MUSLIMS IN BRAZILIAN AND SPANISH NEWSPAPER HEADLINES BEFORE 9/11 2001 – A PSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Although nations in the Iberian realm of cultural influence have recently acquired institutional features of modernity, they have maintained specific views of collective mobilization regarding what it is assumed to be a reasonable representation, contact and interaction with Muslims. We compared data collected in 2001 – before 9/11 – from Brazilian and Spanish broadsheet headlines. Drawing upon intergroup relation's psychosocial literature, we focused on the debate around the reporting of "Muslims in action" and "Muslims in interaction with westerners". We concluded that the newspapers' simplified representation of the Arab/Muslim as incompetent, archaic and undemocratic served to construct a contrast with an ideal western self, in order to ultimately justify and reify traditional models of interaction, maintaining unchanged intercultural conflict and resentment.

Key words:

intergroup relations, Muslim, discourse analysis, news reports, Brazil-Spain.

Resumen

Las naciones del ámbito ibérico de influencia cultural han adquirido recientemente rasgos institucionales de modernidad, aunque manteniendo puntos de vista específicos de movilización colectiva en lo concerniente a lo que se asume sería una representación, un contacto y una interacción razonable con musulmanes. Comparamos datos de titulares de periódicos brasileños y españoles colectados en 2001 – antes del 11/9. Basándonos en literatura psicosocial sobre relaciones intergrupales, nos centramos en el debate sobre la cobertura de "musulmanes en acción" y "musulmanes en interacción con occidentales". Concluimos que la simplificada representación de los periódicos del árabe/musulmán como incompetente, arcaico y no-democrático sirvió para construir un contraste con el yo occidental ideal, para finalmente justificar y reificar modelos de interacción tradicionales, manteniendo inalterado el conflicto intercultural y el resentimiento.

Palabras clave:

relaciones intergrupales, musulmán, análisis de discurso, noticias, Brasil- España

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MUSULMANES EN TITULARES DE PERIÓDICOS ANTES DEL 11/9/2001 – UNA PERSPECTIVA PSICOSOCIAL

This study compares Spanish and Brazilian newspapers' coverage of news about countries with a majority Muslim population. We aim at describing phenomena of intergroup relations drawing mainly upon concepts and theories of social psychology.

Within an international context shaped by the supremacy of the eight more industrialized countries (G8), led by the United States, several influential countries were fighting in early 2001 to improve their relative status within the international hierarchy. Such undertaking to stay in a good position in the competition for power and prestige pushed each state and national group to use the media as a vehicle of mobilization for specific interests and goals. These include the preservation of national and group values, norms and perspectives. Attempts at shaping public opinion seeking to prepare the readership for eventual mobilization were carried out through different forms of social communication. Stereotypes, representations and attitudes, which can be channeled, were reproduced or even challenged and transformed by individuals, groups or mass media.

Historical and psychosocial relations

In Europe, some theoretical approaches put emphasis on the interaction between strategies of information production and large scale socio-cultural processes. For these researchers mental activities such as reasoning, language and representations can be studied only if we bear in mind the cultural context of intragroup and intergroup relations.

A complex set of issues currently defines the representation of Muslims. The way nowadays Muslims are perceived by westerners ought be related to the centuries' old construction of racially hierarchical and undemocratic European empires that fought against Muslim powers such as the Ottoman Empire; and the experience of the Middle-Ages' Crusades that boosted Islamophobia (Young, 2001). In other words, Eurocentrism became rampant consolidating *"an ideological and political divide that separated the 'civilized' nations of the west from the part of the world (of nations) of the Rest"* (Bouzatzis, 2009, p.434).

Many ascribed the controversial theory of a Clash of Civilizations and radical incompatibility between East and West, Muslims and Christians, and portrayed the post-cold-war international relations conjuncture as a clash between totalitarian Islam and democratic Occident (e.g. Huntington, 1997). However, they missed to notice that Islam is too diverse to become the 'necessary enemy of the west'; and that state brutality against citizens and neighboring countries is not a specifically Middle-Eastern or Muslim phenomenon (Smith, 2005, p.195).

In the last decade interesting research has emerged also in areas such as politics and democracy studies (Brumberg, 2002), and social representations (Liu et al., 2005) that confirmed how western media coverage of Islam tends to overlook its complexity and diversity. Further, the dominant western media provides direction on how to behave (Eitzen & Zinn, 2004).

By marginalizing the representation of ordinary Muslims a simplified representation of Islam and its followers as a threat is proposed (Richardson, 2004); and controversial issues are avoided (Kuypers, 2002). Then, a radical separateness between the rational West and the exotic Orient is emphasized, which Said (1985) pointed out as a main feature of the discourse of Orientalism.

Other contemporary social scientists who tried to overcome European visions, such as Billig (1995) and Baudrillard (1990), stated that since the end of the cold war period Islam has tended to be represented as the incarnation of all evil. For instance in France, Balibar (1997) argued that in a context of serious economic and ideological crises, and difficulty to deal with competition in the international sphere, the Muslim immigrant was being made accountable and preferential target of cultural and differential racism. Cultural racism would be based on the belief on cultural incompatibility between Europeans, Muslims and Jews, rather than on a biological or genetic view. This "racism without a race", is not a new phenomenon in the European history (Balibar, 1997, p.36/37). The mention of all this is important to grasp the effect of history on phenomenon of racism in the context of zones of Catholic and Iberian cultural influence.

In parallel to religious and cultural repression and homogenization processes, Spain and other European countries were characterized by their long history of territorial expansion undertaking, which carried out a high investment in warfare and armed confrontation with other peoples and regions of the world. By contrast, its share in colonialist violence notwithstanding, Brazil was the result of the forced/voluntary emigration of people from diverse nations. These included also Arabs and Muslims, under the implicit assumption that a pacific living-together would be feasible. But there was a continuation of the Catholic religion in Spain and Brazil.

