



Police Violence, Racism, and Anti-racism: Opinion Struggles in the Portuguese Daily Newspapers

Ana Cristina Pereira, Sílvia Roque, and Rita Santos

Introduction

In this chapter, we analyse opinion articles published in the Portuguese daily newspapers *Correio da Manhã*, *Observador*, and *Público* between 2015 and 2019 on the police racist aggression against a group of young Black men on February 5, 2015. This incident of police brutality gave rise to a long court battle and became known in the Portuguese public

A. C. Pereira (✉)

Centre of Communication and Society Studies, University of Minho (CECS/UMinho), Braga, Portugal

e-mail: ana.c.pereira@outlook.com

S. Roque · R. Santos

Centre for Social Studies, CES, Coimbra, Portugal

S. Roque

University of Évora, UE, Évora, Portugal

debate as “the Alfragide Police Station Case” (hereafter referred to as the Case).¹

This article seeks to answer the following research questions: How does opinion operate in the production of discursive events? How does it promote processes of racialised othering or de-othering? As such, we aim to analyse the impact that the Case had on opinion production in three national newspapers, to understand which discursive strategies are used both to defend the *status quo* and to question structural and institutional racism in Portuguese society. The Portuguese case is particularly interesting since racism is not often acknowledged as a real problem nationally and until recently it was not present in governmental agendas. This unwillingness to recognise and combat structural racism, in particular, stems from a process of national identity building during the fascist and colonialist period that remains unchallenged. The following section provides an overview of the literature on opinion and mainstream media, focused on the contribution of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), while the next focuses on de/othering processes and anti/racism in Portugal, introducing and justifying the case study. The subsequent one explains the methodology. The paper then proceeds to explore how othering processes are discursively activated and contested in the opinion segments of the Portuguese daily newspapers centred on the Case.

Critically Analysing Opinion in Mainstream Newsmedia

Whereas the public does not always perceive differences between ‘news’ and ‘opinion’ (Media Insight Project 2018), newspapers’ Op-Eds have long-lasting effects on public opinion (Coppock et al. 2018). In Portugal, research on media representation of immigrants and minorities or ‘internal others’ (El Tayeb 2011)—that is, racialised people who are often read as non-Portuguese—namely immigrants, afro-descendants,

¹ This study stems from the project “(De)Othering: Deconstructing Risk and Otherness: hegemonic scripts and counter-narratives on migrants/refugees and ‘internal Others’ in Portuguese and European mediascapes” (2018–2021). See https://deothering.ces.uc.pt/en_GB/.

and Roma people, has loomed since the 2000s (Cunha et al. 2004, Cunha and Santos 2008; ERC 2009; Santos and Santos 2021), focusing chiefly on press and television news. Studies have shed light on readers' opinions (hate speech and racism), namely in comment boxes and letters to newspapers (Silva 2021), and on the issue of fake news and bad journalism (Cardoso and Baldi 2018; Pinto 2018); nevertheless, there is a notorious lack of research on the opinion produced by print media.

This study uses CDA (Fairclough 1995; Bonilla-Silva 2006; van Leeuwen 2008; Jäger and Maier 2009; van Dijk 2001) to identify the rhetorical strategies employed by opinion-makers to exercise power. Discourses are related to ideologies and, consequently, power distribution in the social world. Thus, discourse analysis cannot be limited to merely describing the linguistic contents of speeches and texts. CDA is a type of analytical research that primarily studies how abuse of social power, domination, and inequality are produced, reproduced, and resisted through texts (of all kinds) and speech in social and political contexts. It seeks to understand, expose, and resist social inequality (van Dijk 2001; van Leeuwen 2008).

The battle waged by different social groups to make their opinion and interests prevail in the social space—the struggle for hegemony (Gramsci 2017)—is present in the news clipping and the case under analysis. This struggle is not fought on an equal footing because it is nearly impossible to oppose alternative discourses to hegemonic discourses (Foucault 1996), which are usually naturalised and unrecognised as ideological. Although all events are rooted in discourse, “the theoretical concept of ‘discursive events’ refers specifically to events that appear on the discourse of politics and the mass media intensively, extensively and for a prolonged period” (Jäger and Maier 2009: 54). The Case turned into a discursive event due to the involvement of the Public Security Police (PSP) and other security forces, the Black Portuguese Movement (BPM), the media (including the mainstream), government officials, among others, over a long period and with indelible consequences for the racism debate in Portugal.

