014, p. 1). Nevertheless, this idea is not unanimous. In fact, citing several authors, Fulton et al. (2005) address the idea that associates the narratives with the concept of soft news, linked to the stories, but not to the hard news, linked to the facts.

Technological proliferation has impacted the organisation of newsrooms and triggered professional transformations in the work of journalists, changing journalistic writing itself (Lits, 2015). This technological proliferation, which resulted in new media, increased the transmission of narratives and their reach, including through the possibilities of interactivity that digital offers (Reis, 2018). Narrative journalism itself, which can be understood as a journalistic genre, may be seen as a competitive strategy vis-a-vis the immediacy of accessing — at least apparently — totally free news of the online world (van Krieken, 2018).

The media landscape has changed profoundly with the introduction of the internet, but above all, its widespread usage (van Krieken, 2018) becoming one more comprehensive (Couldry, 2012) and interactive space (Erjavec, 2014). The development of websites (and consequent online platforms and mobile applications) of social media and social networks has “revolutionised the way information is shared and consumed online” (Bhattacharya & Ram, 2012, p. 966), even to the extent that these can be sources of information for news (Lits, 2015). In this sense, one might even question the concept of “breaking news” since one piece of information has a high potential of being disseminated quickly in social networks and social media before being identified and transformed into the news by any journalistic organisation (Alejandro, 2010).

Within social networks and social media, Twitter has been progressively understood as important for journalism (Sadler, 2018) or the broader idea of news sharing (Papacharissi, 2015). It is a platform that connects flows of information between parties (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012) and that stands out for the speed of virality that its publications achieve, as it allows rapid and easy dissemination of information, which makes it an attractive platform even for political uses (Howard, 2010). The viral potential exists even though this platform reduces the centrality of possible actions to sharing small pieces of information, constrained by a small limit of characters (Bhattacharya & Ram, 2012). Since its inception, this restriction of characters has led Twitter to be described not only as a social network or a social media but also as a microblogging platform (Java et al., 2007). It is called “tweet”, the type of publication of this platform which, despite allowing images and videos, continues to favour writing. Despite the restriction of characters, Twitter “exhibits key elements of narrativity” (Sadler, 2018, p. 3266), and there are authors like Dawson (2020) who argue that the specific characteristics of Twitter enable the creation of narrative phenomena, such as the “emerging storytelling”.

Twitter is inserted in a digital context of rapid dissemination of information, in which news circulates through “word of mouth on steroids” (Alejandro, 2010, p. 12). News organisations have needed and continue to adapt to this context, learning to use Twitter as an element of their communicational activity (Papacharissi, 2015). Frequently, this use has been limited to the repetition of news, in this situation in a condensed manner, between more and different platforms, especially in the cases of news about crime and public affairs (Armstrong & Gao, 2010).

2.2. DIGITAL RADICALISATION

Digital media can be seen as resources that assist the processes of rapid mobilisation (Papacharissi, 2015). However, some argue that such mobilisation needs to extrapolate the online space to be consolidated (Howard, 2010). In particular, social media and social networks can be important tools for mobilisation against the orders of authoritarian regimes (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012).

The mobilising potential of social networks and social media also increases the tensions of communicational relationships and interactions (Simões & Camponez, 2020),

generating media spaces that can be harnessed for the development of radicalism in society (Miranda et al., 2020; Thompson, 2011) such as terrorist movements (Dean et al., 2012; Huey, 2015; Ummah, 2021). This mobilising potential may justify the popularity of online radicalisation and recruitment themes in studies that intersect terrorism with social media/social networks (Antunes, 2022). In this sense, radical groups, be these of a supremacist, nationalist or religious nature, use the concept of “online revolution (...) by appropriating online technologies and options for their interest and spreading hateful comments and (mis)information with proclaimed ultimate goals of separatism and annihilation of other societal groups” (Quandt & Festl, 2017, p. 1).

