

#BLACKLIVESMATTER: A STUDY OF SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS FROM TWITTER

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We aimed to identify the main content of Twitter posts marked with #VidasNegrasImportam (#BlackLivesMatter) in Brazil, as well as verifying how the # becomes tangible (objectification) and how it is attributed to one or more meanings (anchoring) in these posts. We also investigated which dimensions of the Social Representations were constructed through the posts of this hashtag. Tweets published between May 27 and June 8, 2020, were collected, totaling 1603 tweets with textual content and 1337 images. The analysis of textual data was performed using the IRaMuTeQ program, and the analysis of the images followed the three-step model proposed by Moliner (2016). We observed the use of the hashtag to disseminate information about racism, police violence and this collective movement. In the image dimension, faces of the murdered black people and symbols that objectify the movement were found, with an attitude largely favorable to the movement by Internet users.

Keywords: Social representations, Twitter, Violence, Racism

1. Introduction

On May 25, 2020, in Minneapolis (USA), George Floyd, a 46-year-old black man, was stopped by the police and, during the encounter, police officer Derek Chauvin knelt on his neck for almost nine minutes, ignoring his pleas (“I can’t breathe”), and killing him by asphyxiation. The event was captured on video and became a vivid example of police brutality and racism, fueling worldwide protests through the Black Lives Matter movement (Taylor, 2020).

This movement emerged in 2013, with Alicia Garza, Patrisse Khan-Cullors and Opal Tometi, after the murder of Trayvon Martin and the acquittal of the person responsible. It is a global foundation located in the United States, United Kingdom and Canada, which aims to eradicate white supremacy, to explicitly combat racism, acting especially on the violence practiced by the State against black communities (<https://blacklivesmatter.com/> accessed on 15th September 2020).

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In Brazil, data on the violence committed by the State are composed of reports that highlight one of the most violent police forces in the world, responsible for numerous records of human rights violations, such as torture and extrajudicial executions. Data from the Public Security Institute (2020) show that, in Rio de Janeiro alone, 606 people of Rio de Janeiro City were killed by the police in the first 4 months of 2020. In May, the total number of police deaths had increased to 741 people. In Brazil, in a survey called “Monitor of Violence”, an increase in the number of people killed by the police during the pandemic was identified. The increase was 7% compared to the same period in 2019, representing 3,148 people killed in the first half of the year (Velasco et al., 2020). According to the Brazilian Forum on Public Security (2019), the number of deaths resulting from police interventions in 2019 grew by 19.6% compared to 2017, with 17 deaths per day and 75.4% of the victims being black, 99.3% males and 77.9% between 15 and 29 years of age.

In order to analyze police violence, it is necessary to construct a reflection, not only on violent acts practiced by police officers, but, fundamentally, to carry out a genealogy of the formation of the police institution in Brazilian society. The police force is an institution that was constructed in the colonial period and aimed to protect the security of the royal family and to maintain order in the process of enslavement and colonization. The figure of the “captain of the bush” - responsible for capturing fugitive enslaved people - symbolizes the historical root of the police that is deeply entangled with the process of colonization and enslavement, therefore, with the practices of violence and racism (Soares, 2015; Cruz et al., 2017).

Brazil inherited from the Portuguese crown the traditional, arbitrary domination of the State, resulting in a political history marked by cycles of authoritarianism in which the military has always been protagonists. The ideology of privileges and authoritarianism has structured our social and political-institutional relations, highlighting racism - which is the result of the naturalization of these practices in the Brazilian slave period - as responsible for current inequalities and violence (Schwarcz, 2019).

It is worth mentioning, the country has had 13 years of a leftist government with more progressive and inclusive programs in the country's political and economic agenda, with the election of someone who came from the popular classes - Luís Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula) - and who has historically been linked to the struggle of social movements towards a more ample equality and inclusion of the minorities. However, the administration of the Workers' Party (PT) - 2 terms with Lula and another 2 with Dilma Rousseff, the latter interrupted by an impeachment - is the target of numerous criticisms by the most progressive groups in Brazil for having been characterized by more conciliatory and compensatory politics than an agenda that would have structurally reformulated the economic and social policies of the country. Although it was a government that made progress in guaranteeing human rights, it was also a management that favored capital, not focusing on the main producer of inequalities, which is the concentration of income and favoring the rentier classes (Braga, 2016; Chauí, 2016; Lowy, 2016).

Currently, with the rise of a right-wing party, we have a conjunctural component popularly known as “BBB”, an acronym related to the so-called Bullet bench - deputies linked to corrupt groups of the military police and militias; Boi (Ox) - landowners; Bible - conservative sectors that disrespect the secularity of the State. In other words, we have in Brazil a continuous process of struggle for democracy against totalitarian regimes, making the Brazilian State a field of disputes for different societal projects, some more just, equitable and democratic, others more unequal,

violating and excluding (Lowy, 2016). The alternation of power or of a political regime implies that new representations of history achieve political and institutional legitimacy, which generates a redefinition of the hierarchy of power between different social identities (Kus et al., 2013).