Racism/Othering and Anti-racism/ De-othering in Portugal

Rooted in feminist and postcolonial works (Beauvoir 1949; Said 1978; Spivak 1988), othering refers to explicit and implicit processes of reproducing alterity by resorting to discursive binary opposition of in-group/out-group, built on hierarchisation, where the former dominates the latter (Spivak 1988; El Tayeb 2011). The representation of migrants and refugees as an out-group (Brons 2015), along with other non-majority groups, namely Roma, Afro-descendent, indigenous and queer people (El Tayeb 2011) is an example of this dynamic, which relies on their stereotyping as inferior and/or radically different members of society; and also on discursive violence against the out-group, cast as a voiceless and statusless social actor (Spivak 1988). Media plays a crucial role in the diffusion and crystallisation of who is 'us'/in and who is 'othered'/out. Racism is hence understood as a salient form of othering, the opposite process of de-othering—i.e., focused on producing horizontal representations and practices aimed at transforming society towards equality, social justice, solidarity, and peace, here represented by anti-racist discourses and practices.

Black citizens in Portugal have long faced a process of othering and police brutality. The assault in the Alfragide police station (2015) was not the first case of police brutality nor an isolated incident. This case became a discursive event however because Black resistance and activism were on the rise, partly supported by the Black Lives Matter movement as well as by internal developments. The fact that some of the young people attacked belonged to the BPM is not insignificant. On the one hand, the brutalised youth were already informed and aware of what they should do in the face of assault. On the other hand, they were part of a network connected to the anti-racist struggle. The case 'exploded' on social media right after the fake news broadcast by the mainstream media, which accused young Black people of having invaded the police station. The discussion around the National Identity Law is an example of both othering and deothering faced by Black Portuguese, the latter showcasing the rising activism of the antiracist movement. In 2006, the nationality law was amended to reinforce the principle of *jus soli* (soil

criterion) to the detriment of *jus sanguinis* (consanguinity criterion). In 2015 and 2018, changes were made to grant nationality to children of immigrants residing in Portugal for at least two years. This Law excluded people born in Portugal before its enactment. The BPM strived to put the issue back on the political agenda by demanding the attribution of Portuguese nationality to all people born in Portugal from 1981 onwards, eliminating the criteria for one of the parents to have been born in the country and to have resided here at the time of the child's birth. It also demanded that foreign citizens who had been sentenced to a prison sentence equal to or greater than three years were not excluded from Portuguese nationality. In 2019 the issue was discussed again in the national parliament.

The issue of nationality is closely linked with that of national identity. Portugal imagines itself as a white and Christian part of the European community. Integrating different ethnic affiliations is a long and painful process, especially for those who systematically remain at the margins of what is considered Portuguese. Paradoxically, the lusotropicalist theory that the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre developed in the early 1930s rose to national ideology in the 1950s in Portugal. At the time, the objective of the fascist state was to justify its presence in Africa by circumventing the racist foundation of colonisation. According to this theory, the Portuguese have showcased a particular inclination to mix with other people since Portuguese colonisation was perceived as a benevolent process that provided an actual meeting between all peoples. Lusotropicalist ideas are still very present in Portuguese society, contributing to racism denial and blaming the PBM for racial conflicts (Araújo 2013; Pereira 2019). The historical difficulties of including the specific problems of Black communities on the political agenda led the BPM to commit itself to the election of Black MPs supporting small left-wing parties. The parties of the so-called governmental arc also realised the need to account for the votes of disaffected social minorities. In the 2019 legislative elections, three Black women were elected to the national parliament for the first time in the history of Portuguese democracy.

Parallel to the processes of BPM strengthening and the discursive events it provoked, there was a resurgence of the far-right and of populist, racist, sexist, and xenophobic discourses, epitomized in the election of

a far-right MP (CHEGA party) in 2019. In the 2022 legislative elections, this party became the third political force. Its discourses, based on lusotropicalism and empire nostalgia, have strong penetration in the mainstream media, including television. Lusotropicalism was used to deny racism and to portray 'common Portuguese' as victims of 'anti-racist radicals', while nostalgia for the empire was used to belittle those not read as Portuguese. Finally, gender, religion, and nationality-based stereotypes were evoked to criminalise, exclude and even try to banish from Portugal citizens considered alien to the Portuguese ethnic/religious pattern (Santos and Roque 2021).

Methodology

This article's empirical material was retrieved from the (De)Othering Nvivo database, which collected and coded news and opinion pieces from daily Portuguese newspapers—*Correio da Manhã* (365 items in total), *Observador* (278), and *Público* (606 items)—between the years 2015 and 2019, selected through a keyword-based search (racism, Afro-descendants, Blacks, immigrants, Africans, neighbourhoods, delinquency, and colonialism). The database aimed at an examination of diverse media representations of immigrants, refugees, and 'internal others' in Portugal. These newspapers were selected precisely because of their divergent public and political stances.

Correio da Manhã (CM) is a popular newspaper (tabloid). It is characterised by the use of plenty of images against little text; the absence of reports and background work; the use of stereotypes when referring to 'internal others'; the resort to negative contextualisation, or lack of context; and the deficit of first-person accounts.

