

Police violence and the debate on Twitter in Portugal: the case of Bairro da Jamaica

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Abstract

This paper presents an analysis of the communication on Twitter about a case of police violence that happened in Bairro da Jamaica, district of Setubal, in Portugal. The aim is to identify in which ways the public discourse naturalizes violence and which are the main arguments used. Using qualitative analysis of tweets, it was possible to identify the following main themes in discussion: the excessive use of violence by police agents, racism, the place of black people and African descendant people in the Portuguese society, and the liability about the event. In accordance with other studies, social media conversations about race and racism tend to be related to news events of police violence. The analysis shows that Twitter is used as a medium to express narratives about the news event and also to reaffirm stereotypes to justify police action.

Keywords: Bairro da Jamaica. Portugal. Racism. Police violence, Twitter.

Introduction

The phenomenon of racism and its ways of expression are socially and historically shaped (BONILLA-SILVA, 2006). Since the tragedy of Holocaust, racism has been expressed in a much more subtle way (VALA; BRITO; LOPES, 1999). However, in countries like Portugal, that has a history of colonialism and slavery, racism and race has profound roots on that history (CABECINHAS; CUNHA, 2003, HENRIQUES, 2018). Social media currently represents a new arena for debates about race and racism (ANDERSON; HITLIN, 2016). At the same time, their public data enable social researchers to investigate behavior changings and perceptions about social issues (CARDOSO; JACOBETTY, 2013).

The aim of this article is to identify how the police violence against black people is interpreted by Twitter users, in a specific case of violence that occurred on Bairro da Jamaica, Setúbal's district, in Portugal, in January 2019. Besides that, we intend to identify if there is naturalization of violence, which are the frames used on the discussions are, in general, identify evidence about what role Twitter plays in discussions about racism in Portugal.

For this, the first part of this article consists of historical contextualization, which makes possible a connection between the issue of modern racism and its colonial roots in

Portugal. Then, we provide a brief narrative about the case of Bairro da Jamaica. As this is an analysis of racism on social media, we point out some fundamental questions raised in the literature about it, indicating similarities and differences in relation to our conclusions. We adopt a qualitative approach to analyze the data, which consists of 2.067 posts in an interval of 10 days, between January 20th and 30th 2019. From this data, we analyze and categorize 564 posts according to thematic categories previously elaborated.

The roots of Portuguese racism

In the colonial reality, the occupation by a colonizer placed the colonized subjection in an inferior grade, “between subjecthood and objecthood” (MBEMBE, 2003, p. 25). To the slaves, it was dictated a “social death” and removed any trait of humanity (MBEMBE, 2003, p. 21). Currently, the reality is different, but differentiation and social hierarchy have not been eliminated. The idea of race structures the perception of the others (CABECINHAS; AMÂNCIO, 2004) and is still one pillar of social hierarchization (CABECINHAS; AMÂNCIO, 2003). The social construction of minorities results from the idea that, inside or outside of a state, some people have more rights than others (APPADURAI, 2009) and that, in an extreme situation, some people deserve more to live than others (MBEMBE, 2003). In this regard, to Achille Mbembe, the idea of race was always present in the Western history as a way to dehumanize and dominate others, with the function of “regulate the distribution of death” (MBEMBE, 2003, p. 17). Therefore, racism and its many manifestation forms are, in Portugal, intimately connected with the colonial history of the country. The situation of inequality and, sometimes, invisibility in which black people find themselves in Portugal has its roots in the last centuries of Portuguese history (HENRIQUES, 2018).

Portugal was a colonial power until very recently. The Portuguese colonial period only finished with the *Revolução dos Cravos* and the consequent end of the Salazarist regime, in 1974. After that, the colonial wars, some of which (such as Angola’s) began ten years earlier, led to independence.

After the independence of Brazil, in 1822, a process of reorganization of the Portuguese colonies was initiated, now with Africa in focus (ALEXANDRE, 2000). Even with the independence of Brazil, Portugal kept intermediating slavery trafficking to supply the demand for labor in the newly-born country. Despite the start of a political movement for the abolition of slavery at the beginning of the 19th century, led by England, the slave trafficking on the Atlantic Ocean lasted as an important economic activity for the Portuguese traders. Besides being a profitable activity by itself, slave labor was the base for the plantation economy in Portuguese colonies. It was the case of cocoa plantations in São Tomé, that continued using slave or servile labor until the 20th century (DIAS, 2000). In Moçambique, the slave trade was the major commercial activity in the 19th century, as well as the keystone for the colony’s main economic activities, such as ivory and gold trade (CAPELA, 2000).