About the violence currently experienced, in Brazil, brutal events against black children have also been frequent, such as the case of 14-year-old João Pedro Matos Pinto, who died on May 18, 2020, inside his own home during a civil police operation; Agatha Felix, 8, killed on September 20, 2019, by the military police; Kauê Ribeiro, 12, shot in the head by police on September 8, 2019; and Miguel Otávio Santana da Silva, 5 years old, who fell 35 meters from a building where his mother worked, after being under the care of her employer so that the maid could comply with the orders that were given to walk with the family dog, the case was part of national mobilizations for denouncing facets of structural racism in our country, which places black women's main job in caring for white families while their children are exposed to the most diverse risks, including those of life (Gonzales, 1984). All are named in this work as a political act aimed at overcoming the symbolic death of those “without names”.

Such facts triggered a Movement of Favelas in Rio de Janeiro that, in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic, mobilized protests for the demonstration #VidasNegrasImportam (#BlackLivesMatter), on May 31, 2020, in Rio de Janeiro. Subsequently, this movement spread throughout the national territory, leading to demonstrations of June 7, 2020, in several Brazilian cities and capitals, such as São Paulo, Curitiba, and Rio de Janeiro, among others (Pires, 2020).

It should be noted that Brazil was the last country to abolish slavery, without having presented, until today, any project for the integration and historical and psychological resolution of the people that were enslaved by the State and Brazilian society - the African and indigenous population. Therefore, it is understood that the history of Brazil is structured by a process of colonization and exploitation based on racism and Eurocentrism that engender what Almeida (2018) called institutional and structural racism. According to the author, “racism is a form of discrimination that considers race to be the foundation of practices that culminate in disadvantages or privileges for individuals, depending on the racial group to which they belong” (p. 82). In this way, racial discrimination occurs in our country in a systemic, structural and institutional way insofar as it is reproduced in the state apparatus - such as the police - and in everyday relations.

From marginalization to systematic criminalization of black people, Brazilian society is still deeply entrenched with slave values that are used as a justification for the constant and categorical violence applied to this population (Nunes, 2006). Considering that Brazil has three centuries of slavery regime, having been one of the countries that most enslaved the African population and was the last to abolish slavery - this only happened in the late nineteenth century - the values that supported hierarchization and the inferiority of the non-white population remains active and organic to this day. The marks of the colonial slave society are conserved, updated and spread both in macro-social relations (such as in the sphere of the State, politics and economy) and in everyday micro-relations. According to the Brazilian Public Security Yearbook of 2020, despite constituting 56.0% of the population, black people make up 74.4% of murder victims in Brazil and 79.1% of people killed in police interventions, as well as totaling 66.7% of the incarcerated population (Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, 2020).

There was even an attempt in the country to erase the racist past, when, in 1890, Ruy Barbosa, Minister and Secretary of State for Finance Affairs and President of the National Treasury Court,

burned official documents that explained the reality of slavery in the country under the pretext of eliminating a shameful period from history (Nunes, 2006). Therefore, the dissonance between reality and rhetoric generated by the “racial democracy” discourse, constructs a veiled, structural and highly relativized racism explained by Schwarcz (1996) in his study, in which, despite 98% of the interviewees claiming to know racist people in their close circles, 97% said they had no racial prejudice, Brazilians feels like they are "on an island of racial democracy, surrounded by racists on all sides" (p. 155).

Chauí (2019) emphasized that the myth of racial democracy is forged in the history of Brazilian society with the ideological purpose of perpetuating a system of privileges of the dominant classes (white and Eurocentric). It should be noted that the history of the constitution of the Brazilian State is structured through practices of violence, brutality and torture. Brazil’s history “began” with practices of genocide and enslavement of indigenous and African peoples; it has been marked by cycles of authoritarian and dictatorial governments; and today Brazil carries out an “undeclared” war against the black and poor population, in which the police institution has a central role. Despite this, violence is repressed in the hegemonic narratives that defend the cordiality and pacifism of the Brazilian. That is, although we are the result of practices of violence, authoritarianism, racism and Eurocentrism, the discourse of racial democracy and the peaceful and hospitable Brazilian people is still propagated (Souza, 2014; Chauí, 2019; Safatle, 2010; Gomes, et al., 2019).

These phenomena are found in the articulation between an individual and a collective sphere, as they are both the object of a personal experience, as well as re-elaborated from discussions in daily conversations, in the media and in social groups, and for that reason they are important object of study for the Theory of Social Representations.

1.1 *Social Representations and new media*

Communication and language are essential for comprehending social representations (SRs), as these are formed, maintained or modified through communication (Marková, 2017). Moscovici (1978) reflected in his work that social representations communicate as much as they describe and influence behaviors, because they define social stimuli and act on the meanings attributed to them. The circulation of messages, not only what is orally circulated at a message, has a social characteristic of expression of groups and societies, their power relations, interests and conflicts (Camargo & Bousfield, 2014). For example, the practices and the structural racism are part of shared social representations that circulate in communication (Batel & Castro, 2015).