Observador is a right-wing online newspaper that privileges official sources (police, government, court, etc.) and neglects the gaze of 'internal others'—whether because its journalists are all White Portuguese, or because Black and Roma people are distrusted as credible sources. News related to racism, migrants, and 'internal others' is infrequent and when existent its author is often Lusa (the Portuguese media agency).

Público is a centre-left newspaper, closer to independent journalism, even though it belongs to an economic group (Sonae). It privileges source diversity and includes some journalists committed to giving visibility to ‘internal others’; while it offers an opinion space to activists from ethnic and social minorities and promotes difficult discussions on colonialism, racism, and xenophobia.

The Alfragide Station Case

On February 5, 2015, a short Lusa news take was broadcasted by different media: “A dozen young people tried to invade the PSP police station in Alfragide at 2 pm on Thursday”. The version of the events reported by the police was that a young man was arrested in Cova da Moura, a neighbourhood on the outskirts of the Lisbon metropolitan area, after throwing a stone at a police van and breaking a window. He was taken to Alfragide’s police station, and later his colleagues invaded the police station. The explanations were then given to Lusa by sub-commissioner Abreu, the spokesman for the PSP’s Lisbon Metropolitan Command (Cometlis).

Afterward, accounts from several witnesses claimed that it all had started with a raid in Cova da Moura, with the police randomly searching residents. A young man was detained by officers of the PSP’s rapid intervention team without justification. The violence used in his detention led some residents watching the episode, primarily women, to protest. The police dispersed those on the street with rubber bullets. People ran and took refuge where they could while the officers handcuffed the young man, transporting him to the police station in a van, where he was assaulted. Upon learning of the events, five young men decided to go to the Alfragide police station where the young man was being held. This was standard procedure for obtaining information and preventing the detainees from being mistreated, especially since the Alfragide police station is known among residents for the brutality of its officers. While trying to talk to the police outside the station, the five youths were assaulted with kicks, punches, clubs, and rubber bullets. Once inside the police station, they were attacked again and suffered numerous threats

and racist humiliations. It was later learned that one of them had been hit in the leg twice with rubber bullets, two had broken teeth, and the five had bruises and wounds on their bodies and faces (Raposo et al. 2019).

In July 2015, the Minister of Internal Affairs initiated a disciplinary process against nine PSP officers involved in the incidents. This resulted in the suspension of three officers for 90 days (DN, July 7, 2015). The Public Prosecutor's Office (PPO) opened a case against 18 police officers from the Alfragide police station, and the charge of breaking into that police station, imputed to five young men, was withdrawn. In an unprecedented trial, the PPO accused 17 PSP officers (a female police officer was acquitted in the meantime) of slanderous denunciation, injury, kidnapping, offenses to physical integrity, torture, perjury, and forgery of documents, all aggravated by racial hatred. On May 20, 2019, the judges acquitted nine police officers and sentenced seven to suspended sentences (from two months to five years) and one to an effective sentence of one year and six months for recidivism. However, in its closing arguments, the PPO had already dropped the allegations of torture and racism.

Opinion Struggles in Mainstream Print Media

Between the occurrence of the aggressions (2015) and the court's final decision to convict the police (2019), there were a total of 76 articles related to this Case (70 news articles and six opinion pieces) in the three analysed newspapers. While this paper is focused on opinion, the analysis also raised questions regarding the relationship between news and opinion, which involves issues relating to the identity of each newspaper, and, most importantly, of power as "a whole series of particular mechanisms, definable and defined, that seem capable of inducing behaviours or discourses" (Foucault 1996: 394).

Correio da Manhã

CM dedicated two opinion articles to the Case. The first was published on February 9, 2015, on page 19, in the column entitled “Passing of the Hours”, signed by Rui Hortelão, a middle-aged white man, director of the magazine *Sábado*, which belongs to the same media group as CM. The article was not accompanied by images, only the passport photograph of its author, next to the name, on top of the written text. The author called this short text “Invasion or repression?” and began by reproducing the initial news conveyed by mainstream media, to which he added that “the case seemed serious and the PPO requested the preventive detention of the accused” and, immediately after, the element of surprise: the Judge applied to them the lowest duress penalty “Identity and Residence term.” In the second part of the piece, the author stopped referring to ‘news’ and started to describe a ‘new version’ of events, deeply ironical, resorting to the adverbs ‘after all’ and ‘only’ and also putting the expression ‘rubber’ in square brackets:

Another version of events emerged through SOS Racism. After all, the young people only went to the police station to find out about their friend, but “they were shot” [with rubber].