According to Giddens (1990, p.4-5), the pre-modern has survived in the modern not only in the form of a revival of Islam in Iran, Afghanistan or Malaysia, but as a cultural influence of Catholicism in southern Europe. Yet, nowadays these Islamic and Catholic nation-states are both modern and traditional: they do enjoy many institutional features of modernity, and the profound influence on social and cultural experience that it entails

(Tomlinson, 1999, p.37-38). And these can be also described as minority and majority groups that regardless of actual size or scope can enjoy diverse degrees of power and social recognition.

Colette Guillaumin (1972) in her meticulous description of the way the French press classifies minorities pointed out how the minority is defined in society by its state of alterity in relation to the majority "I" pattern, even if such "I" or "ego" is left unpronounced. Therefore only majorities enjoy a certain freedom of self-definition. The minority's options are narrower, since group membership is the main characteristic of his identity definition.

When positively depicted the minority's historical or personal individual characteristics will only be portrayed when they coincide with unfavorable stereotypes. In other words, the majority norm is a kind of symbolic form that hides a social subject, an implicit group which enjoys autonomy, freedom, mainly because it uses a more general pattern of reference whose validity for all existing groups is taken for granted (Guillaumin, 1972). In this sense Carmen Martinez (1996) has shown how in Spain abstract language was used by Spanish children to describe negative events whose performers were Gipsy. However, more concrete language was used when similar events described their own group's actions. She concluded that the use of abstract categories by very young children turn stereotypes into something almost irreversible. By the same token, Muslim identities would be an exception or oddity that confirms the western rule or canon that defines the whole group of relationships and categorizations among the groups that interact in society. Colette Guillaumin formulated her "theory of the racist ideology" at a time when in the Northern Hemisphere active minorities were emerging with compelling media impact over the rest of the world. As a reaction to this new conjuncture of higher visibility and minority rights claims traditionalist movements drew even on ninetieth century biologist racist discourses (Levy-Strauss, 1971). Incidentally it coincided with much media focus on the OPEP as a weighing factor for international economic arrangements.

 Other behavioral and epistemological aspects like the majority's use of more universalist discourses and particularization were formalizations trying to deal with phenomena of intergroup competition when it became difficult to explicitly convey expressions of racism. Together with a strengthening of the discourse and practice of human rights there was a shift of emphasis in the mass media. It is well known that over the post-war period, the hegemonic countries did concentrate much effort in the development of education and science. Both areas became source of wealth and power; and this entailed as top priority the taking of the individual rights' perspective.

As for Brazil, two factors may have contributed to stances that are unfavorable in relation to Arabs and Muslims: 1) The identification of those Brazilian groups who are highly influential in the public sphere with Christian European countries; 2) western news agencies are predominant, and they serve as filters and/or select/decide singlehandedly which messages will be addressed to which country. Furthermore, the Brazilian media is largely dependent upon international news agencies particularly in the coverage of international events.

Another issue that could be raised regards the recent history of military confrontation between formally lay but Christian-based and more-or-less blatantly Muslim countries. For instance, the confrontations in the Middle-East, Iraq or Afghanistan demand qualification for military actions, which will carry public budget expenses. The vested interest of military industry in the existence of military conflicts notwithstanding, there is a set of efforts focused on the maintenance of westerners' own socio-cultural Christian values in the world. In sum, criteria that are chosen to compare with other groups tend to be Occidentalist and implicitly (even at times explicitly) Christian. However, most countries, even the socialists, do not adopt this model of social organization. Instead, what prevails is the dissuasion of minority initiatives which could underpin a possible influence over hegemonic groups. Then minority groups' claims remain subordinated on a hierarchical order to a highly centralized power core.

Countries like Brazil have a significant cultural heritage of non-European ethnic groups, but such hierarchy between races is somehow concealed. A veneer of the "ideology of racial democracy" within each multiethnic country serves to avoid the externalization of a crude policy of patronizing and subordination of minority groups. This serves as a buffer against the expression of blatantly Euro-centric discourses. Yet, can be expected that such interethnic discriminatory contents might be partially disclosed when spontaneous representations on foreign ethnic groups *who do not live in the country* are at play.

Psychological and situational aspects

In socio-psychological terms, we could expect that the press would adopt intergroup differentiation strategies. First, depicting Muslims as a threat to individual and group. Also as carriers and disseminators of different or negatively viewed values; as unable to solve their own problems, etc. These are forms of communication to be inferred from more systematic qualitative and quantitative studies. Theorization and description developed by constructivist social scientists that posited how mass media should be understood as cultural constructions produced in the context of social power (Williams, 2003) might then be helpful.

Henri Tajfel et al. (1981) argued that processes of categorization contain two propositions: enhancement of extragroup differences, and accentuation of intragroup likeness. According to them individuals constantly compare advantages and disadvantages of the social categories they belong. The theory of self-categorization (Turner et al., 1987) highlighted that shared stereotypes are the upshot of strong group identification, and that individuals are active in the socialization process: Only those who identify with the group are likely to end up accepting its ideological influence.

The main notion of social comparison presupposes that human beings evaluate their opinions and skills when they feel insecure about them, and so they draw upon comparison with one another (Festinger, 1954). In this sense, we can posit that in societies influenced by European cultural models - but not only -, people tend to compare themselves with those they view as similar in status and, when the latter are not available, with groups of higher status or prestige. Shall we argue that such attitude reinforces hierarchy between groups and nations, and sets up the so-called "negative" relationships. In other words, most people regard positively those groups considered superior, and on a rather negative light those whom hierarchy places as relatively powerless.

By 2001 the European Union had benefitted countries like Spain and Ireland, upgrading them from their previous uncertain or subordinate position. Both Spain and Brazil could be ranged among the pro-normative countries since they can be described as highly pro-European and pro-western cultural values. In this post-cold-war context, there is an underlying tension between western and Islamic values (Esposito, 1995). The higher contact, exchange and interdependency of both cultural macro-regions and other parts of the world brought into sharp comparison and contrast the different worldviews and cultural-religious values. Furthermore, the hyper-differentiating tendencies of postmodernization pushed local cultures, religions and traditions to relativize themselves (Robertson, 1992). Such relativization can involve the embracement of abstract civic values and human rights, but might also trigger a defensive search of 'pure' traditions, xenophobia, racism and religious fundamentalism.