The author also presupposed two fundamental processes for the construction of social representations: anchoring and objectification. Anchoring refers to the process of assimilating a “foreign” idea or object to an already existing social representation for the subject, that is, concepts and images that are already familiar contribute to the understanding of this new object. This process allows the unknown to be assimilated and unified in a social representation of this new object. Objectification refers to concretization, making concrete what until then was abstract, objectifying in images. Therefore, the two processes transform concepts and images into independent things (Moscovici, 1988). These two processes should not be understood as separate,

but as two sides of the same story (Marková, 2000) interwoven and partly simultaneous (Hakoköngäs & Sakki, 2016).

As contextualized by Camargo and Bousfield (2014), in the late twentieth century, written and audiovisual media were essential for the circulation of political information for the population, which previously was restricted to specific audiences. Decades later, new media emerged, which expanded and accelerated the communication and circulation of news, videos and images, as well as social representations.

Mazzotti and Campos (2014) reflect that social media have an important role in the beginning of demonstrations that managed to bring together thousands of people and put an end to dictatorial regimes, as in Tunisia, after the death of Mohamed Bouazizi, and in Egypt, stimulated by the Tunisian event. The cyberculture makes it possible, through social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter and Blogs, for individuals to share the reasons why demonstrations are necessary, such as movements against police violence or human rights violations. Through social networks it is possible to mobilize and interact with countless people quickly, due to their global and collaborative aspect. This process is called a cyber revolution by the authors (Mazzotti & Campos, 2014).

In this context, social representations are considered cultural phenomena particular to society and a manifestation of its culture (Moscovici, 1978), with online social networks being important for the disclosure of shared meanings in the construction of social representations. It is a (non)space in which people share ideas, information and knowledge in relationships defined in time and space (Mazzotti & Campos, 2014).

The SRs are conceptualized by Moscovici (1978) as a modality of knowledge, with the function of elaborating behaviors and communication. For the author, social representations are formed by socialized figures and expressions, images and language that symbolize acts and situations based on values, notions and rules socially shared by a group. The SRs have two inseparable faces: the figurative and the symbolic, after all, the representation evokes a meaning to a figure, and a figure to a meaning (Moscovici, 2012). The importance of images for the construction of everyday knowledge has been present since the beginning of SRT. In one of its definitions, Moscovici (1984) states that the SR are a complex of images that reproduces a complex of ideas. For him the first step in objectification was to find the iconic nature of an abstract phenomenon and turn it into one concrete image. Moreover, visual images can work as tools of objectifying (De Rosa & Farr, 2001).

As Moliner (2016) pointed out, the image communicates elements of a shared common code, and the iconographic productions about a given social object are elaborated from the social representations of the object. In this context, the analysis of images referring to a given social object makes it possible to identify representational content, as its elaboration and understanding is linked to this “common code”.

There are numerous forms of communication and among them, research usually focuses on words and texts, however studies in SR can also carry out investigations on symbols and signs communicated by images (De Rosa, 2001; Arruda, 2009; Vasquez et al., 2019; Hakoköngäs and Hakanen, 2019). For De Rosa and Farr (2001), the images can be: 1) source of activation or construction of SR; 2) a product, the “iconic-symbolic” synthesis of representations, derived from the objectification process; or 3) a means of transmitting the content of thought, conveyed in different communication channels.

Images and videos of events such as the deaths of George Floyd, João Pedro and countless others have been disseminated on social media. The sharing of images in support of a movement, such as *Vidas Negras Importam*, are widely disseminated on social networks together with texts that highlight the position of Internet users. These are rich sources for comprehending social representations that circulate socially, reaching more people due to the characteristics of spread on the internet.

It is also understood that studying comments from Internet users on social networks can be particularly interesting in studies in the SR field, because in communications established through virtual social networks, a large number of people transmit messages to another large group of people through a system of intense and accelerated collective interaction in time and space. Furthermore, the dissemination of these processes is also accelerated. There is autonomy for individuals and groups in the selection of information, in the elaboration and in the transmission of messages. Studying these comments, therefore, allows the processes of elaboration and expression of SRs through other modes besides discourses and practices to be observed (Alaya, 2016).

Other studies on social representations have already been carried out using textual corpus derived from twitter hashtags, such as the study by Delouvé (2016) with “#jesuischarlie”, on the terrorist attacks in Paris, France, with emphasis on the attack on the headquarters of the satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*; and the study by Ratinaud (2016) of “#mariagepourtous” related to the project on same sex marriage that had been presented to the Council of Ministers, also in France, and a study on the SRs of happiness on Instagram (De Paola et al., 2019). The study by Wilkins et al. (2019) examined 326 Tweets with #Blacklivesmatter, with the aim of understanding how rhetorical functions used in social networks by social movements to enable social change, identified the attempt to delegitimize the movement and racial inequality in some tweets. It is, then, a data source already used by scholars of the Social Representations Theory (SRT).

Twitter is a social network that makes it possible to understand social thinking about certain themes emerging in the social discourse due to its indexing tools for the flow of messages through hashtags¹ or keywords. Sampling is made possible by collecting all spontaneous conversations and discourses linked to the hashtags. The tweets can also be used as a form of masking, and allow access to social representations without the effect of social desirability, due to the feeling of anonymity provided by the internet (Ratinaud, 2016). The social network Twitter is, therefore, a rich source of access to social representations.