Hortelão only openly revealed his thesis in the last part of the article: the distance between the ‘facts’ presented by the police and the ‘version’ of SOS Racism (an antiracist association) is so great that it is urgent to find out the truth because, according to the author, while the facts are not established, the opportunism of the political party Bloco de Esquerda (Left Bloc) and SOS Racism will prevail:

The Bloco de Esquerda, which soon ran to ask the Government for an explanation, and SOS Racism, which threw into the fire “The impunity with which the police acts in peripheral neighbourhoods must end.”

The piece excluded the possibility (later confirmed) of a group of young Portuguese being victims of police aggression and conspiracy, motivated by racial hatred, and gave visibility to a false idea of social polarisation

and radicalism on the part of anti-racist forces, through the metaphor of the ‘bonfire.’ For Hortelão the real problem was not police violence, nor racist hatred, but the opportunism of SOS Racism and Bloco de Esquerda. Invisibilization—obtained in this case through irony—“presents a successful strategy of withdrawal from what otherwise would cause social reprobation, that is suffering” (Herzog 2020: 188).

The second opinion piece on the Case appears on July 15, 2017, on page 12. The column entitled “Security Mail” is signed by César Nogueira, a white, middle-aged man, president of the Republican National Guard (GNR) Professionals’ Association. The article did not feature images, only the passport photograph of the author next to the name above the written text. Using a well-known discourse strategy (Bonilla-Silva 2006; van Dijk 2001; van Leeuwen 2008), the text entitled “Troublesome Truths” began by claiming that, if the events of the Alfragide Police Station were to be true, they must be treated with rigor, giving its author an image of moderation and neutrality, to then introduce the adversative “but” and say what he really meant, i.e., that the same rigor must be applied to the uncomfortable realities that are covered up by the anti-racist discourse. For Nogueira, social indignation against police violence is harmful because “the courts” are not immune to it. Put differently, there should be silence on the issue so as not to influence the judges’ decision:

Condemnations are promoted in the public realm on issues such as racism, xenophobia, and violence in the Security forces, and the Courts are not immune to this.

The author warned that:

The criminal reality in sensitive neighbourhoods is complex and it is not uncommon for there to be unfair accusations of violence, just in an attempt to allow criminals to get away with it.

The expression “sensitive neighbourhoods” refers to neighbourhoods inhabited mainly by immigrants and Afro-descendants. The author reproduced a false idea that crime in these places is more significant and

more violent (Maeso 2021), insinuating that accusations of racism are a card that criminals play to get away with it. The words “complex”, “unfair accusations of violence” and most of all, “criminals” reinforced well-known tropes about Black people as aggressive and violent (Pereira 2019). Yet, the author went further and stated that the media coverage of this case might hinder police action in the future:

This condemnatory mediatisation can also enhance the hesitation to act for fear of punishment, even if the situation justifies it.

This sentence feeds the fear of the “other” who is cast as a potential criminal, of whom even the police are afraid. At the time Nogueira wrote this, it was already clear that the police officers had forged evidence and created a false narrative. Hence, the author—a member of a police force—resorted to the projection strategy. Projection is an effective and quite common self defence instrument as well as a key tool in creating an “us” versus “them” dichotomy (Pereira et al. 2019). It helps us “escape blame and responsibility and allocate blame elsewhere” (Bonilla-Silva 2006: 64). The argumentative strategy of “face maintenance” has a strong and complex battery of semantic actions and one of them consists explicitly of inversion: focusing on the intolerance of the “other” (van Dijk 1992).

Nogueira concluded that

The obligation to use force properly and proportionally cannot be confused with the ineffectiveness of the police, just because controversial issues may be at stake.

The “controversial issues” referred to the aggressiveness of Black populations, crime in the neighbourhoods mentioned above, and to the difficulties experienced by the police when dealing with these populations. The author implied that one cannot openly address such issues and that this contributes to weakening the police. Nogueira closed his article by insinuating that the BPM worked to achieve media prominence and to “cloud memories”:

Crime has no race or creed and deserves the same treatment. One thing is sure, whenever something serious happens in the country, new controversy arises ‘innocently’ involving the security forces assuming the spotlight of the news and clouding memories.

In this paragraph, the author once again proved his moderation by stating that every crime deserves equal treatment and then insinuated that this case was being used to mask other cases/crimes.

By resorting to a series of stereotypes about Black populations, both articles shed light on the alleged dangerousness of the BPM and on the supposedly widespread criminality in Black neighbourhoods, rendering invisible the racist brutality of the Portuguese police.