The use of the internet is strategic and central in the recent activity of terrorist and radical groups, as online spaces “can also replace the role of mainstream media that radical-terrorist groups cannot have” (Ummah, 2021, p. 234). Social networks and social media are purposefully used “by extremist groups in order to manufacture a process of online hate” (Awan, 2017, p. 139). Terrorist cells employ a wide range of platforms, but Twitter stands out in terms of popularity, namely because this platform faces fewer technological hurdles for its proper functioning in geographical areas whose internet use mainly relies on mobile network usage in mobile phones (Klausen, 2015). Consequently, Twitter can be considered an important locus of online radicalisation (Bastug et al., 2020).

Online spaces such as social media and social networks have made radicalised content more accessible, which corroborates the normalisation of social and political violence (Huey, 2015). This proliferating online violence can take the form of hate speech, prompting even approaches to the phenomenon of “cyber-hate” (Assimakopoulos et al., 2017), which tends to be strategic and is targeted at a specific group — differing from the term “cyber-bullying” as such is not directed at a single person (Quandt & Festl, 2017).

In this paper’s particular case under study, the focus is on the journalistic narratives that accompany the case’s mediatisation itself. However, to understand the (non)attack, it may also be important to address the individualised, sometimes solitary, processes of online radicalisation, which, if they result in attacks, tend to be less lethal and dangerous than those organised by groups (Cohen et al., 2014). One may speak here of people of whom any antecedent history of extremist connection or affiliation is unknown but who act — or plan to act — in ways that tend to be designated as “terrorist”. Johnson et al. (2016) suggest that these individualised radicalisation processes may be justified by a false sense of belonging to a terrorist group.

However, terrorism is also thought of and undertaken without a group or even the false sense of belonging to a terrorist group. In this context, the term “lone wolf” terrorism has become popularised (Cohen et al., 2014; Phillips, 2011) — regarding cases such as that of Anders Breivik, who, on July 22 2011, caused the death of 77 people in Norway (Jordán, 2011) — however, it is not unanimous (Paixão, 2019). That is a phenomenon that, although typically less lethal, is highly unpredictable and intricate to predict or to establish type profiles (Paixão, 2019; Spaaij, 2010).

Radicalisation processes are individualised but not unique (Pisoiu et al., 2020). In this sense, and in order to seek to identify patterns for this radicalisation, there is relevance

to the idea that the internet “appears as the most important element driving individual radicalisation processes” (Koehler, 2014, p. 131). In the corpus of this work, the potential of internet radicalisation is not focused on since the internet tends to reveal itself only as a digital place to carry out journalistic work and, in particular, social networks/social media stand, above all, as spaces of dissemination of that same journalistic work.

3. EMPIRICAL STUDY

3.1. METHODOLOGY

Through a qualitative approach, this work is rooted in the narrative capacity of media, either in general terms or in the specific case of digital media, namely by focusing on social media networks and platforms. Underpinned by the argument that discourse is “the main instrument in the process of meaning construction” (Figueira, 2014, p. 25), a discourse analysis (Assimakopoulos et al., 2017; Leeuwen, 1995) aware of the study of narratives (Motta, 2013) is carried out. In this manner, the idea that any media selects certain aspects of a world is considered, implying that narrative worlds are fundamentally incomplete entities (Ryan, 2021a). This study seeks to identify the narratives used on Twitter concerning the case in focus, which occurred on February 10 2022.

The tweets of the five official journalistic/information Twitter accounts in Portugal with the most followers were collected: SIC Notícias (887,400 followers), *Público* (848,600 followers), *Expresso* (537,600 followers), *Jornal de Notícias* (535,300 followers) and *Correio da Manhã* (455,100 followers)¹. These five official Twitter accounts correspond to the accounts of five media organisations in Portugal, even though they have distinct editorial characteristics and periodicities. All five media in question have a generalist and informative national character. Since its creation, SIC Notícias has been a relevant thematic television informative channel in Portugal, whose programme schedule is mainly “composed of extended news, short news and information programmes” (Gaspar, 2004, p. 45). *Público* and *Expresso* are newspapers considered information media of reference (Araújo & Lopes, 2014). In its turn, *Jornal de Notícias* and *Correio da Manhã* carry “closer editorial orientations, with themes and narrative styles that tend to raise the participation of the public, although the first one is closer to the tabloid format” (Lima & Reis, 2014, p. 669).