The hashtags make it possible to have access to several discourses on a topic that is being debated socially. It is understood that a topic was or is circulating among Twitter users, and is being debated online by the population, through Trending Topics, a sort of ranking of the platform itself on the terms and hashtags most mentioned in users’ tweets. The “#VidasNegrasImportam” rose and remained on the Trending Topics of Brazil, emerging as a way to highlight the practices of violence against black bodies and also in an attempt to stop the black genocide experienced in the country (Silva, 2020).

¹ The term hashtag corresponds to keywords preceded by the # symbol.

1.2 *This study*

Considering the importance of discussing racism and violence, along with the political aspects associated with these phenomena evidenced by #VidasNegrasImportam, tweets that used this hashtag were collected in order to answer the following questions: What are the main contents of Twitter posts marked with the hashtag VidasNegrasImportam in Brazil? How does the # become tangible (objectification) and how is it attributed to one or more meanings (anchoring) in these posts?

2. Method

This was a qualitative study in the form of documentary research. The data sources for this type of study are various styles of written materials (Lüdke & André, 1986), from legal documents to texts from social networks. The study took place in two stages, a first stage in which we collected posts in the form of text associated with #VidasNegrasImportam and a second stage in which we collected images associated with this same hashtag. Both materials, texts and images, are important sources of analysis of social representations, thus, analytically we use different methods in order to complement the analysis of the results, for the both sources complement each other. After all, the objectification process of the social representations creates a figurative nucleus of abstract ideas. And by mobilizing contents about an object of representation, the people activate lexical contents and a directory of mental images (Moliner, 2016).

The collection took place on Twitter's advanced search platform, inserting the hashtag to be collected, filtering for the "Portuguese" language, only main tweets, no replies and retweets, with a time delimitation of May 27, the date on which the movement started mainly due to the death of George Floyd, in the United States, until June 8, to contemplate the Brazilian demonstrations.

All tweets were collected manually by two of the authors to circumvent the "bubble" effect of social networks and inserted into a corpus containing the texts and images. Subsequently, the texts were inserted into another file with the command and format lines for the corpus to be analyzed using the software IRaMuTeQ - Interface de R pour les Analyses Multidimensionnelles de Textes et de Questionnaires (Ratinaud, 2009) version 0.7 alpha 2. All tweets uploaded by Twitter at the time of data collection were included in the research, and the present study analyzed texts and images. In total, 1603 tweets were collected, of which 1603 had textual content and 1337 images. With regard to images, after excluding repetitions, 1051 remained for analysis.

The textual data were analyzed by Descending Hierarchical Classification (DHC) through the IRaMuTeQ program (Ratinaud, 2009). This is a lexical analysis that makes it possible to understand the contexts of the vocabularies and segments of texts that share the vocabularies (Camargo & Justo, 2013) associated with profiles of people, companies, groups, fan clubs, NGOs and collective movements.

The analysis of the images followed the three-step model proposed by Moliner (2016). First, a systematic inventory was elaborated with the forms present in the images of the corpus, which correspond to the elements present in the images, whether objects, people, places or other identified components, and the data were inserted in a spreadsheet. Based on this information,

the frequency of each form and the number of different forms were calculated, in order to identify the diversity of the corpus. The second step sought to recognize the patterns and combinations of forms that identify the patterns of the corpus from the forms with the highest saturation. Finally, the third step consisted of formulating hypotheses regarding the elements of the corpus, and testing the hypotheses by comparing scores and classifying the images according to their origin and standards.

A total of 61 different forms were identified in the 1337 images that made up the study corpus. After identifying the forms, two judges categorized the images. The first analysis obtained an agreement of 77% according to the calculation of concordance between judges by Holsti (1969). After discussing the coding between the judges again, the level of agreement increased to 99%.

In addition, the calculation of the frequency of the forms and lexicometric analysis was performed to estimate the diversity of the corpus, considering the 1337 images, as the repetitions of images demonstrate the sharing and dissemination of certain forms on the social networks. Finally, the identification of the patterns and combinations from forms with greater saturation present in the corpus was carried with the analysis of the main components (Moliner, 2016).

3. Results

The corpus was composed of 1603 tweets with textual content, of which 474 were posted through the personal profiles of women, 432 men, 312 through fan clubs, 174 undetermined, 110 through company profiles, 8 from NGOs and 93 from other collective movements. The variables used in the command lines were the type of profile (male, female, fan club, etc.). This corpus was divided into 1620 text segments (TS) through the lexicographic analysis of Descending Hierarchical Classification (DHC), which retained 83.72% of the TS. In a first partition, the DHC divided the corpus, separating class 4 from the rest, then, in a second partition, the analysis separated class 3 from the others and, finally, there was a division of classes 1 and 2. Figure 1 shows the dendrogram with the classes, their frequency and the words that had the greatest association with the class.