The forced labor supplied a protectionist, authoritarian, and anti-capitalist mercantilism, based on the exploitation of natural resources in African colonies until the 20th century (TORRES, 2000). The specificity of the Portuguese case does not come from the nature of the mercantilist and slavery system. It comes from the extended duration of this situation, which made the slave labor possible until very late, (NETO, 2000) and denied citizenship to a significant number of Africans from the colonies until 1961 (ALEXANDRE, 1999).

The exploitation of slave labor remained until so late also because of the lack of an abolitionist mindset in Portugal, and due to a predominant ambivalence on this issue, which did not contribute either to some regulation nor to law enforcement to stop trafficking (MARQUES, 2000). The colonization and the relationship between Portugal and Africans have been ruled by the idea of a civilizing mission in Africa and, therefore, by the idea of a biological and cultural superiority of Portuguese over Africans (CASTELO, 2011).

After the Second World War, colonization still was an important component of national identity, even with an international pressure for African decolonization that caused some changes in current legislation and on the official discourse in Portugal. One of the answers to the international anti-colonial framework and the African independence wars was a shift in discourse by the Portuguese State, adapting the Gilberto Freire's lusotropicalism to the modern African empire context (CASTELO, 2011). However, the idea of an exceptional capacity of Portuguese people to deal with the African colonized did not disappear in the Authoritarian regime (Estado Novo), since this idea was still reproduced by the Portuguese political elites after that, as part of the national identity (ALEXANDRE, 1999).

This aspect of the construction and affirmation of Portuguese national identity still represents a challenge nowadays when we speak about racism in Portugal. Following the 1974's Revolution, a first period of immigration to Portugal was signed mostly by people coming from the former Portuguese colonies, such as Cabo Verde, Angola, and Guiné-Bissau (DIAS, 2012, OLIVEIRA, 2012), mainly driven by an increase of labor demand in the construction industry in Lisbon. Part of this population who arrived in Portugal could not afford to live in the city center, increasing, thereby, the suburbs and slums, most of them in the Lisbon's district of Amadora (RAPOSO; VARELA, 2016).

The habitation problem and the existence of precarious neighborhoods in the suburbs of Lisbon are just one of many structural issues that African descendants are facing in Portugal (ECRI, 2018). Access to a decent home is even more difficult when people do not have Portuguese nationality, even if they were born in Portugal (HENRIQUES, 2018). Structural racism is, therefore, intrinsic in many other basic services for black people, such as justice and education. Some studies pointed how, in Portugal, the discussion about race and racial relations has been hampered by a lack of black representation in didactic material and by a biased approach of colonial history in schools (ECRI, 2018, ARAÚJO; MAESO, 2013). The underlying question of these studies is about whether any level of social mobility for black people exists nowadays, given the persistence of social barriers.

Despite the isolation that part of the black population lives in Portugal, most of them in poor and precarious neighborhoods (RAPOSO; VARELA, 2016), some episodes occasionally bring to light that maybe the Portuguese society is not indifferent about the color of skin. In this sense, there is a practice of blaming the black population about their situation, instead of recognizing the State accountable for the failure in managing structural problems in the society and in granting full citizenship to all Portuguese people.

Cases of police violence show the action of a repressive State apparatus in order to maintain the social hierarchy and social cohesion (ALTHUSSER, 1983), rooted by a racist logic about the social relations (BONILLA-SILVA, 2006). Therefore, “there is no practice except by and in an ideology” and “there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects” (ALTHUSSER, 1983, p. 42). In Portugal, some of these cases happened in the last years, such as the case in Cova da Moura, in 2015, and in Bairro da Jamaica, in January 2019. These cases led to a debate characterized by symbolic violence (BOURDIEU, 2000), through naturalization, banalization and, sometimes, apology of violence as an ethical means to conflict resolution.