Tweets were extracted in the 7 days starting from the case under study. Thus, the news coverage is studied between February 10, 2022, and February 16, 2022. This study aims to identify macro and micro-narratives (Lits, 2015) in the tweets of the five official Portuguese Twitter accounts of a journalistic/informative nature with the largest number of followers. In this sense, this study is guided by the three research questions explained in the introduction of this work.

¹ The number of followers shown here refers to the number of followers of these accounts in April 2022.

The advanced search engine Twitter provided presented 881 tweets from SIC Notícias, 846 tweets from *Público*, 661 tweets from *Expresso*, 590 tweets from *Jornal de Notícias* and 599 tweets from *Correio da Manhã*. Interestingly, the advanced Twitter search did not provide any tweets from the official *Expresso* account referring to February 10, 2022 (the day the case in question was mediatised). The tweets were later extracted using PhantomBuster² and compiled into a “csv” file. This way, it was possible to reach 3,577 tweets in the corpus for analysis, whose distribution by each account can be seen in Table 1.

DAY	SIC NOTÍCIAS	PÚBLICO	EXPRESSO	JORNAL DE NOTÍCIAS	CORREIO DA MANHÃ	TOTAL
February 10	167	128	0	118	89	502
February 11	146	153	145	110	100	654
February 12	61	95	65	75	80	376
February 13	62	79	52	58	65	316
February 14	145	119	117	66	83	530
February 15	154	138	139	60	87	578
February 16	146	134	143	103	95	621
Total	881	846	661	590	599	3,577

Table 1 Total number of tweets extracted according to official accounts and the respective days

After extracting the 3,577 tweets of the initial corpus, the tweets that did not address the case studied were identified, reducing the corpus to 104 tweets worthy of analysis, which are distributed in 33 tweets from *Correio da Manhã*, 29 tweets from SIC Notícias, 18 tweets from *Jornal de Notícias*, 13 tweets from *Público* and 11 tweets from *Expresso*, whose distribution by days can be seen in Table 2.

DAY	SIC NOTÍCIAS	PÚBLICO	EXPRESSO	JORNAL DE NOTÍCIAS	CORREIO DA MANHÃ	TOTAL
February 10	7	1	0	1	4	13
February 11	16	7	10	12	18	63
February 12	5	3	1	4	9	22
February 13	1	0	0	1	1	3
February 14	0	2	0	0	1	3
February 15	0	0	0	0	0	0
February 16	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	29	13	11	18	33	104

Table 2 Number of tweets about the case under study, extracted according to official accounts and the respective days

The texts of the 104 tweets of the final corpus concerning the case in question underwent discourse analysis aided by word clouds, a tool of particular adequacy in

² More information at <https://phantombuster.com/>.

discourse analysis (Heimerl et al., 2014)³. Six-word clouds were created using the online platform Flourish⁴, one of the word clouds that seeks to identify the macro-narratives of the news coverage, in this case, via Twitter, through the identification and analysis of the most frequent words. The remaining five-word clouds correspond to a word cloud for each journalistic/informative account. Word clouds allow the identification of narratives, including macro and micro-narratives, in the media coverage of the case under study. Macro-narrative is understood as the general narrative that, moreover, is built through the conjugation of micro-narratives, that is, particular narratives (Canilha, 2019). All terms in the 104 tweets were rewritten to their lowercase version only, thus avoiding errors in counting the frequency of terms, and some Portuguese discourse connectors such as “de”, “a”, “e”, “o”, “da”, “do”, “das”, “dos”, “que” and “é” (“of”, “the”, “and”, “that”, “by”, “from”, “which”, and “is”) were also eliminated. The word clouds of this study display the 100 most frequent terms in a given corpus, represented according to a linear scale.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results demonstrate that, although this specific case seems, at the outset, to have high media interest, in fact, of the 3,577 tweets initially collected, only 104 addressed this very case, resulting in a percentage of tweets included in the final corpus of under 3%. Although research stipulated 1 week as the time frame of possible media relevance, no tweets about the specific case were identified on February 15 and 16. On the other hand, February 11, with 63 of the 104 tweets in the corpus, was the day with more tweets about the specific case.