Class 1 contained 42% of the TS. Tweets of group and fan club profiles were associated with the class. The words highlighted in the dendrogram represent the most frequent words and those with the highest association with the class. The importance can be seen of #VidasNegrasImportam, mainly in the dissemination of the understanding that this does not mean that black lives matter more, but that it is necessary to listen and understand the differences that make black people the majority of those killed by police violence, due to racism. The text segments also encompass the importance of the fight against racism and the need to go beyond following the hashtag on the internet, transposing the actions of this fight outside of the social networks. This class is linked to political issues that involve racist speeches by great leaders, which are echoed and repeated by the population. As an example of this class, there are the tweets:

“Only certainty of the day: if you say #VidasNegrasImportam and the person hurries to answer that all lives matter, you can know: he voted for and still defends the GENOCIDE, the one that never gave importance to life.” (Personal profile, male gender).

“A sad black man in the service of racism, which is one of the great flags of the current government. The #VidasNegrasImportam movement does not imply that our lives are the most

important, but that we deserve THE SAME importance as all others. In practice, it STILL doesn't happen!" (Personal profile, female gender).

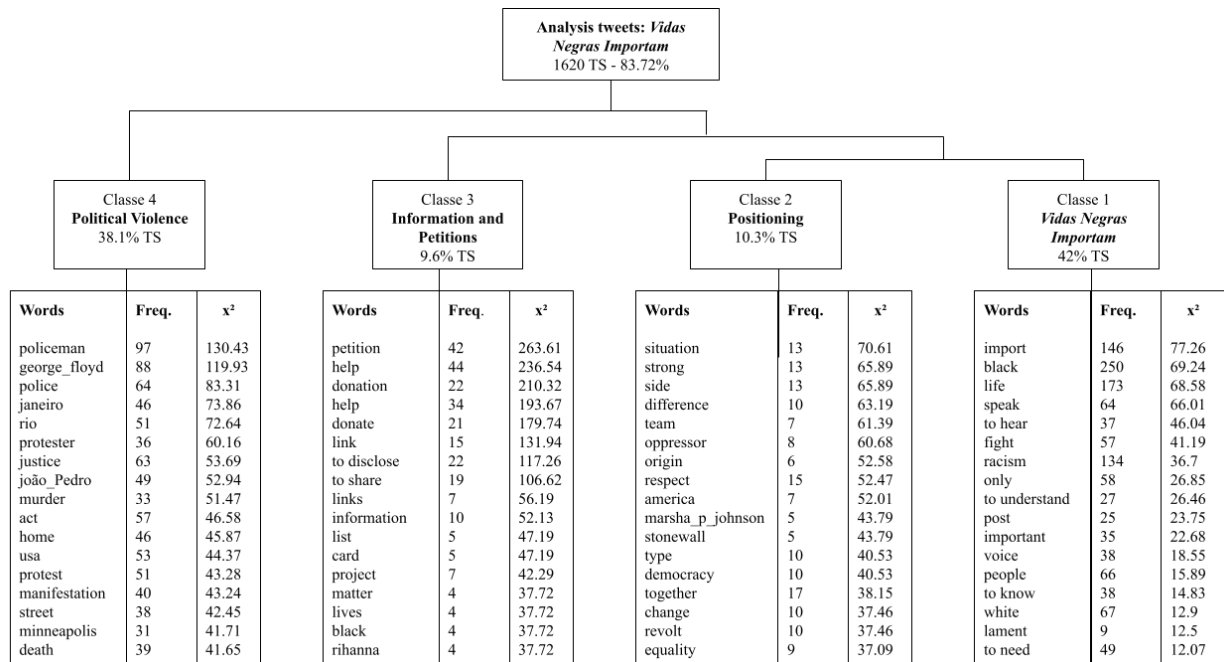


Figure 1. Dendrogram of the corpus with tweets linked to the hashtag

Class 2, had 10.3% of the TS and was mainly associated with profiles of fan clubs of artists, celebrities and sports teams. In this class there was an exposure of the position of their idols regarding police violence and racism. There were tweets related to non-neutrality in the aforementioned situations, indicating that to be silent is to be on the side of the oppressor, and there are also strength tweets, encouraging unity despite differences, to strengthen the fight against social injustices. These aspects are exemplified in the following tweets: "No to racism. No to homophobia. No prejudice, whatever it may be. The difference unites us, respect does not separate us! Together we are stronger! #VidasNegrasImportam" (Series fan club profile). "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor! We are anti-fascist, we are in favor of democracy, and we are above all: #VidasNegrasImportam!" (Videogame fan club profile).

Class 3 presented 9.6% of the TS and was mainly composed of tweets from fan clubs. These were TS related to asking for support for petitions related to requests for justice for deaths and donations, objectifying the struggle in projects aimed at the black population. There was also the dissemination of links to informational sites on racism and information about the necessary care in the demonstrations due to possible reprisals. An example of this class is: "Be sure to sign and disclose the petitions available on the link below, if you can, donate to Brazilian projects also available on the link. Use your voice. #VidasNegrasImportam" (Music fan club profile).

Finally, class 4 comprised 38.1% of the text segments that corresponded mainly to the personal profiles of men and women, companies and social movements. The tweets were related to the police violence that caused the death of George Floyd, and to a context of intense police violence

in Rio de Janeiro, in addition to the demonstrations and acts in the search for justice for the countless cases of racism and police violence. Examples of tweets associated with this class are: “George Floyd was choked to death by a police officer in the USA. Another black man brutally murdered by the racist police. It is the same reality here. The black population is responding with revolt in the streets. Everyone supports our brothers! #VidasNegrasImportam” (Personal profile, male gender). “Black is the root of freedom! Anti-racist demonstration in Rio de Janeiro. Protesters denounce policies to exterminate the black population in Rio’s shanty towns. How many more will need to die for this war to end?” (Company profile).