The case of Bairro da Jamaica

On January 20th, 2019, the Public Security Police was called to Bairro da Jamaica, district of Setúbal, to attend on a conflict between residents. When they got there, a confrontation began between policemen and some residents, a situation that was caught on video, apparently by residents. The video shows officers using disproportional violence and beating up a group of residents, including two elderly people. A great repercussion began on January 20th, maybe because the situation was recorded and spread on the internet, both by traditional and social media.

Therefore, the aim of this analysis is to identify how police violence is interpreted on Twitter, focusing on the case of Bairro da Jamaica.

Racism on social media

In previous studies, scholars have pointed that discussions about race and racism on social media tend to follow police violence events, since these events play a catalytic role for the debate on social media (ANDERSON; HITLIN, 2016). Even though the traditional media, like TV and newspaper, still are the main source of information in discussions about race and racism (BEN-DAVID; MATAMOROS-FERNÁNDEZ, 2016, HUGHEY; DANIELS, 2013, STEINFELDT et al, 2010), the social media is a public space to express opinions about the media coverage and politicians’ statements (ANDERSON; HITLIN, 2016). Therefore, social media can be seen as a resource to interact with reality, to create a sense of belonging and to protect interests (CARDOSO; JACOBETTY, 2013).

It's not possible to say that social media build social bubbles or niches, however, in this communicative context the niches are visible. Therefore, social media provide clues about the fragmentation of society (SUNSTEIN, 2017). While on one hand it's true that is easier for the civil society to organize its fight for human and civil rights on the network society (CASTELLS, 2003), it's also true that some groups are using social media to question and undermine these rights (FAULKNER; BLIUC, 2016, RECUERO, 2015).

Some changes are occurring regarding the public expression of racist discourse nowadays. A blunt and direct racist discourse, based on a biological concept of racial hierarchy, was replaced by a much more subtle discourse, still based on a cultural concept of social hierarchy (BONILLA-SILVA, 2006, BONILLA-SILVA; LEWIS; EMBRICK, 2004, MEERTENS; PETTIGREW, 1999, VALA; ALEXANDRE, 1999). It does not mean that racism is not harmful to the victims. The use of stereotypes is common to justify and naturalize the social behavior of ethnic groups and to blame them for their social condition (BONILLA-SILVA, 2006, HENRIQUES, 2018, TAGUIEFF, 1990). The ambivalence of the liberal thought (APPADURAI, 2009, p. 50) promotes the use of the principle of meritocracy in the context of a cultural hierarchy to deny racism and explain social inequalities (BONILLA-SILVA, 2006, TAGUIEFF, 1990). It's possible to perceive a direct representation of some minorities as immigrants, criminals, and, thus, threats to the public security (BEN-DAVID; MATAMOROS-FERNÁNDEZ, 2016, FAULKNER; BLIUC, 2016), a representation that undermines anti-racist efforts and naturalizes social inequalities.

For that reason, this paper presents a discourse analysis on Twitter, with a focus on a case of police violence, occurred on January 2019, in Bairro da Jamaica, district of Setubal, Portugal. It's still unclear what kind of impact the reproduction of racist discourse on social media has on public opinion and on the social reality of black people. It's also unclear what are the effects of the discourse on practice regarding racist violence. However, it's an assumption that racist discourse has an important role in the construction and reproduction of stereotypes, which is, in turn, a key component of the persistence of social inequalities (DIJK, 2012). The aim of this paper is to present the results of a discourse analysis of Twitter data, through a qualitative analysis of public posts that talk about the case of Bairro da Jamaica. In addition to identifying if there was a normalization of police abuse against black people, we sought to investigate the main frameworks used to justify the police actions. We intend to search for evidence about the role of Twitter in the context of discussions about racism and race in Portugal.

Methodology

In this research, we carried a qualitative analysis of Twitter data, specifically public tweets, using critical discourse analysis (BRAUN; CLARKE, 2006, DIJK, 2012). To this end, the tweets were labeled with thematic categories previously elaborated.

Data collection

The data have been collected across a period of 10 days, between January 20th and January 30th, 2019. The incident in Bairro da Jamaica happened in the morning of the 20th and, because of that, analyzing the data collected in this period permits to check the repercussion from the beginning. A total of 2.067 posts have been collected, including tweets, retweets, and shares. We analyzed 564 posts, which represents the total of original posts, after data cleaning, i.e., excluding unclear posts or posts that were outside the context of the research (BATRINCA; TRELEAVEN, 2014).