Is not at random that since the mid-1980's new concepts of racism have surfaced among scholars, such as "aversive racism" (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986), "modern racism" (McConahay, 1986), "symbolic racism" (Sears, 1988), and "subtle racism" (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). What all of them have in common is the representation as a defensive mechanism that serves to solve the person's internal conflicts. For instance, the "modern racists" would be those who believe that there are no racists nowadays, but complain that minority groups demand too many rights, or that their tactics are not justified.

Research carried out on several countries has disclosed that in Europe xenophobia is an attitude that does not depend on social class or level of instruction (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). This research underlined the lack of correlation among either kind of racism they studied (whether it be explicit or subtle), and people who underwent any sort of relative deprivation. Such findings cast some doubts about the effectiveness of those theories of mass society and racism that have emphasized the relationship between racism and groups that feel socially alienated or disempowered.

In the domain of psychosocial theories about categorization of objects, the process known as "assimilation and contrast" has been object of a number of studies. Regarding intergroup interactions one of the main effects of assimilation would lay in the increasing tendency to interact with other people as members of a group, more than as individuals. By means of assimilation the intragroup happens to be seen as more complex than the extragroup (Linville & Jones, 1980). As Brewer (1979) pointed out, when two groups are compared the negatively valued differences of the extragroup's representation prevail over the positively assessed, whence members of the extragroup are seen as more homogeneous than the intragroup (Quattrone & Jones, 1980).

Going back to a large-scale perspective, shall we point out that nowadays each nation state seems to be in the search of something inner and particular they can present as their own identity. In such undertaking of social differentiation as a source of autonomy and individual fulfillment/accomplishment, religion and ethnicity become the milestones of political identities in progress. Yet, need of differentiation rarely shapes movements, political parties or any institutions. Its trials remain focused on questions considered more generic – i.e. material and power relations, eventually becoming individual/group expressions that are labeled as "social deviants". Further, when individuals/groups try to influence public sphere they are generally discouraged and inhibited since the hegemonic canon defenders deploy simplification, stereotypes, or metaphors that reinforce negative representations of minorities.

As to the individuals/groups that proclaim themselves majorities, they can also be affected by a low self-esteem in their interactions (Moscovici & Paicheler, 1978). First, those who doubt their worth might tend not to create/maintain differentiation, autonomy or space of their own. Further, individuals/groups that enjoy lesser social recognition can believe that by putting down and damaging other groups' image, they will be able to enhance and improve their own. And when such groups aim to maintain a majority status which is at stake they might implement rules/norms that will enable them to maintain the status quo, whence they become conservative or orthodox majorities. Second, other members of these groups can also be condescending or paternalistic with minorities who have much difficulty to be socially assertive to claim their rights. This is another way majorities

draw upon to thwart minorities' freedom, and undermine chances to trigger processes of social influence and change.

In the light of the aforementioned literature we posit the hypothesis that in areas such as Spain and Brazil the daily press would report rather unfavorable than favorable messages on Arab/Muslim countries. Additionally, the news coverage about Arab/Muslim countries would be performed drawing upon unfavorably depicted aspects of action and interaction, to the detriment of messages about the Arab/Muslim in itself. We expect to find the latter type of content less seldom in Brazil where an ideology of racial democracy used to be upheld in the mass media. Nevertheless, this ideology does not prevent the Brazilian press from expressing and disseminating unfavorable messages regarding minority ethnic or religious groups, such as the Arabs/Muslims.

Additionally, this work aimed at disclosing less explicit qualitative aspects of policies of representation. Therefore, we shall draw on a discourse analytical approach (e.g., Potter, 1996; Billig, 2008) to look in more detail to some grammatical choices in the description of protagonists and events. We found high indexes of negatively connoted coverage of the themes *Arab/Muslim in action*, *Arab/Muslim in interaction with Westerners*, *Arabs/Muslims in Europe* in the Spanish newspapers. And we will argue that this is due to the more conflictive way Muslims are imagined in Spain. Here there is an underlying intergroup confrontation and an implicit agenda not to recognize the Muslim as a social subject with his/her own dignity and legitimacy to be an active part in the political sphere.

Methods

Constitution of the data

The newspapers we analyzed were the Brazilian *Folha de Sao Paulo* and *Jornal do Brasil* and the Spanish *El País* and *El Mundo*, which were chosen because they were widely disseminated newspapers in their respective countries. All these newspapers claim a secular positioning regarding religion and generic commitment with democratic values. Following an initial exploration of the collected data, we decided to focus our analysis on a sample that encompassed the period between the beginning of February 2001 and the first week of May 2001. Therefore, it is important to stress the sample we worked preceded the terrorist attacks in New York (11 September 2001) and Madrid (11 March 2003), and so they only provide specific examples of how the image of the Muslim was constructed in a conjuncture in which the representation of such object was not yet affected by such tragic events.

Procedures and Data Analysis

This study was based on headlines published on Fridays in *Jornal do Brasil* and *El Mundo*, and every Sunday in *El País* and *Folha de Sao Paulo*, over a period of 14 weeks. The research was carried out drawing upon comparison of Brazilian and Spanish news reports headlines, and we aimed at inferring similarities and differences in the description of news related to Muslims. We used methods of content and overall analysis for qualitative research in mass media (Bardin, 1994; Van Dijk, 1991), transcribing all the 244 headlines related to the Arab/Muslim topic, and that explicitly mentioned this subject whether in the headline or in the main text. This permitted the examination, interpretation and setting in order of the data from diverse perspectives, including analysis of general themes starting from small linguistic units, drawing on their regrouping in synthetic categories. In order to decide to include headlines in the unfavorable (U), favorable (F) or neutral (N) category we had to look not only at the headline, but also at the main texts' first paragraph. Each news item was thoroughly read, but only contents of headlines, subheads, and first paragraphs were analyzed and counted. The ranged tables of frequencies and percentages of the main topics or meta-categories were subsequently chi-square tested in order to verify the level of statistical significance between the compared sets of data.