3.1 Analysis of the images

The analysis of the 1337 images identified 61 different forms, the lexicometric analysis was performed by calculating the number of different forms divided by the total number of identified forms, which indicated a relatively homogeneous corpus through the value of .44. According to Moliner (2016), values closer to zero denote a more homogeneous corpus, while those closer to 1 equate to a more heterogeneous corpus with different forms. The frequency calculation for each of the forms was performed, which varied between a frequency of 1 - it appeared in one image (0.07%) at a frequency of 421 - it appeared in 421 images (31.48%). The forms that had a frequency higher than 59 images (4.41%) were considered in the analysis of the main components. This value was stipulated considering the significant increase in frequency from this number of repetitions and enabled the identification of 15 forms with greater saturation in the corpus, shown in Table 1. These forms with greater saturation were present in 1061 images, representing 79.35% of the images that made up the corpus.

Table 1. Forms with greater saturation in the image corpus

Form	Frequency	%
Protests/demonstrations	420	31.41
Support posters	207	15.48
Closed fist	161	12.04
Phrase “Vidas Negras Importam” or “Black Lives Matter”	159	11.89
Renowned black artist(s), sportspeople, and/or figures	99	7.40
Anti-racist illustrations/comic strips and/or of support for the movement	97	7.25
Message of support for the movement	86	6.43
Car/building on fire	81	6.05
Black person/people murdered	81	6.05
Black child(ren)/adolescent(s) murdered	79	5.90
Posters of movements, companies, fan clubs, sports teams in support	75	5.60
Print of social networks of person talking about what happened	66	4.93
Image of following the movement with the words anti-fascist/anti-racist	61	4.56
Police officers at demonstrations	60	4.48
Text about white privilege and/or racism	59	4.41

The next step was to identify the patterns and combinations of the forms with the highest saturation presented in Table 1, to outline the patterns that structure the corpus, also called “factors”.

Four factors were identified and the forms used as the central focus of each factor were defined based on the analysis of the different combinations of forms and the identification of those that were shown to be central. Factor 1 focused on the form “protests and demonstrations”; factor 2 was based on the forms “black people, children and adolescents murdered”; the third factor focused on the forms “the ‘Vidas Negras Importam’ or ‘Black Lives Matter’ phrase” and “message of support for the movement”; finally, factor 4 was based on the form “anti-racist illustrations/comic strips and/or those in support of the movement”. It should be noted that each combination of the images was inserted in only one of the factors and that the 4 factors analyzed covered 35.7% of the image corpus. Table 2 presents the frequency of the form in each of the factors and indicates the variance of coverage of each of the factors in the corpus.

As identified in Table 2, factor 1 had the largest coverage variance and factor 2 the smallest. With regard to factor 1, there was a high frequency of the form “protests and demonstrations” associated with the form “support posters” and “closed fist”, which were used as symbols of support for the movement during the protests carried out, in order to strengthen the agenda in question. In this sense, it is also possible to observe the significant frequency with the form “car/building on fire”, which has consolidated itself as another symbol of the protests and demonstrations carried out.

Table 2. Coverage of the factors and frequency of the forms.

Forms	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
	f	f	f	f
Protests/demonstrations	292	0	30	5
Support posters	167	0	34	5
Closed fist	94	1	20	18
Phrase “Vidas Negras Importam” or “Black Lives Matter”	11	1	80	30
Renowned black artist(s), sportspeople, and/or figures	12	5	8	1
Anti-racist illustrations/comic strips and/or of support for the movement	0	0	0	55
Message of support for the movement	6	13	19	0
Car/building on fire	52	0	0	7
Black person/people murdered	3	29	0	21
Black child(ren)/adolescent(s) murdered	2	17	0	22
Posters of movements, companies, fan clubs, sports teams in support	2	1	31	1
Print of social networks of person talking about what happened	11	8	13	1
Image of following the movement with the words anti-fascist/anti-racist	0	0	0	0
Police officers at demonstrations	40	0	0	0
Text about white privilege and/or racism	1	0	11	0
Coverage variance	22.1%	2.5%	6.9%	4.1%

The frequency of the form “Renowned black artist(s), sportspeople, and/or figures” associated with form 1, is related to the presence of these people at protests in support of the movement. Another form present in relation to this factor is that of “police at demonstrations”, which appears in a dichotomous way, some tweets denounce reproductions of police violence while others show the support of the police for the protesters. The form “Print of social networks of a person talking about what happened” demonstrates the sharing to Twitter of information and highlights given to the theme on other social networks and platforms.

Regarding factor 2, there was a high frequency of association with the forms “black person/people murdered”, “black child(ren)/adolescent(s) murdered” and “message of support for the movement”, demonstrating how the images of victims of police violence were used to reinforce the importance of the movement and the urgency of the anti-racist struggle, as well as paying tribute to them. These images can also be interpreted as anchors behind symbols.