Thus, our dataset consists of tweets, which are small texts with a limit of 280 characters published on Twitter. The posts can be followed by external links, that many times consist of news from an online newspaper, a blog post, videos or photos.

We used a social media analytics platform, named Crimson Hexagon, to collect and visualize the data. Using a time frame delimitation for data collection, keywords, post types, language and location, the platform Crimson Hexagon is able to extract from the dataset just the data that match the filters chosen by the researcher, either on the historic or on real-time data (HITLIN, 2015).

Data analysis

The discourse analysis was carried out using the software NVivo. Initially, we inserted the categories on the software, then we imported the data to be analyzed, and finally, we proceeded with the labeling (AHMED et al, 2018). The tweets posted by online newspapers, agencies, and organizations were not labeled, as our focus was to identify the frameworks used by individual users.

The categories of analysis, which were mostly based on a concept-driven strategy, represent the main frameworks used by Twitter users to explain situations of racial discrimination, in this case, the police abuse against blacks and African-Portuguese people. All the categories represent a conception, blunt or subtle, of a mindset rooted in an idea of racial hierarchy, or in a stereotyped and depreciatory concept about black people. The proposed categories and their definitions are summarized in Table 1, and in more detail in the next session of this paper.

Table 1 – Categories of analysis and definitions

Category of analysis	Definition
Minimization of racism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A question of interpretation (Victimization); • Negation of discrimination (BONILLA-SILVA, 2006, TAGUIEFF, 1990)
Black /African-Portuguese people x violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inner-city residents: criminal archetype (RAPOSO; VARELA, 2016, VALA; ALEXANDRE, 1999); • Relation race / violence (HENRIQUES, 2018); • Blaming the victims (BONILLA-SILVA, 2006); • Stereotypes
Meritocracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social status: merit / individual effort reasons (BONILLA-SILVA, 2006, TAGUIEFF, 1990)
Reverse racism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differential treatment x equality of opportunity (BONILLA-SILVA, 2006); • Racial discrimination against white people

Source: author's findings.

Minimization and denial of racism

In practice, most of the posts labeled with the categories of analysis summarized in Table 1 express arguments in favor of the police action in Bairro da Jamaica. It was a little bit different in the case of minimization and denial of racism. In this case, even when someone recognized an excessive and disproportional action by the police, this action was not understood as racist conduct.

Manos tão a fazer manifs contra o racismo só... tp que o problema não foi o abuso de poder das autoridades... Até pode ter racismo envolvido mas oq aconteceu na Jamaica foi abuso de poder! Devem pensar que polícia só abusa de pretos, brancos sofrem do mesmo.

Se ocorrer uma situação de violência, mesmo que gratuita, entre polícias melanodérmicos e populares leucodérmicos, será o tema tratado como #racismo? #BairroJamaica #Jamaica.

In the first case, it was suggested that the police are always violent and always use abusive means to deal with conflicts. It is not considered, though, that the police forces could be especially abusive on slums and against black people. The categories of analysis are not

exclusive: the second post quoted also fits in the category “reverse racism”, in the sense that, despite it uses irony to talk about racial categorization, it also seems to suggest that the civil society is not worried about the racism that targets white people.

Another way to minimize and deny racism is to link victims’ denouncements as a strategy of victimization or an unnecessary dramatization of the issue.

Gente não dramatizem o que se passou no bairro da Jamaica. A polícia é para manter a ordem social. Obvio que se vocês vão bater nos bófiás eles não vos vão dar festinhas. Vocês estão é habituados a ter demasiada liberdade e quando algo não corre a vosso favor já é racismo ou +.

In this case, the user ignores the possibility of police misconduct and, instead, claims that, in some way, Bairro da Jamaica residents involved in the conflict were responsible for the violence, and that it explains the police actions.

Relationship between black people and crime

Many scholars have pointed that a linkage between crime and black people is frequently used by the racist rhetoric around the world (BONILLA-SILVA, 2006, HENRIQUES, 2018, TAGUIEFF, 1990, VALA; BRITO; LOPES, 1999). This kind of stereotype is extended to poor immigrants, gypsies, and Muslims (AWAN, 2014, CABECINHAS; AMÂNCIO, 2004, MALESIC, 2017).