Next we present the description of themes that each meta-category encompassed:

The Arab/Muslim in action in political/military field. War, attack, terrorism, murder, democratization, internal parliamentary politics, fraternization and approach moves among Muslim countries, statement of resilience in relation to Western countries (except direct interaction). Here headlines included in the unfavorable category depicted Muslims as, or suggested they were, violent, dangerous. And also economically and politically repressive-undemocratic, restless or badly managed. As favorable headlines we included those where Muslim was linked with values which are generally seen as positive in America and Europe, such as democratization, avoiding crimes or violence, and physical attractiveness. We are aware that it might be argued that some of them reinforced romantic stereotypical images (case 11), but stress positive similarities of Europeans/Americans and Muslims. On some cases newspapers depicted events, but their stance was not clear, or was not expressed, therefore we included these headlines in the neutral category. In order to ascertain whether the headlines were indeed referring to Muslims or not, we had often to read the whole news item. That is, the main text.

1. *"Bomba mata um e fere nove em Israel."* [bomb kills one and hurts nine in Israel] (Unfavorable (U), "Jornal do Brasil", 02/03/2001);
2. *"Turquía recibe el nuevo plan económico con fuertes protestas."* [Turkey receives his new economic plan under strong protests] (U., "El Pais", 15/04/2001);
3. *"La represión policial de los Bereberes argelinos se cobra más de 30 muertos."* [The police repressions against the Algerian Berbers provokes the death of more than 30] (U., "El Pais", 29/04/2001);
4. *"Afeganistão - Ministro do grupo extremista diz que vários sítios históricos foram destruídos (...)."* [Afghanistan – Minister of the extremist group says that several historical sites have been destroyed (…)"] (U., "Folha de São Paulo", 04/03/2001);
5. *"Naufrágio da lira turca, que caiu 36% em dois dias, (...)."* [Shipwreck of the Turkish lira that drop 36% in two days] (U., "Folha de São Paulo", 25/02/2001);
6. *"Los talibán acusan a la oposición afgana de asesinar a 120 civiles."* [The Taliban accuse the Afghan opposition of murdering 120 civilians] (U., "El Mundo", 23/02/2001);
7. *"Novena víctima mortal en la huelga de hambre de los presos políticos turcos."* [Ninth mortal victim in the hunger strike of the Turkish political prisoners] (U., "El Mundo", 13/04/2001);
8. *"Kuait discute conceder voto a mulheres."* [Kwait discusses to grant women the right to vote] (Favorable (F), "Folha de São Paulo", 15/04/2001);
9. *"Síria exibe sinais de abertura política e econômica."* [Syria exhibits signs of political and economic opening] (F., "Folha de São Paulo", 18/02/2001);
10. *"El `brazo armado' de Arafat salva a una israelí de ser linchada."* [The 'military arm' of Arafat saves one Israeli from being lynched] (F., "El Mundo", 16/03/2001);
11. *"Deus grego com sangue marroquino - Karim Alami é motivo de muitos suspiros na Barra."* [Greek God with Moroccan blood – Karim Alami motivates many sights in Barra] (F., "Jornal do Brasil", 09/02/2001);
12. *"Acordo comercial une Síria e Iraque."* [Trade agreement unites Syria and Iraq] (Neutral (N), "Jornal do Brasil", 02/03/2001);
13. *"Jatami defiende su "democracia religiosa" en el día de la revolución."* [Jatami stands up for his "religious democracy" in the day of the revolution] (N., "El Pais", 11/02/2001);

Arab/Muslim's own cultural/leisure/sport/environmental/physical/business characteristics. Sport (soccer and tennis), religion, tourism, physical milieu, environmental catastrophe/disaster, misery/poverty. Here we bore in mind if Muslim countries or famous people such as soccer players etc., were depicted as interesting or attractive and contemporary. When uncontrolled trouble, havoc was emphasized we included editorials in the unfavorable category. Images like the sun of the desert could be doing nothing to change stereotypical images of Muslim countries, but it was considered a neutral depiction of a landscape. A black stain was a danger for the coast of Lebanon, but the news item implies it might have been controlled by Lebanese people themselves, even if it does not overtly state it (ex. 20).

14. *"Accidentado recital en Egipto."* [Troubled recital in Egypt] (U., "El Mundo", 27/04/2001);
15. *"Palestina: el pueblo menos elegido del planeta."* [Palestine: the less elected people of the planet] (U., "El Pais", 18/02/2001);
16. *"(Na Península Arábica) Diversão inclui falcão e poesia."* [(In the Arabian peninsula) Amusement includes hawk and poetry] (F., " Folha de São Paulo", 15/04/2001);
17. *"(A jornalista e escritora Ana Arruda Callado) Sob o sol do deserto"* [(The journalist and writer Ana Arruda Callado) Under the sun of the desert] (N., "Jornal do Brasil", 16/03/2001);
18. *"Palestina faz estréia de verdade em Copas."* [Palestine makes genuine premiere in Cups] (N., "Folha de São Paulo", 04/03/2001);
19. *"Futebol - Roni marca em sua estréia na Arábia Saudita."* [Soccer – Roni scores in his premiere in Saudi Arabia] (N., "Folha de São Paulo", 01/04/2001);
20. *"Disuelta una "mancha negra" que amenazó la costa del Líbano."* [Dissolved one "black stain" that threatened the coast of Lebanon] (N., "El Mundo", 30/03/2001);

Arab/Muslims in interaction with Westerners. Negotiation of the Arab-Israelite peace process, visit of diplomats, OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries), Western investments in Muslim countries, aerial bombardments/attacks against Muslim countries. It concerns political negotiations at the highest levels. In some cases Muslim countries or their delegations were depicted as thwarting peace agreements or negotiations with European and American countries, or at least not willing to collaborate. Further, the repercussion of such behavior was considered negative. Therefore, such headlines were included in the unfavorable category, since it was understood Muslim countries were depicted as accountable. As favorable we included headlines in which Muslims and Westerners were described as willing to negotiate and also working together in order to achieve something that was presented as beneficial for both sides. On some cases,

interaction between representatives of Western and Muslim countries is mentioned, but no evaluation is made or suggested regarding Muslim's stance or position. Such headlines were classified as neutral.