Observador

No article was dedicated to the Case in *Observador*. The newspaper has 29 regular columnists and more than 2500 guests who occasionally contribute to its opinion segment and publishes between seven and fifteen opinion pieces every day ((De)Othering database). Among its regular columnists, seven are women, and the remaining 22 are men, all of them read as white. The topics covered in the opinion section are diverse and range from science, politics, economics, society, etc. However, there was not a single person among the resident columnists who thought it was pertinent to write about the Case. The newspaper did not find it relevant to invite someone to write about this issue in the opinion space either. It is important to mention that *Observador* did not make the event invisible in the news space, having published 15 articles over five years. Yet, by not reflecting on the event, on police violence, or on the criminalisation of certain social groups, the Case was silenced and rendered invisible by the newspaper. *Silencing* is knowingly a powerful mechanism that can be used to eliminate participation in the public sphere, in which the “struggles” about knowledge, definitions, practices, and the distribution of power occur. Silenced social groups are denied access to this space (Herzog 2018, 2020). Further, to participate in the public sphere, subjects must often accept the hegemonic rules of the dominant segment of society, leaving their group of belonging (Spivak

1988). Invisibilisation extends further and refers to the impossibility of perceiving the Other empathetically. The moral claims of the Other, even when perceived as a similar human being do not have the same status as as those of physical and social equals, which makes it difficult to perceive the Other empathetically or as equal.

Público

Público published four opinion articles on the Case. On February 14, 2015, the first one appeared on page 45 and was signed by historian Manuel Loff, a middle-aged white man who writes a biweekly Saturday chronicle entitled “On the Contrary”. In addition to the author’s passport photograph, the article is accompanied by an image of an anti-racist demonstration, in which a Black woman is holding a sign that says “Police Violence.” The photograph is credited to Nuno Ferreira Santos, but it is unclear which event it represents. The author called this article “Mild Customs”, alluding to the idea that the Portuguese way of being and living is mild. The author began his text with “Since Lusotropicalism became the official doctrine of Salazarism...”, followed by a summary of some myths derived from Freyre’s theory and the ways in which these were perpetuated in the Portuguese common sense. Loff used expressions of former Presidents to assert his point of view, showcasing the state of denial in which the country lives concerning racism:

For more than a century, the majority of Portuguese people let themselves be convinced, with the greatest of self-condescension, by the idea of the Portuguese exception in the world and in history, of a supposed essential difference that would have meant that after so much “we sowed the seed of universal solidarity” (as Mário Soares said in 1992), from having known “to really understand and mix with others” (Cavaco, in 2008), that our collective life would have been free from prejudice and racial persecution—or that our colonies were not colonies, and, by the way, that the colonial war was neither colonial nor war at all...

Although some ideas related to Portuguese exceptionality are older, associating the concept of Lusotropicalism with the phrase “Most Portuguese

people have been convinced for over a century...” is not rigorous. Freyre published *Casa Grande e Senzala* in 1933, and, at that time, the book was banned in Portugal because it questioned the purity of the “Portuguese race”. It was not until the 1950s that Lusotropicalism was simplified and transformed into the official doctrine of the Portuguese State (Castelo 1998). In any case, this paragraph demonstrated how lusotropicalist ideas remained in the discourse of power, even after 1974. The author asked how one can understand the events in Cova da Moura in a country that claims to be non-racist. Then Loff summarised the events, including the statements that the youths who were assaulted had given to Público’s journalist Joana Gorjão Henriques, and offered a personal reflection:

The problem is that this time, in addition to Bruno Lopes, one of the many unemployed young people in the neighbourhood who are used to police violence, they [the police officers] did not hesitate to arrest, beat and ask for preventive detention (refused by the judge) of activists of a community project that has existed for 30 years in Cova da Moura, and was credited with awards such as the National parliament’s Human Rights Prize.

Loff emphasised the social distinctiveness of the victims to explain why “this time” attention was being paid to violence against young Black people; in doing so, he wanted to make clear that “many unemployed young people” in Cova da Moura are often victims of police violence. The author confronted racism denial, this time resorting to comparison not only to the discourse on the Portuguese colonial past but also to the national discourse on other countries: the racism of others and colonialism of others—always worse than ours.

Next, Loff entered the most biting part of his text: the moment he referred to the conclusions of a set of studies and reports that denounce the existence of racism in Portuguese society and within the police. After this relatively long paragraph, the author considered himself in possession of the necessary conditions to give his opinion:

Those who still doubt the racism installed in Portuguese society [...] They live in a country in denial: whoever gets caught, take care; something must be done!

It took another two and a half years for an opinion related to the Case to be published in P. On August 27, 2017, the young activist of Indian origin Sadiq S. Habib signed, as an anthropologist, the opinion article “SOS24 - opinion journalism or journalistic policing?” The author is not part of the newspaper’s opinion group; he writes occasionally, especially in the summer, when many journalists and other columnists are on holiday. There is no image of the author accompanying the article, but an image of a demonstration against police violence featuring several Black people. In the foreground on the left two posters are visible: one held by a young man, saying “No to aggression” while showing a Black man’s mouth with a broken tooth, and further back on the right, a poster saying, “I don’t want to be afraid of the police,” held by an older woman with both hands. The photograph is credited to Nuno Ferreira Santos, but the moment it represents is not referenced.