That representation is based on the idea that there is a relationship between crime practice, drug consumption, insubordination, and race. In the case of Bairro da Jamaica, the residents, especially the black ones, are viewed as archetypes of criminals and, therefore, took the blame, because, in this view, they are accused of being naturally violent.

Se vocês soubessem o que se passa todos os dias na Jamaica não estavam aí a mandar bocas. Todos os dias tem de haver intervenção da polícia, todos os dias há tiros, pancada e roubos. E vocês aí a dizer que a polícia é racista.

A PSP agrediu moradores do bairro da Jamaica. Deve ter sido a primeira vez lá no bairro que o que bateu mais não foi a erva.

Esta agora os pretos da jamaica fazem merda e atiram pedras á PSP e a policia tem de ter moderação...vão tomar no cú vão.

The negative and stereotyped idea about black people is present in some posts and is followed by an image of Bairro da Jamaica as an essentially problematic place. This image is constantly repeated in some posts. That aspect of Bairro da Jamaica is used as an excuse for

violent actions by police officers and also to delegitimize accusations of racism. Stereotypes and blaming the victims are an important part of this kind of argument.

Desculpem lá..PQP, marginais do caralho, coitadinhos deles, espancados pelos arrogantes dos polícias ... Conhecem o bairro? Vão lá dar uma volta a pé e depois digam alguma coisa... Jamaica?? Está tudo dito,só em rendimentos mínimos..

In this post, the user uses many arguments and the post fits in, at least, three categories of analysis. There is an accusation that the Bairro da Jamaica residents are criminals, but they actually are playing the victim, and, besides that, they are reliant on government benefits. Using these arguments altogether is a strategy to dehumanize the victims of aggressions and delegitimize any complaint about racism.

Meritocracy and abstract liberalism

Another kind of argument used in racist discourses is related to the explanations about differences in social and economic status in society (BONILLA-SILVA, 2006, TAGUIEFF, 1990). Differences in income, neighborhood, and education level are explained by an abstract liberalist point of view, as if the status of someone in society could be justified only due merit and individual effort (or its absence). This kind of argument is based on the idea that some traits like hard-working, success and wealthy are results of ethnicity. As a consequence, black people are associated with laziness and sloppiness, a stereotype with profound roots in the Portuguese colonial history (CABECINHAS; AMÂNCIO, 2003).

As gentes do bairro da Jamaica procederam à realização de uma manifestação contra as ações (por sinal completamente válidas) da polícia de segurança pública, com acusações de racismo e injustiça no dever por parte dos policiais. Pergunto-me: Estes seres de etnia negra trabalham?

The ideas of meritocracy and hard-working, in this case, are complemented by the choice of a side, the police officers' side, and by showing support for the police actions. Besides that, this is another case of denial of racism.

Reverse racism

Finally, in the discussions about the police officers' actions, some attempts to revert complaints about racism were noticed. Reverse racism arguments are based on the idea that some minority groups have privileges, in the form of affirmative actions, which violate the principle of equal opportunities (BONILLA-SILVA, 2006). It's based also on the belief that

there is racial discrimination against white people, which can be perceived by the attitudes of black people against white police officers.

Falam de racismo mas esquecem-se que quem praticou racismo nesta situação do bairro da jamaica foram os da raça negra que começaram a atirar pedras ao polícias, daí o desacato. Ou racismo é só a raça caucasiana perante a raça negra?

Racismo xenofobia.!? É bem mais fácil um negro ou mestiço do bairro da Jamaica, no Seixal, ou de qualquer outro bairro ver um estado ocidental proteger os seus direitos legais do que um indivíduo branco numa qualquer sociedade da África. E ainda se queixam.

In the first post, there is the accusation about the Bairro da Jamaica residents starting the conflict motivated by racist attitudes against the police. In the second post, the user not only claims that racism does not exist in Western countries, supposedly civilized, as also claims that is white people who suffer racial discrimination in African countries. In addition to that, there is the idea that a black citizen or an immigrant has no right to complain about their condition in Portugal.