21. *"La OPEP aprueba el segundo recorte del petróleo en lo que va de año."* [The OPEP approves the second reduction of the petroleum so far this year] (U., "El Pais", 18/03/2001);
22. *"Powell tenta reativar apoio anti-Iraque."* [Powell tries to reactive support against Iraq] (U., "Folha de São Paulo", 25/02/2001);
23. *"El Rey y Bashar Asad piden que se recupere el espíritu de al-Andalus."* [The king and Bashar Asad ask the retrieval of the spirit of Al-Andalus] (F., "El Mundo", 04/05/2001);
24. *"La EU (Unión Europea) apoya el plan de paz árabe para Oriente Próximo."* [The European Union supports the Arab peace plan for the Middle-East] (F., "El Pais", 06/05/2001);
25. *"Miles de pescadores reclaman una nueva negociación con Marruecos."* [Thousands of fishermen demand a new negotiation with Morocco] (N., "El Pais", 22/04/2001);
26. *"Ataque aéreo ao Iraque errou maioria dos alvos."* [Aerial attack to Iraq missed most targets] (N., "Jornal do Brasil", 23/02/2001);
27. *"Afeganistão - Taleban diz que se reunirá com Kofi Annan."* [Afghanistan – Taleban says he will meet Kofi Annan] (N., "Folha de São Paulo", 11/03/2001);
28. *"Los ministros de Exteriores e Interior y dos estrechos colaboradores de Mohamed VI se entrevistan hoy con Rajoy y Piqué."* [The ministers of external and internal affairs and two close collaborators of Mohamed VI are going to meet today with Rajoy and Piqué] (N., "El Mundo", 27/04/2001);
29. *"Los croatas de Bosnia quieren separarse de los musulmanes."* [The Croatians from Bosnia want to separate from Muslims] (N., "El Pais", 04/03/2001);
30. *"Israel e Irã mantêm compra."* [Israel and Iran maintain purchase] (N., "Jornal do Brasil", 09/02/2001);
31. *"Sanções contra a Líbia deixam de ser unânimes."* [Sanctions against Libya stop being unanimous] (N., "Jornal do Brasil", 02/02/2001);

Arabs/Muslins in Europe. Arrested immigrants, without identity papers, expelled, negotiation between immigrants and European governments, negotiations of reforms of the "European immigration laws", immigrants as criminals, thieves, fugitives, prostitutes, kidnappers, ill, abandoned, aggressors or victims of injustice, explored as cheap labor, immigrants helped/supported by Europeans and by NGO's, integrated immigrants, Europeans mobilized against construction of a mosque, etc. Those headlines where Muslim groups or individuals living in Europe were associated with crime were categorized as unfavorable. When Muslims in Europe were depicted as victims of aggression by Europeans, but nothing positive was stated about the victims, such headlines were categorized as neutral.

32. *"Itália frustra plano terrorista."* [Italy frustrates terrorist plan] (U., "Jornal do Brasil", 06/04/2001);
33. *"Detenidos siete marroquíes en Lorca acusados de secuestrar a nueve compatriotas."* [Seven Moroccans arrested in Lorca accused of kidnapping nine countrymen] (U., "El Mundo", 13/04/2001);
34. *"El 90% de las prostitutas que trabajan en España son inmigrantes."* [90% of the prostitutes who work in Spain are immigrants] (U., "El Pais", 04/03/2001);
35. *"La atribución de un crimen en Italia a los inmigrantes se vuelve contra la Liga Norte."* [The attribution of one crime in Italy to the immigrants turns against the North League] (N., "El Pais", 25/02/2001);
36. *"El Gobierno descarga sobre las ONG la atención a los inmigrantes."* [The government discharges on the NGO's the attention to the immigrants] (N., "El Pais", 29/04/2001);
37. *"Vecinos de Granollers recogen firmas contra una mezquita."* [Neighbors of Granollers collect signatures against a mosque] (N., "El Mundo", 23/03/2001);
38. *"Un inmigrante acusa a dos policías de robo y agresión."* [An immigrant accuses two policemen of robbery and aggression] (N., "El Mundo", 09/02/2001);

European as victim of Muslim aggression.
39. *"Huelga de hambre de los asesinos de dos españoles en Marruecos"* [Hunger strike of the murderers of two Spaniards in Morocco] (U., "El Mundo", 16/02/2001).

The main author sorted the news items into categories. The preliminary sorting decisions were later checked by the second author. Drawing upon diverse social psychological literature on categorization and stereotypes of

Muslims, which is mentioned in the introductory section, we tried to critically self-scrutinize and avoid any cultural bias related to our European and Brazilian heritage. We tried to be objective throughout our data sorting process and reached an agreement on what constitutes our criteria to inclusion/exclusion of headline's contents in one or other category. This work has been read by several colleagues. We have gradually included some changes following their suggestion to turn the description of our sorting methodology more intelligible and replicable. Nevertheless, we are aware that our procedures might lead us to a perspective which is not exempt of certain sociocentrism. In other words, we do not claim to be immune to cultural ideas linked to local normative systems, and we are aware that here we are positioning ourselves.

Results

In general unfavorable representations of Muslims were more frequent in all the newspapers we analyzed, with the exception of *"Jornal do Brasil"*.

In three newspapers (*Jornal do Brasil*, *El País*, *El Mundo*) high indexes of neutrality in the coverage of Muslim related themes were found.

Table 1: General index of favorable, neutral and unfavorable coverage in news reports about Muslims. Comparison of Brazilian and Spanish newspapers.

	Jornal do Brasil		Folha de SP		El País		El Mundo	
	f.	%	f.	%	f.	%	f.	%
Favorable	2	5,7	21	29,1	1	2,2	6	6,7
Neutral	17	48,5	18	25,0	18	40,0	40	43,4
Unfavorable	16	45,7	33	45,8	26	57,7	46	50,0
Total	35	100%	72	100%	45	100%	92	100%

$\chi^2=30,021$; df=6; p<0,0001.