Figure 1 displays the word cloud for the visual representation of the 100 most frequent terms in the set of 104 tweets of the corpus. In this visual discourse analysis resorting to word clouds, the terms “ataque”, “jovem”, “universidade”, “lisboa”, and “faculdade” (“attack”, “young man”, “university”, “Lisbon” and “faculty”) stand out. In that sense, these terms that stand out visually centralise the analysed media discourse in the idea of an “attack of a young man on a faculty of the University of Lisbon”. This central media narrative can be understood as the macro-narrative in the corpus under analysis. The idea resulting from this macro-narrative does not highlight, at least with equal frequency and centrality, motifs or adjectives that contextualise that “attack”.

³ Word clouds are also used in other types of content analysis (Vilela et al., 2020) and for any focus identification of a given written material (Atenstaedt, 2012). They compose visual representations of the frequency of any term in a specific corpus, as the most frequent terms in that corpus are graphically highlighted.

⁴ More information at <https://flourish.studio>.



Figure 1 Word cloud of the corpus of 104 tweets

Note. “Ataque” = “Attack”, “jovem” = “young man”; “universidade” = “university”; “lisboa” = “Lisbon”; “faculdade” = “faculty”; “vídeos” = “Videos”, “suspeito” = “suspect”, “ciências” = “sciences”; “portugal” = “Portugal”; “estudante” = “student”; “terrorista” = “terrorista”; “atentado” = “bombing”; “terrorismo” = “terrorismo”; “massacre” = “massacre”; “preparava” = “prepared”; “planeava” = “planned”.

One can highlight other terms from the word cloud in Figure 1, such as “vídeos”, “suspeito”, “ciências”, “portugal”, “estudante”, “terrorista”, “atentado”, “terrorismo”, “massacre”, “preparava” or “planeava” (“vídeos”, “suspect”, “science”, “Portugal”, “student”, “terrorist”, “bombing”, “terrorism”, “massacre”, “prepared” or “planned”). These terms may suggest other narratives present in the corpus of the 104 tweets about this specific case. The media narratives each official journalistic/news organisation account used for the coverage of this case can be further explored through the discourse analysis using the respective word clouds.

Figure 2 is the visual representation of the 29 tweets extracted from the official account of SIC Notícias. In this word cloud, the words “ataque”, “faculdade”, “jovem”, “universidade”, and “lisboa” (“attack”, “faculty”, “young man”, “university”, and “Lisbon”) stick out initially. These are the exact same five terms found with greater prominence in Figure 1 and the identified macro-narrative of a young man’s attack on a faculty at the University of Lisbon. The terms “tentativa” and “ciências” (“attempt” and “sciences”) also draw attention, although with less visual representativeness, which corresponds to a lower frequency of both words. In what concerns words that add to the identification of the “suspeito” or “detido” (“suspect” or “detained”), we find “18” — the age of this young man.

relevance after 5 days of occurrence. Notwithstanding the immediate nature that characterises the digital space, social networks and social media, it was not from the day of the event itself that more tweets about this case were found, but rather from the following day, February 11, 2022 (with 63 of the 104 tweets of the corpus), which corroborates the idea that “usually, the narrative emerges after the event” (Lits, 2015, p. 20), even in the digital space. A critical perspective of the tweets of the corpus about this case reinforces the understanding that the news media behind the five accounts in question use Twitter essentially as another platform for the dissemination and spreading of the journalistic work they do within a trend of underutilisation of the conversational capabilities that Twitter offers (Puebla & Gomes-Franco, 2015).