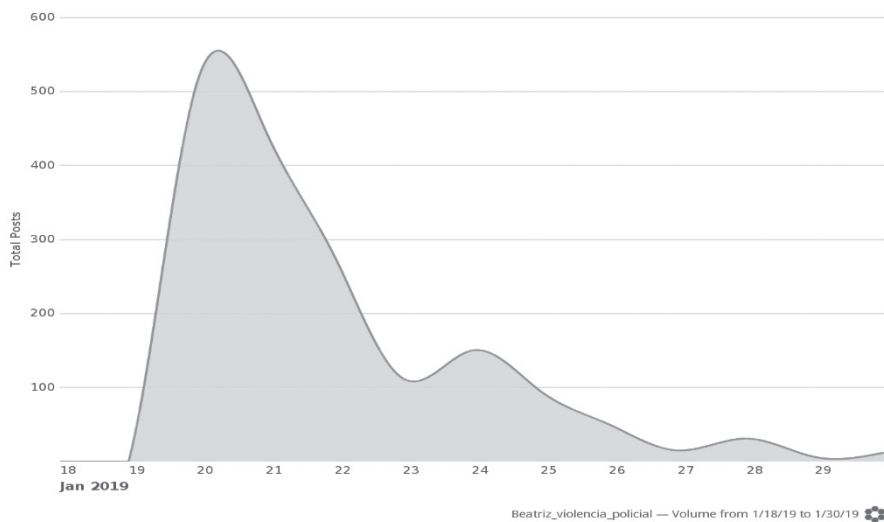
During our research, beyond the categories that we have defined, other two thematic categories arose from the data analysis: advocacy for violence and repression; and a correlation between black people and immigrants. In the first category, fall posts in which occurred explicit advocacy or even an encouragement for the use of violence by the police as the right way to solve the conflicts in Bairro da Jamaica were coded. The second category refers to discourses that suggest or maintain a representation of black people as immigrants or foreigners, not as Portuguese citizens. This kind of representation is used, in the discourse, to one more time justify the actions of police officers or to minimize its damages.

Results and discussion

A big discussion on Twitter had started right after the sharing of a video and the spreading of the first news about the conflict in Bairro da Jamaica. While the first posts revealed some bewilderment over the force used by the police officers to deal with the situation, it did not take long for different narratives to appear. Explaining the actions of the police was the first issue discussed. It caused contrasting views. Some people stood up for the Bairro da Jamaica residents who were attacked by the police officers, showing indignation to what appeared to be an episode of excessive force by the police. Other posts were ambiguous, complaining about the excessive force used by the authorities, but accusing the Bairro da Jamaica residents of starting the conflict. Finally, the users stood up for the police actions in near ¼ of the posts, justifying the excessive use of force as a response to the violent behavior of the residents, or even denying any excess.

Twitter is considered to be a place of reflexion and reaction to everyday events (ANDERSON; HITLIN, 2016). However, it would not be a place to express new ideas (YAQUB et al, 2017). These claims could be only partially confirmed in this study since the number of retweets was much higher than original tweets: around 27% of posts which mentioned Bairro da Jamaica were original posts. Nevertheless, Twitter, at least in this specific situation, was the user's mean to express a version of what happened, a version that seems to be built based on different sources of information. What can be perceived is that some people, in their posts, tried to develop alternative narratives challenging media narratives. For this, the users used many discursive strategies in order to legitimize their narratives. A very common strategy is to claim they had privileged information, from Bairro da Jamaica residents or from police officers, that is, information from people who were directly involved in the situation. Furthermore, by quoting one or more news, Twitter users wrote their own conclusions to the story. The complexity of the issue seemed to stimulate people to create an official and definitive version of what happened.

Figure 1 – Volume of original posts between January 18th and 30th



Source: Crimson Hexagon (2019).