Associations referring to factor 3 between the forms “phrase ‘vidas negras importam’ or ‘black lives matter’” with “posters of movements, companies, fan clubs, sports teams in support”, “support posters” and “messages of support for the movement” confirm the large number of companies and civil-society groups that mobilized to support the movement. In the association with the categories “print of social networks of people talking about what happened” and “texts about privilege and/or racism”, the presence is evident of reflections that deepen the agenda and sharing information on various social networks. The phrase, which also represents the name of the movement, was widely used in the form of a “closed fist”, another symbol of the movement, in protests and demonstrations.

Finally, factor 4 associated “anti-racist illustrations/comic strips of support for the movement” with the forms “closed fist”, “the ‘vidas negras importam’ or ‘Black Lives Matter’ phrase”, “black person/people murdered” and “black child(ren)/adolescent(s) murdered” consolidating the above in relation to these categories as symbols of the movement, that is, making the abstract concrete, but also as a way for artists to pay homage to the murdered people.

It should be noted that the form “Image of following the movement with the words anti-fascist/anti-racist”, despite having a high frequency in the corpus, did not appear linked to any set of combinations of forms. Regarding the similarities and singularities of the textual and iconographic corpus, among the elements shared in common, the exposure of police violence and racism, the recent deaths of black people and the support for the movement in protests and demonstrations can be highlighted, as well as the support messages, illustrations, following the hashtag, exaltation of renowned black artists and figures and disclosures.

We also consider it important to point out images that could have been present but were not, for example, no images were present that pointed to reconciliation or reparation between groups of blacks and whites in Brazil. We understand that images of peaceful coexistence between these groups would be important for the construction of possible paths to peace between the groups.

4. Discussion

The present study aimed to understand the main content of Twitter posts marked with #VidasNegrasImportam (#BlackLivesMatter) in Brazil, in addition to verifying how the # became

tangible (objectification) and how it was attributed to one or more meanings (anchoring) in these posts, as well as investigating which dimensions of the Social Representations were constructed through the posts of this hashtag.

Accordingly, an analysis was made of the textual content of tweets related to the hashtag along with an analysis of the images associated with these tweets. The analyses made it possible to perceive different contents shared by Internet users that used the hashtag in their messages to talk about the *Vidas Negras Importam* movement and to associate them with Social Representations Theory. The data highlights the rise of the hashtag with tweets that address structural racism and diverse violence suffered by the black population. Other shared information refers to texts on privileges and racism disseminated through images on Twitter, in addition to the dissemination of sites of informational on these topics and on the movement in question. This was mainly observed in classes 1 and 3, and in the factors that contained images with text about privilege and racism.

It is important to note that Twitter has become an important platform for exposing political positionings (Park, 2013) and that in some cases the discussions become extremely politicized, with opposing opinions between different groups. In the present work, however, it should be highlighted that following #*VidasNegrasImportam*, demarcated beforehand belonging to an anti-racist group and being in favor of the defense of the rights of black populations, and for this reason we did not find messages contrary or in opposition to the cause. This is because an SR carries the traces of alliance and opposition relations inside and outside the group that expresses it, and these traces are manifested in a plot of SRs with a “sympathetic” shade that allows their quick concealment for the benefit of the objectification (Gaffié, 1997).

These data differ from the study by Wilkins et al. (2019) that examined 326 Tweets with #*Blacklivesmatter*. The authors evaluated the rhetorical functions present in social networks and realized points of disagreement regarding the social movements’ goals and about the racial inequality. It means that the social representations of the theme are not shared among Internet users surveyed. The study shows 3 points of disagreement about the goals of the social movement: 1) who are responsible for the injustice: the police was the most prominent category in the tweets, pointed out at an intergroup level by “police violence”, but also the researchers observed tweets that antagonize the good and the bad police officer, locating the deviants and minimizing the prevalence of police violence; 2) the study points as targets of injustice disadvantaged groups like the black people. Although some tweets contest the limitation of this term, asking for a definition without limits of race, it can be seen as an attempt to delegitimize the movement. Then there are tweets that show why “white lives” are not the focus of the movement; and 3) the nature of the problem: some tweets argue about police brutality from a viewpoint of moral deviation and injustice, other tweets point to the intergroup and racial nature of racism issues.

In this present study, social representations widely shared on Twitter involve content referring to police violence, racist acts and murdered black children, adolescents and adults, with recent and past situations. In the images, various contents emerged, such as the sharing of the faces of the murdered black people, which objectifies the violence and racism in its most extreme form, by taking their lives. Netizens also highlighted the importance of the anti-racist struggle, anchoring this need in racist speeches by world political leaders and prints of racist events on social networks, along with these specific cases reported.

Besides that, images that have become symbols of the Vidas Negras Importam movement also stand out, including the clenched fist, which appears in protests and images, on posters of companies and movements in support, on posters in protests and demonstrations or in illustrations and comic strips. These images can also be interpreted as anchors behind symbols. Understanding that anchoring connects a topic to common sense and makes the topic understandable Hakoköngäs & Sakki (2016), in this case where and how violence against the black population occurs in Brazil. In addition to being objectified as a symbol of the Vidas Negras Importam movement, the closed fist demonstrates the attitude of support for the movement.