At a quantitative level, there are differences in the media coverage of this case for each news organisation connected to the five Twitter accounts included in the corpus, as shown in Table 2. SIC Notícias and *Público* published, respectively, 881 and 846 tweets between the 7 days of the corpus, the two accounts with more tweets collected. However, of the 881 tweets from SIC Notícias, 29 address the case studied. On the other hand, from the 846 tweets from *Público*, only 13 are about this case. That amounts to less than half the SIC Notícias’s tweets incorporated in the corpus of 104 tweets under analysis, despite the similar number of tweets in the 7 days of the corpus. Moreover, *Correio da Manhã*’s account has the highest number of tweets about the case (33) and the second lowest total number collected in the 7 days of analysis (599). This prevalence may constitute a potential indicator of greater perceived relevance of this case, for this journalistic organisation, through a higher frequency of tweets, compared to the other journalistic organisations behind the analysed accounts, which may be a mere reflection of the informative matrix of *Correio da Manhã*, considered to be closer to the tabloid format (Lima & Reis, 2014).

According to the discourse analysis, by resorting to the visual representation of word clouds, a macro-narrative is identified in Figure 1, which allows answering the first research question — “in what way was this event characterised on Twitter?”. The discourse of the 104 tweets corpus focuses on an idea that connects the most frequent terms: “ataque”, “jovem”, “universidade”, “lisboa”, and “faculdade” (“attack”, “young man”, “university”, “Lisbon”, and “faculty”). This journalistic macro-narrative is somehow present in every word cloud, referring to the tweets of each of the five journalistic/informative accounts. The exception is *Expresso*’s word cloud (Figure 4) since the small number of tweets (11) possibly does not constitute a sufficient corpus for identifying narratives in the form of word clouds that visually represent the 100 most frequent terms.

Figure 1 shows, still with relative frequency, terms like “terrorista” or “terrorismo” (“terrorist” or “terrorism”), which allows starting an answer to the second research question that guides this work — “does a journalistic narrative associated with terrorism stand out?”. It is identified as a narrative that associates this case with terrorism. However, it is not a central macro-narrative in the corpus.

The word clouds concerning each Twitter account of a journalistic/informative nature allow answering positively to the third research question — “are there nuances in

the narratives followed by the different media?”. There are nuances, in other words, subtleties in the narratives applied, namely at the level of the use of the terrorism narrative, since terms that refer to this idea are found in the word clouds of SIC Notícias, *Jornal de Notícias* and *Correio da Manhã*, but not in the remaining ones.

The actual discursive construction of the central character in this event is differentiated between the five journalistic/informative Twitter accounts. There are cases in which a more legal approach, where this character is constructed as a suspect of any illicit activity, is particularly frequent in comparative terms. This approach may be a consequence of adherence to the Portuguese Journalists’ Code of Ethics, in particular Point 8, which covers the need for the journalist to safeguard the presumption of innocence of defendants (Sindicato dos Jornalistas, 2017). In any case, the use of the term “suspeito” (“suspect”) differs between the word clouds, appearing with relative frequency in the word clouds of SIC Notícias, *Expresso* and *Correio da Manhã*. There are cases in which the age (SIC Notícias) or the name (*Correio da Manhã*) of this young man is highlighted, which constitutes relevant discursive nuances in the construction of the central character of this case — since, inevitably, the real figure of an event goes through a work of narrative and journalistic composition and construction (Peixinho, 2014).

A further possible nuance at the level of micro-narratives has to do with the high frequency of the word “travado” (“stopped”) — by association, for example, with “ataque travado” (“attack stopped”) — in *Público*’s word cloud. With only this term, *Público* ascribes great importance to this micro-narrative, which conveys the idea that the event itself did not occur because it was stopped, thus being a non-event. One does not find this micro-narrative in the other word clouds, at least not with a similar level of prominence, whereas the frequency of the word “tentativa” (“attempt”) in SIC Notícias’ word cloud may correspond to a micro-narrative very similar to the one identified in *Público*’s because it also expresses the idea that the attack did not happen.