Folha de Sao Paulo stood out with a high number of favorable descriptions of the Muslim (29,16%), but nonetheless it shared the existing consensus of unfavorable representation (45,83%). In turn, *Jornal do Brasil* (45,71%) showed quite similar numbers of unfavorable representations of the Muslim. This pattern of representing the Muslim in negative terms was more noticeable in the Spanish journals: *El País* (57,77%), and *El Mundo* (50%).

Table 2: General index of favorable, neutral and unfavorable coverage of the Muslim, through comparison of Brazilian and Spanish newspapers

	Brazilian newspapers		Spanish newspapers	
	f.	%	f.	%
Favorable	23	21,4	7	5,1
Neutral	35	32,7	58	42,3
Unfavorable	49	45,7	72	52,5
Total	107	100%	137	100%

$\chi^2=15,134$; df=2; p<0,0005.

If we compare the Brazilian newspapers' results with the Spanish ones, what is striking is that in the Spanish newspapers it seemed to be hardly any spaces for a favorable portray of the Muslim, and what stood out was a preferential focus on negative aspects, and some specific themes that were treated drawing upon a more neutral language. Although also largely unfavorable, in the Brazilian headlines we found a significant pattern of using favorable items to refer to the Muslim, even if here neutrality still prevails over favorability.

Table 3: Topics mentioned to represent the Muslim in each newspaper separately

	Jornal do Brasil		Folha de Sao Paulo		El País		El Mundo	
	f.	%	f.	%	f.	%	f.	%
Muslim in action	18	51,4	28	38,8	16	35,3	33	35,8
Muslim in itself	8	22,8	13	18,0	1	2,2	4	4,3
Muslim in interaction	8	22,8	29	40,2	14	31,1	22	23,9
Muslim in Europe	1	2,8	2	2,7	14	31,1	32	34,7
Westerner victim of Muslim	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1,0
Total	35	100%	72	100%	45	100%	92	100%

χ^2=51,267; df=12; p<0,0001.

The topic which is more mentioned by all the newspapers is *"Muslim in action"* that is found on a rate of 51,42% of descriptions in *Jornal do Brasil*, 38,88% in *Folha de Sao Paulo*, 35, 55% in *El País*, and 35,86% in *El Mundo*. The second topic that was granted more coverage was *"Muslim in interaction with Westerners"* (diplomatic relationships, negotiation of conflicts, etc.) that was found in all the newspapers, though in different proportions.

The third more mentioned topic was *"Muslim in Europe"*, a theme that concerns exclusively the two Spanish newspapers in significantly similar proportions: *El Mundo*, 34,78%; and *El País*, 31,11%.

Lets stress that by contrast a fourth macro-topic was much more channeled in the Brazilian newspapers: the *"characteristics in itself of the Muslims* (culture, religion, sport, physical environment, among others). These accounted for 22,8% of references to the Muslim in *Jornal do Brasil*, and 18,05% in *Folha de Sao Paulo*. In *El País* such topic was not mentioned, and in *El Mundo* rather seldom, 4,34%.

Table 4: Comparison of themes used about the Muslim in newspapers of Brazil and Spain

	Brazilian newspapers		Spanish newspapers	
	f.	%	f.	%
Muslim in action	46	42,9	49	35,7
Muslim in itself	21	19,6	5	3,6
Muslim in interaction	37	34,5	36	26,2
Muslim in Europe	3	2,8	46	33,5
European victim of Muslim	0	0	1	0,7
Total:	107	100%	137	100%

χ^2=45,68; df=4; p<0,0001

The comparison of Brazilian journals' headlines put clear the emphasis on *"Muslim in action"*, 42,99% for the Brazilians and 36,02% for the Spanish.

This comparison also underlines how in the Brazilian headlines stood out *"Muslim in itself"*, 19,62%, while in the Spanish it had a modest coverage of 2,94%.

The scarce interest of the Brazilian newspapers regarding the topic *"Muslims in Europe"* is quite evident (2,80%), and this contrasts with the core importance the same topic has for the Spanish newspapers (33,82%).

Table 5: Comparison between Brazilian and Spanish newspapers on covered macro-topics and in terms of favorable, neutral and unfavorable portrayal of the Muslim

| | Brazilian newspapers | | | | | | | | Spanish newspapers | | | | | | | | | |
| | Muslim in Action | | Muslim in itself | | Muslim in interaction | | Muslim in Europe | | Muslim in action | | Muslim in itself | | Muslim in interaction | | Muslim in Europe | | European victim | |
	f.	%	f.	%	f.	%	f.	%	f.	%	f.	%	f.	%	f.	%	f.	%
Favorable	10	21,7	4	19,0	9	24,3	0	0	2	4,0	0	0	4	11,1	1	2,1	0	0
Neutral	10	21,7	11	52,3	13	35,1	1	33,3	8	16,3	3	60	20	55,5	27	58,6	0	0
Unfavorable	26	56,5	6	28,5	15	40,5	2	66,6	39	79,5	2	40	12	33,3	18	39,1	1	100
Total	46	100%	21	100%	37	100%	3	100%	49	100%	5	100%	36	100%	46	100%	1	100%

χ^2 ("Muslim in action")=8,069; df=2; p<0,0177. χ^2 ("Muslim in itself")=1,16; df=2; non significant. χ^2 ("Muslim in interaction")=3,73; df=2; non significant. χ^2 ("Muslim in Europe")=0,90; df=2; non significant.

The coverage of *"Muslim in action"* (that includes attacks and war, reforms and economic administration, democratization movements, among other contents) has got significantly more negative connotation in the Spanish newspapers (79, 59%), than in the Brazilians (56,5%).

It is worth highlighting that the Brazilian headlines suggest a discreet initiative of favorable representation of *"Muslim in action"* (21,7%); which highly differentiates them from the Spanish data in which positive views of *"Muslim in action"* were very scarce (4,08%).