Habib’s article was a critical reflection on how mainstream television was dealing with the Case and presented his thesis right at the beginning (like a lead): “This case does nothing more than to highlight the way in which the television constitutes itself as a sounding board for fascism”. As the title and the summary indicate, it was not a text about the Case itself but about how a television channel—TVI—gave space to the racist right, reproducing its stereotypes related to the Black population, and summoned up the logic of social panic, not only to defend the police but also to condemn the youths who were assaulted. As means of conclusion, Habib wrote:

None of our liberation movements ever had the sympathy of the mainstream media. Why should we expect anything different?

The question is pertinent in the Portuguese context and intends to link the current BPM to a past struggle against colonialism, but it also links it—because he mentioned them before—to US Black movements. The opinion Habib utters before the question is not shared by a substantial part of the BPM. The collaboration between media and anti-racist movements has consistently been recognised as very important by the latter. The coverage of the Civil Rights Movement in the US between 1950 and 1960 is an example of how the impact of accurate but not neutral news

coverage matters for real change (Greenberg 2008). Activists in the Civil Rights Movement were not oblivious to the importance of the media, and neither were the leaders of the movement (Phillely 2012).

The BPM's efforts to be present in mainstream media have been significant in the belief that in this way, it can influence public discussion and political agendas. Unfortunately, among the Portuguese mainstream media, *Público* seems to be the only one to understand the advantage of listening to these voices, even though it does so in a minimal fashion, focusing on Lisbon-based activists. The last two opinion pieces about the Case in *Público* were written by Mamadou Ba, leader of the anti-racism association SOS Racism. Ba is a Black man of Senegalese origin, around 50 years old, who has been living in Portugal since the 1990s. The first piece is from May 22, 2018; it appears on page 49 and is entitled "What colour will our justice be dressed in?" Above the author's passport-type photograph, the sentence "More than three years later, the Alfragide police officers finally go on trial" stands out. Ba drew attention to the fact that this case is "finally" starting to be tried, describing the list of charges that the PPO made to the defendants and recalling that Black populations have been victims of police violence for decades, "shielded by the indifference of most of Portuguese society and the impunity they have always enjoyed". The author named two fatal casualties of police violence in recent years, hinting that more names could be added to the list. He accused the police of failing to comply with "codes and procedures that require smoothness, equal treatment, respect for the dignity, the physical and moral integrity of people" when they raid 'Black neighbourhoods'. Next, Ba reflected on the public debate that this case has generated, showing how some social sectors have tried to defend the police and the accused police officers, and how the presumption of innocence never applies to Black bodies, to conclude:

... the fact that this indictment is so crystal clear and is coming to trial is of capital importance. Its size and the gravity of the facts imputed to the officers make it an unprecedented case, which gives it social and political relevance. It may help unmask racism within the institutions and the myths about the exemption and smoothness of the security forces in their relationship with racialised subjects. Bringing charges in the terms in

which they occurred also demonstrates that, if there is a will, it is possible for the Public Prosecutor's Office to do its job properly and to confront the actions of the police when they break the law.

The author briefly pointed out taking this case to trial was made possible by social mobilisation and exhorted the Portuguese to acknowledge the prevailing institutional racism that he believes this case represents:

The concern at the beginning of this trial is whether our justice system will continue to wear the colour of white privilege and the state of denial in which Portuguese society and institutions find themselves in the face of racism. (...) Our expectations, although insecure, are great and reflect nothing more than the legitimate aspiration for equality and justice.

On June 1, 2019, on page 20, a new article by Ba, entitled "What was left uncondemned" closed the set of opinions on this case. The passport-type photograph that tops the author's name was at this time accompanied by the word 'Opinion' written in orange letters. The article was accompanied by an image credited to Rui Gaudêncio, showing a group of GNR officers (in uniform) entering a revolving door. Below, the sentence:

To admit that there is a pattern of racist violence and that this is structural is not to say that 'all' officers are racist; it is only to recognise - as others have done - that this violence is structural.

The article intended to draw attention to the fact that the officers were not convicted for 'crimes of torture and racial hatred', as the prosecution had dropped this charge. Structural racism could hardly be targeted for conviction, although Ba's entire article is an effort to show that it was structural racism that allowed torture and racial hatred to go uncondemned.

Ba began by quoting excerpts from the trial:

"Also on this occasion, an unidentified officer addressed the offended several times in the following terms: 'Fucking niggers, you should all die! What do you want, you fucking niggers?'" "As for the defendant H. [...],

he addressed at least the offended R. [...], in these terms: ‘you fucking niggers, go back home!’”