This study allows the identification of narratives, which, in turn, raises necessary reflections about these same narratives. Portugal’s history of cases represented as terrorist attacks is particularly slight. The specific case studied here can fit several definitions of terrorism, including that of “lone wolf” (Cohen et al., 2014; Phillips, 2011; Spaaij, 2010), although those same definitions are controversial (Paixão, 2019). Some even speak of “old terrorism” and “new terrorism” (Neumann, 2009) and how “new terrorism” as a concept gained visibility after the attacks of September 11, 2001, in the United States of America (Rezende & Schwether, 2015). These attacks contributed to the stereotypical, Orientalist and Islamophobic association and binding of terrorism to Islamism (Altheide, 2006; Nayak, 2006). Moreover, inclusively in a country like Portugal, in which the cases described as “terrorism” are a detail, most media representations of Muslims reproduce Eurocentric power discourses (Rodríguez Maeso, 2018), related to an Orientalist tradition (Matos, 2002). Hence, it would be interesting to understand how a similar case to this one would be represented if the character was Muslim or perceived as such — since terms like “Arab” or “Muslim” are commonly, but erroneously, used as synonyms in various media narratives (Shaheen, 2001).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The elaborated word clouds serve as tools for discourse analysis regarding the coverage of the five Twitter accounts of a journalistic/informative nature in Portugal with the most followers. It is considered that this qualitative analytical approach can contribute to the development of scientific understandings about the narratives used to give and construct meaning to the media coverage, particularly journalistic coverage on Twitter, of this specific case with few parallels in Portugal. A journalistic macro-narrative central to the 104 tweets is identified, entailing the idea of an attack on a faculty of the University of Lisbon. Despite being common — but not uniform among the five-word clouds — the terrorism narrative is not the most central in the corpus, as shown in Figure 1. In fact, the journalistic narrative that associates this case to terrorism is not highly present in the five accounts, despite standing out in three of the five (namely, the cases of SIC Notícias, *Jornal de Notícias* and *Correio da Manhã*). Therefore, the study points towards nuances of the most frequent narratives in each of the five news media associated with the official Twitter accounts. In this regard, other narrative nuances are identified, be it the emphasis given to the idea of “attack stopped”, mainly in *Público*, or from the perspective of the construction of the central character of the case, since the word clouds show, among themselves, different highlights given to aspects such as his age or name.

This paper may contribute to studying media narratives, particularly journalistic, in this type of case in Portugal. The critical analysis of the 104 tweets also allows for deepening the understanding that the news media in Portugal show a tendency to use Twitter as a space for the dissemination of their work and not, at least overtly, for the conversational and interactive potential of this platform (Puebla & Gomes-Franco, 2015). Other studies focusing on this case might analyse other media and journalistic objects, reaching beyond the immediate nature that characterises how information circulates online, particularly Twitter.

Nevertheless, this paper reiterates the consideration of what would be the central macro-narrative in the corpus if this case under study had as a character a young Muslim or an individual even perceived as Muslim. Furthermore, if the micro-narratives identified in the accounts of *Público* and even SIC Notícias, which seem to want to demonstrate that the attack did not happen, was “stopped” and was only an “attempt”, would have similar frequencies. Especially if the identity profile of the young man, this case’s central character, had religion — especially not the Catholic religion — as a prominent element.

Based on the word clouds of the posts — tweets — of the five official accounts corresponding to the five information media in Portugal with more followers on Twitter, this study allowed the identification of a journalistic macro-narrative that focuses on an attack at a faculty of the University of Lisbon. As far as this case’s central character is concerned, no narrative focused on his identity element stood out particularly, as opposed to what occurred in vast accounts of media representations associated with attacks that typically follow an Orientalist and Islamophobic tradition (Altheide, 2006; Nayak, 2006). Such a representative tradition, which focuses on an identity element, tends to contribute to the religious — particularly Islamic — association with terrorism. Regardless, in

the case under study in this paper, and although it still has a relevant frequency, the journalistic narrative of terrorism did not stand out uniformly or centrally in the 104 tweets of the corpus, which helps understand the media coverage, especially journalistic, of this specific case with few parallels in Portugal.

Translation: Eduardo Antunes

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