Social Representations Theory is a theory of connection among the social realities, represented in this work by tweets and images, and group membership. From this type of work, we can see that Twitter Internet users were more inclined to retweet the messages corresponding to their position (Ratinaud, 2016). An analysis of this retweet practice can allow the communities that form the outlines of the opinion groups to be determined (Smyrnaiois & Ratinaud, 2014).

It is also worth highlighting the movement for the valorization of black culture in following the hashtag with the sharing of images of renowned black artists, sportspeople and figures, in the dissemination of projects and works of black people and in the sharing of their own photos, showing themselves as black people in support of the movement.

Police violence was one of the most shared content among Internet users, both in the textual content and in the iconographic materials. The images containing policemen appeared in a dichotomous manner, on one hand they presented reproductions of police violence and, on the other, police officers' support for the protesters. In its first presentation they were anchored in the death of George Floyd, the trigger of the movement in the year 2020, together with the dissemination of countless cases that contemplate the Brazilian reality (already mentioned), objectified in the images of the faces of these murdered or violated people. From these dimensions, there is also an unfavorable attitude towards this violence, which is readily expressed in social networks or through the participation of street protests and demonstrations. The images that refer to the police officers' support for the protesters, on the other hand, report the possibilities of new social practices by police organizations, which rethink structural racism and police violence.

The historical genesis of the formation of the police institution and the institutional architecture of the Brazilian public security system makes this institution, by condition, a promoter of violence. That is, it is not a matter of individualizing violence in the figure of the police, but of understanding the process of militarization of the social issue, as well as "the psychological suffering to which the public security professional is subjected, pressured to give immediate responses to a structural problem that is difficult to be effectively faced within the framework of a society that produces inequalities" (Cruz et al., 2017, p. 245).

In summary, the SRs of the Vidas Negras Importam movement through the analysis of the textual and iconic material published on Twitter were strongly marked by identity and political processes to support the movement, from a call for the necessary resistance in relation to the violence directed toward the black population in the Brazil. The photographs and images materialize abstract phenomena, and the ease of sharing this material on social networks makes images key elements in the production of everyday concepts (Joffé, 2008; Hakoköngäs et al., 2020).

We believe that the analyzed data contribute to understanding how this group uses communication through hashtags and how it organizes itself with protests against racism in Brazil and how social representations contribute to this collective action with a view to social change (Batel & Castro, 2015). We believe that the texts and images analyzed here anchor and objectify the fight against racism in Brazilian society. Furthermore, using the SRT for such analysis can contribute to give visibility to the processes of agency and resistance against racism as well as in the co-construction of the self-identity of black Brazilian people. And also, it's important to remember that representations not only influence people's daily practices, but constitute these practices (Howarth, 2006). According to Howarth and Hook (2005), when others have a negative representation of our group, such as dangerous or deviant, we try to find strategies to resist and reject such representations, protecting our self-identity. This points to the creative way in which this group of Brazilians used the hashtag to resist racist ideology and practices in Brazil. In this way, the act of representing through the tweeter makes social criticism and resistance possible.

Different groups have different roles in the co-construction of social reality in the public sphere (Jovchelovitch, 1997). So the reification and legitimation of the knowledge system include different levels of social inclusion/exclusion (Howarth, 2001) So we can think that the knowledge shared in these images and tweets about racism and violence in Brazil was built by an underprivileged group and supporters, who want the change of the hegemonic SR that permeate these realities. These constructions of meaning through this hashtag are directed to the other, that is, to all Brazilians who are not yet concerned with violence directed at black people in the country, or even those who commit such violence.

5. Final considerations

This study did not intend to exhaust the discussion on racism and violence in Brazil, however, we consider that analyses of the SRs in mass media such as Twitter are a fertile field for reflections on this complex phenomenon, as this allows the analysis of the construction of these SRs through the established communication processes, the implicit meanings and the iconic material produced by social groups.

In the case of this study, we observed the widely favorable attitude of Internet users regarding the Vidas Negras Importam Movement, objectifying and anchoring the movement in situations of violence and racism and pointed to the importance of the anti-racist struggle in the murder of black people, racist events on social networks and in racist speeches of political leaders. The hashtag was also widely used to disseminate information about the movement, racism and privileges. It should be noted that the movement was objectified through the closed fist symbol, widely used in shared iconic materials.

In addition to illustrating how the Vidas Negras Importam movement is objectified, anchored and organized on Twitter, the results of the present study have theoretical implications for the scientific study of the current ways in which the knowledge of # is socially formed. Contemporary collective mobilizations, especially those organized in a virtual way - as in the movement that was the focus of this article - demand new theoretical and methodological perspectives in the study of social movements and collective actions.

In addition, an analysis that combines textual or lexicographic analysis with image analysis can provide tools that are conducive to the everyday understanding of social movements through Twitter or other social networks. It is also important to take into account the specific characteristics of social media, in terms of aesthetics and elements related to linguistic and cultural contexts, to achieve a deeper comprehension of the underlying meaning of social communication in today's social arenas.

Acknowledgement

Post-Graduate Program in Psychology at the Federal University of Santa Catarina.

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