Also in the Brazilian newspapers, *"Muslim in itself"* was much more mentioned from a position that avoided evaluation, and negative descriptions were very rare. Further, Brazilian headlines were comparatively more favorable (19,04%).

In turn, the Spanish newspapers hardly ever addressed the topic of *"Muslim in itself"*, and when they did it was negatively.

In what regards *"interaction among Muslim and Western countries"* we came across with a higher level of negatively connoted coverage in the Brazilian newspapers (40,5%), than in the Spanish (33,33%). Meanwhile, the Spanish conveyed more neutrality (55,55%), and the Brazilians were rather divided between unfavorable (40,5%), neutral (35,1%) and favorable (24,3%).

The topic *"Muslim in Europe"* happened to be almost exclusive of the Spanish newspapers, where although it was covered maintaining a descriptive tone (58,69%), often was negatively depicted (39,13%). On the contrary, the same topic in Brazil tended to be represented in a more unfavorable than neutral way.

Discussion

All in all, no matter the theme, Muslims tended to be unfavorably or neutrally portrayed, so much in the Brazilian press, as in the Spanish. Explicitly unfavorable representations drew upon the use of emotionally charged evaluative language in which stereotypes and metaphors abounded. These swung between criminalization and disqualification of the subject's capacity to be well organized and autonomous.

One typical rhetorical work to confirm the stereotype of Muslims as archaic, is to put at stake the know-how of Muslim countries' efforts to adapt to patterns of business administration that follow a model of effectiveness. This model was commonly recognized/accepted as an exclusive westerners' gift until the last decades' emergence of China and other Asian economies. In sum, the analyzed newspapers' writers seemed to be aware of the strategic role these topics might play for an eventual improvement and reversal of the Muslim countries' prestige in the western countries. Therefore, *"Muslim in action"* became a core and delicate topic that tended to be addressed with distrust by the Brazilian and Spanish press alike.

Unlike the Spanish, the Brazilian newspapers seemed to convey a certain intercultural openness concerning the theme *"Muslim in itself"*, which is usually focused on drawing upon a more historical, cultural and playful or recreational language. But overall, these subthemes (e.g., sport, religion, culture, and environment) were limited to repeat rather shallow stereotypes (e.g. the desert, Mecca pilgrimage). Yet, in some cases they were portrayed with more detail of elements, and even some specific non-threatening attributes of Muslims were described and favorably evaluated.

Then, going back to our results, as we foresaw, a widespread pattern in the analyzed broadsheets is the use of rhetoric of criminalization (Guillaumin, 1972). This happened in different ways. For instance the association of Muslims with terrorism, death, murder, violence, danger, and so on, was very common. Our analysis brought to the fore that *"Muslim in action"* and *"Muslim in interaction with Westerners"*, both dealing with contemporary life, are pivotal topics in the Brazilian and the Spanish newspapers. The Muslim's own behavior; the way they act in the realms of armed conflict, how they perform the management of political and economic administration, and the type of interactions they have with western countries (e.g. as victims of warfare aggressions, as open to diplomatic relationships, or through OPEP) was one of the main themes on focus. All this hints at the importance of appraisals of Muslim's capacity to carry out autonomous action and

projects that will serve to construct legitimacy based on western dominant values. Further it confirms that a strategy deployed against groups viewed as less powerful is despising their capacity to successfully carry out autonomous projects. Hence, majorities often criticize minorities' actions and initiatives that contradict the formers' interests and goals, or express expectation that minorities' efforts for economic and political development will end up in failure.

Let's start briefly focusing on *Arab/Muslims in interaction with Westerners*. The Brazilian newspapers strived to convey a neutral position. However, reports of delicate and controversial actions perpetrated by Europeans turn verbs such as *to sanction* (headline 21) and *to attack* (headline 23) into nouns. Therefore, the Western agency behind these actions is not mentioned as if the actions were a natural process independent of any agency and stake. In turn, in both Spanish newspapers (headlines 26, 27, 28, 30) what is more conspicuous is how - in the depicted intergroup contact and negotiation - western actors (whether Ministers, King, Bosnian Croats, the EU, Spanish fishermen) are mentioned in the first place. This suggests a hierarchy of importance and relevance granted to the West, and a biased position. It is not at random that, unlike in the Brazilian *Folha de Sao Paulo* (headline 25), when an Arab/Muslim agent like OPEP is activated and mentioned at the very beginning of the sentence in *El País* (headline 29) it is done to report something unpopular like a second raise of petroleum's price in one year: "second in a year" conveying abuse and arbitrariness.

On the other hand, according to Guillaumin (1972) the group enjoying less prestige tends at times to be represented as a victim or someone who depends on help/care that the hegemonic groups can decide whether to provide or not. Headlines that convey such view of minorities as helpless, miserable and dependent upon the support of more successful and civilized people draw upon Christian and illustrated Eurocentrism and cultural racism, which emphasize Muslim countries' authoritarian and archaic aspects - as if they were part of their inner nature and thus permanent. The truly serious difficulties for a democratic transition to laicism in most Muslim countries notwithstanding, the stress in examples of human and minority rights' disrespect serves to present Europe by comparison as if it were example of democracy and tolerance regarding minority groups and individuals.

Yet one dimension of the competing representation of the Muslim collective as victim can be quite misleading: the myth of the good Palestinian (Taguieff, 2002) is based on an idealization/generalization that constructs the Muslims as a mass of miserable and dispossessed people. Additionally, such apparently positive representations can be for instance deployed to hidden prejudice in cases of paternalistic prejudice. In other words, lack of competence of the minority is stressed, while in turn favorable traits like traditional music, past history, art are benevolently recognized. Such portrayal suggests a non-prejudiced stance (Glick & Fiske, 2001)

In this sense, if we look in-depth at the examples of headlines listed in the part of the procedure's and themes' description some interesting patterns can be inferred in descriptions of conflict and warfare between Palestinians and Israelis. The first topic is "*the Arab/Muslim in action in political/military field*", and headline 1 (from *Jornal do Brasil*) reports a bomb attack in Israel. This is a Palestinian bomb attack and the victims are Israelis although agency is not stated, but omitted. Another striking example of attempt of making-up a less negative portray of Palestinians is found in the Spanish newspaper "*El Mundo*". Headline number 8 presents *the "military arm" of Arafat* as an active agent saving an Israeli woman from lynching. This is an ambiguous mix of negative clichés and metaphors of threatening armed and archaic lynching Muslim mob versus an Israeli woman, but the message it stresses is rather favorable regarding Arafat's armed arm. Even it is conveniently omitted the likely Palestinian identity of the lynching mob.