He described how the police officers, after assaulting the victims, tried to blame them for what happened; how during the process some unions and security forces alongside PSP’s leading structures attempted to discredit the victims and the PPO itself. The legal bullying against victims and witnesses during the process and the way in which “despite the evident physical and psychological marks of the victims, the panel of judges considered that they did not have enough proof to convict the criminals for the crimes of torture and racial hatred,” meant that this was a missed opportunity to combat institutional racism and impunity in the security forces. For Ba, the convictions fell short of what could be expected, even though a police officer was sentenced to prison because it is not possible to trust those who “lied, forged documents, abused their powers, kidnapped, humiliated and raped citizens”. Finally, Ba claimed:

What happened in the Alfragide case calls for structural changes in the organisation of the police forces, in the recruitment and training of their personnel, and in the public and democratic scrutiny of their activity. [...] Let us hope that this sentence will become jurisprudence and that the judicial system will gain more and more courage to confront racism where it is most harmful to democracy, in the institutions.

Conclusion

Concerning opinion production, the *Alfragide police station case* was not a central focus of either of the daily newspapers. This case became a discursive event through, first of all, digital media, especially social networks. It was, later, picked up by television and social movements, and finally political power. Mainstream newspapers, particularly conservative ones, kept this case out of the public discussion, notably after realising that the police’s initial version was false. The invisibilisation of the case was forged in different ways. *CM* published two opinion articles on the case, both suggesting the criminalisation of public debate around the event.

In *Observador* the issue was not addressed in the opinion segment at all, being totally ignored as a possible matter of sociological, political, or other reflection. In *Público*, the reader was given four opinion articles on the case, but only one of the usual columnists wrote a piece on the topic. The remaining opinion articles were written by occasional guests who were members of the anti-racist movement. Thus, we can conclude that in *P* the Case was perceived as a matter that concerned only Black people, having no importance for society as a whole. It was a matter of the ‘others’ that only affected ‘them’; therefore, only one of the dozens of columnists in the newspaper (all-white at the time) wrote about it. For Herzog (2018: 13), “the very notion of exclusion typically refers to communicatively or discursively produced mechanisms that lead a group to be considered irrelevant in public processes of communication. Exclusion and marginalisation might therefore be understood as processes of silencing or invisibilizing social groups”, of othering, thus “making silence heard, giving voice to the silenced, and bringing the invisibilized back into the public domain are (...) fundamental tasks of solidarity in reaching a higher degree of social integration” and equality (de-othering).

The facts narrated by victims of police abuse and the evidence they presented enabled racialised subjects to talk about other cases of racism in the police forces and put the issue of institutional and structural racism in public discussion. Opinion articles produced by non-white authors have as a common denominator the attempt to deconstruct the hegemonic discourse conveyed by the media, police forces, and power. Even though some concrete denunciations are put forward, namely in Ba’s texts, the presentation of an anti-racist discourse was mainly done through deconstruction: fact-checking; comparison of situations; and the confrontation of double standards.

The analysis shows that the discursive strategies of opinion in the daily newspapers are neither unique nor different from those used in other countries, meaning that the much-heralded Portuguese exceptionality does not exist.

The scope of this article does not allow us to extend the analysis to other media events of the same period, such as the debate on the National Identity Law; the question about the ethnic origin of citizens in the 2021

census; the election of three Black women to the Portuguese parliament (2019); or the election of a far-right deputy to the national parliament (2019). The study of these other cases will be critical in the future to assess more comprehensively the discursive strategies of the Portuguese mainstream newspapers regarding Black populations and to understand whether the ethical issues underlying the turning of the Alfragide police station case into a court case prevented some opinion-makers from writing.

However, the general conclusions of the (De)othering project allow us to affirm that the Portuguese mainstream media participates in and reproduces racism by at times conveying stereotypes about Black people while more often than not ignoring prevailing racism in society, invisibilizing violence and treating violent incidents as exceptions to the rule in a non-racist country. Therefore, the erasure of the Case in the Portuguese mainstream opinion is a cruel manifestation of institutional racism.

References

- Araújo, M. (2013). "Challenging Narratives on Diversity and Immigration in Portugal: The (De)Politicization of Colonialism and Racism", in Philip Kretsedemas (org.), *Migrant Marginality: A Transnational Perspective*. Oxon: Routledge, 27–46.
- Beauvoir, S. (1949). *Le Deuxième Sexe*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2006). *Racism without Racists: Colour Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Brons, L. (2015). "Othering, an Analysis." *Transcience* 6 (1): 69–90.
- Cardoso, G. & Baldi, V. (Coord.) (2018). *As Fake News numa Sociedade Pós-Verdade. Contextualização, potenciais soluções e análise*. Relatórios OberCom. <https://obercom.pt/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2018-Relatorios-Obercom-Fake-News.pdf>
- Castelo, C. (1998). *"O Modo português de estar no mundo", o luso-tropicalismo e a ideologia colonial portuguesa (1933–1961)*. Porto: Edições Afrontamento.