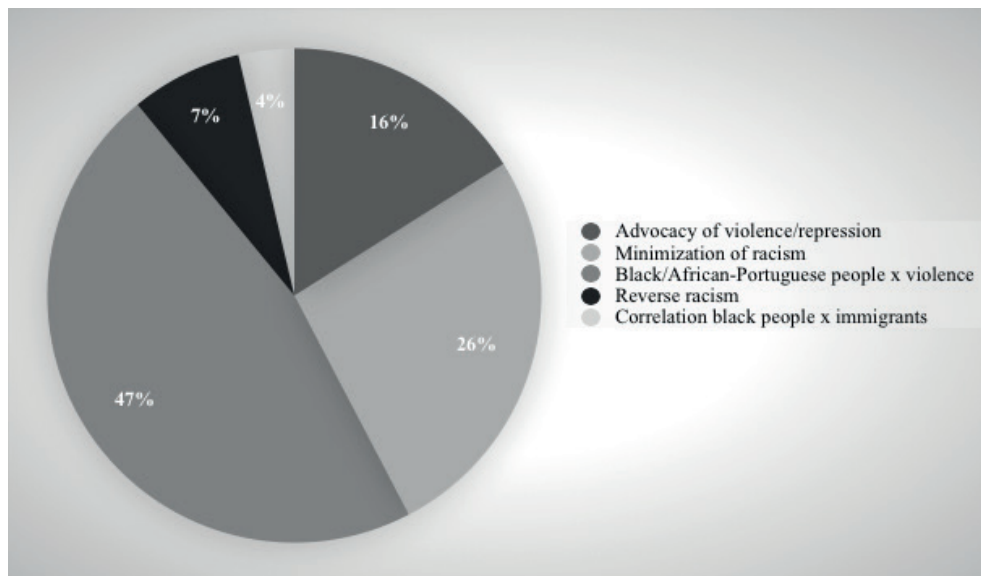
Note: Graphic refers to posts that mentioned Bairro da Jamaica.

In these narratives, aiming to defend, justify or naturalize the police actions, it can be highlighted arguments that are based on racist stereotypes (BONILLA-SILVA, 2006, HENRIQUES, 2018, RAPOSO; VARELA, 2016, TAGUIEFF, 1990, VALA; ALEXANDRE, 1999). This one is definitely the discursive strategy most used in the analyzed data. In this sense, the black, inner-city residents are the archetype of criminals. Thus, as criminals, they justified the violent actions of the police officers, and they are, directly or indirectly, guilty

over the violence they suffered. Then, the minimization or denial of racism (BONILLA-SILVA, 2006, HENRIQUES, 2018; TAGUIEFF, 1990) is the second main idea. At many times, however, the use of stereotypes and the denial of racism are complementary, since the idea that underlies the denial is exactly the idea that the police actions are justified toward the criminal attitudes by Bairro da Jamaica residents.

Reverse racism (BONILLA-SILVA; LEWIS; EMBRICK, 2004) is another argument used, on very rare occasions, to relativize a possible relation between police violence and structural racism. So, in those cases, it is claimed that racism is not exclusively directed toward black people, but also toward white people.

Figure 2 – Distribution by category



Source: author's findings.

Arguments in favor of liberalism and meritocracy were also rarely used in this specific case, despite some studies have been claimed that it would be one of the dominant frames of the modern racism (BONILLA-SILVA, 2006, TAGUIEFF, 1990). It does not mean that these ideas are not in Portuguese society and public opinion, however, it did not appear on our data. A possible reason for that can be the fact that those who defended the police officers showed no interest in understanding the reasons to, for example, the existence of such a precarious and isolated neighborhood in Portugal, and who is responsible for that. The main subject in the discussions was violence, not poverty or inequality.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to show how police violence and structural racism are naturalized on Twitter in Portugal, in relation to a specific case of violence occurred in Bairro da Jamaica in January 2019. Many of the tweets in analysis indorse stereotypes about the neighborhood and its residents or deny the existence of racism. The reality of ghetto and isolation is then reinforced, but often without questioning about the reasons behind it. That situation is seen as something already natural and impossible to change. Even if it is not possible to know the exact influence of the discursive and ideological dimension of racism in the material world, we assume that these dimensions lead up to the abuse of power and racist violence, and also are the basis for racial discrimination and social inequality.

This study, of course, has some limitations. Twitter has a small range in Portugal, besides being used by a young and high qualified part of the population. Therefore, it is not possible to generalize our findings to the whole Portuguese society. Besides that, the data gathering on Twitter was always through the use of filters and keywords, which imply that we would not gather all the useful data.

The subject of this article is part of a Ph.D. thesis proposal that is focused on the naturalization of violence against black and African-Portuguese people in Portugal, on social media. We intend to complement the qualitative analysis with quantitative analysis and network analysis in further studies, in order to identify if there are connections between the main actors involved in the discussions about racism, and between them and Portuguese politicians and political parties or organizations. Furthermore, another possibility is to conduct a comparative analysis between the discourse pro and against the police actions in cases of police violence.

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