The Palestinian case is an exception since it has mobilized a significant part of the European and Brazilian human rights activists and intellectuals. Otherwise, most of the examples of headlines in which a Muslim was grammatically activated as a protagonist of an action highlighted unfavorable aspects of Muslim societies. For instance, in Afghanistan a Minister from an *extremist group* is reported as uttering that several historical sites have been destroyed (headline 6); and the Talibans accused the Afghan opposition of murdering 120 civilians (headline 7). In turn, *El Pais* (headline 10) activates Jatami on top of the sentence, but draws on an ironical *su* (his) to suggest the arbitrariness of Iran's prime ministers' paradoxical claim that his regime is a "*democracia religiosa*" (religious democracy).

Nonetheless, sometimes the press can recognize some value in the historical, cultural or scientific achievements of certain groups such as the Muslims. Yet these successes were those that were achieved in a remote or exotic past, and never the result of the action of such minority or othered groups in the present. These would be examples of decontextualized folklore or mythologies (Barthes, 1957). In the case of ethnic minorities that have endured long historical periods such processes of sign deconstruction played a social influence role, even if a relatively weaker one. Additionally, we would expect that for those who portray minority groups the partial acknowledgement of their contribution in the public sphere might have the rhetorical function of feigning flexibility and neutrality. Nonetheless, this is often ineffective in face of the predominance of unfavorable contents that majorities tend to associate with minority social action.

Then, the newspapers' psychosocial construction of Arab-Muslim ethnic-religious individuals and groups, regardless of the analytical clipping, revealed a predominance of contents linked to isolated or interactive action, pointing out a bet for immediacy to the detriment of depth. Such journalistic material tended to skip explanations or more elaborated descriptions about what the Arab and Muslim people are, an also overlooked regularities that might be considered favorable. Shall we argue that here we are dealing with a certain entertainment journalism, following the pattern raised by action films, which posits life styles that seem to have gone forever in societies where everything is planned and controlled in advance, leaving scarce room for the unexpected, for adventure. These almost fictional tales have become a gender not unlikely the traditional Hollywood westerns with their portrayals of sheriff's confrontations with Indians and/or Mexican bandits. That is, deviance is described like in a movie; and it might be attributed to a desire to deflect attention from other proposals and projects that should stay hidden since they might present a challenge to the status quo. Therefore, the media focus on the Arab/Muslim can be also read as a narcissistic way of self-culture-group worship in societies that seem to enjoy some degree of stability and accomplishment. It is a fictional world were the more threatening conflicts take place quite far away; and people and their institutions are modern, reasonable and good.

Finally, we might wonder if such constructions even being addressed to the western readership, do not have an effect in Arab/Muslim groups forestalling the gamut of available thought, discourses, actions on both sides, which shrinks exchange guidelines and leaves both sides with tiny scope for maneuver. If we look at the theme *Arabs/Muslims in Europe* two things can be noticed. First, immigrants are often associated to conflict, delinquency, and aggression. This pattern prevails even when the aggression is presented as apparently perpetrated by the police against the immigrant (e.g., *El Mundo*, headline 32). If we compare *El Mundo*'s headlines 32 and 34, it is clear that in the first sentence the immigrant is activated and presented as someone who makes a delicate accusation. Yet in the other sentence which also reports an accusation, at the outset "detenidos" does not say us who made the accusation. Only after we read about the seven Moroccans of Lorca, we get to know what they were accused of, and the noun "police" is nowhere to be found. Second, more *El Pais* than *El Mundo* might suggests a stance against discrimination of immigrants and a discourse of denunciation of discrimination (headlines 35 to 37). Yet, some grammatical choices in the presentation of the events and their protagonists denounce an effort to attenuate European agency behind delicate accusations. This is achieved for instance by putting the xenophobic Italian North League at the end of a headline (number 35) that paradoxically seemed to be aimed at criticizing the racist group.

This research is entirely based on news reports published before 9/11 2001; and they are presented here as a modest reflection of a set of accumulative difficulties that might have contributed to the tragic episode of New York City. As it is well known, the stances and representations became more polarized in the aftermath of 9/11. It is our wish to point out that psychosocial work is needed on this topic of communication between westerners and Arab/Muslims if we are to set up the grounds of more constructive international exchange between different parts of the world; and at the local level among the diverse religious-cultural communities living together on a nation-state.

Conclusion

The relatively recent emergence of information agencies of International scope (like Al Jazeera) is a key unfolding of a globalized communication between diverse identities and communities of the Muslim Diaspora. They try to cover events and protagonists from an Arab-Muslim perspective and interpretative frame, Al Jazeera, finds much of its audience among Muslims living in Europe and America. It came under the spotlights and reached peak audience rates during and in the aftermath of the last two decades' USA and allies' military interventions in Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan. We shall argue that such initiatives are still very involved with episodes of political-military characteristic related to between-states competition. However, in the foreseeable future should not be disregarded the possibility that such new mass media might provide us with a differentiated view of the Arab/Muslim countries, which could be object of ulterior comparative researches.

During this process we have become more aware of our own values, assumptions, preconceptions and position regarding the topic of research. We do believe that this and similar work can be used to enhance awareness and deeper thought especially among children and youngsters on how their own presuppositions can contribute to reproduce or change the world around themselves. Further, we would like to offer some tools that might help us and others develop more awareness of one's own shortcomings. That is, orientation for an active and critical interaction within ourselves and with mass media productions in order to avoid the pitfall of sociocentrism.

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