- Coppock, A.; Ekins, E. & Kirby, D. (2018). "The Long-lasting Effects of Newspaper Op-Eds on Public Opinion," *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 13 (1): 59–87.
- Cunha, I. F.; Santos, C. A., Silveirinha, M. J.; Peixinho, A. T. (2004). *Media, imigração e minorias étnicas*. Lisbon: ACIME.
- Cunha, I. F.; Santos, C. (2008). *Media, imigração e minorias étnicas 2005–2006*. Lisbon: ACIDI/Observatório da Imigração.
- DN (July 07, 2015). "Três agentes da PSP suspensos", online. Available at: <https://www.jn.pt/justica/tres-agentes-da-psp-suspensos-4666600.html>
- El Tayeb, F. (2011). *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postcolonial Europe*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- ERC. (2009). *Imigração, diversidade étnica, linguística, religiosa e cultural na imprensa e na televisão: 2008*. Lisbon: ERC.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge/Malden: Polity Press.
- Foucault, M. (1996). What is Critique? In J. Schmidt (Ed.), *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*. Berkeley et al.: University of California Press, 382–398
- Gramsci, A. (2017). *A cultura, os subalternos, a educação*. Lisboa: Edições Colibri.
- Greenberg, D. (2008). "The Idea of "The Liberal Media" and its Roots in the Civil Rights Movement." *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics and Culture*. 1 (2): 167–186. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17541320802457111>
- Herzog, B. (2020). *Invisibilization of Suffering: The Moral Grammar of Disrespect*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28448-0>
- Herzog, B. (2018). "Invisibilization and Silencing as an Ethical and Sociological Challenge." *Social Epistemology* 32 (1): 13–23. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02691728.2017.1383529>
- Jäger, S.; Maier, F. (2009). "Theoretical and Methodological Aspects of Foucauldian Critical Discourse Analysis," in R. Wodak and M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage, 34–61.
- Maeso, S. (org.) (2021). *O Estado do Racismo em Portugal: racismo antinegro e anticiganismo no direito e nas políticas públicas*. Lisboa: Tinta da China.
- Pereira, A. C. (2019). *Otherness and Identity in Cinematographic Fiction in Portugal and Mozambique*. Ph.D. dissertation in Culture Studies, University of Minho. Braga: Portugal. <https://hdl.handle.net/1822/65858>

- Pereira, A.C.; Macedo, I.; Cabecinhas, R. (2019). "Film Screening African Lisbon: Talking about Li ké terra and Horse Money in Classrooms." *Luso-phone Journal of Cultural Studies* 6 (1): 115–135. <https://doi.org/10.21814/rlec.383>
- Phillely, A. (2012). "The Civil Rights Movement: The Power of Television". 3690: *Journal of First-Year Student Research Writing*. Vol 2012, Article 4. <https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/journal3690/vol2012/iss1/4>
- Pinto, P. J. R. (2018). *Fake news e social media em Portugal: conceitos, realidades e hipóteses*. Master dissertation in Sociology, at University of Porto. Porto: Portugal. <https://repositorio-aberto.up.pt/bitstream/10216/119799/2/333946.pdf>
- Raposo, O.; Alves, A.R.; Varela, P.; Roldão, C. (2019). "Negro Drama. Racism, Segregation and Police Violence on the Outskirts of Lisbon." *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais* 119: 5–28. <https://doi.org/10.4000/rccs.8937>
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Santos, R; Santos, S. J. (2021), "Covid-19 Pandemic: The Reproduction and Contestation of Securitisation of Asylum Seekers, Immigrants and Afro-Descendants in the Portuguese Media," *From the European South* 9: 47–68.
- Santos, R.; Roque, S. (2021). "The Populist Far-right and the Intersection of Antiimmigration and Antifeminist Agendas: The Portuguese Case", *DiGeSt - Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies*, 8 (1): 41–58. <https://doi.org/10.21825/digest.v8i1.16958>
- Silva, M. T. (coord.) (2021). *Discurso de ódio, jornalismo e participação das audiências—enquadramento, regulação e boas práticas*. Lisboa: Almedina.
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in C. N. L. Grossberg (Ed.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 271–313.
- The Media Insight Project (2018). *Americans and the News Media: What they do—and don't—Understand about Each Other*. American Press Institute and the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/publications/reports/survey-research/americans-and-the-news-media/>
- van Dijk, T. A. (2001). "Critical Discourse Analysis," In D. Tannen, D. Schiffrin, & H. Hamilton (Eds.), *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell, 352–371.
- van Leeuwen, T. (2008). *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis*. New York: Oxford University Press.