

# THE CRIMINALIZATION OF THE IMMIGRANT COLLECTIVE IN THE PRESS DISCOURSE

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## **Abstract**

The press discourse about migrations, often contains simplification, prejudices, partial vision, and ambiguity. In this article we have used the methodologies of analysis of content and critical analysis of discourse to study the press discourse about immigrant collective. It is perceived how, as a reflection of political discourse, while there is a proactive discourse with migrations, minority, there is a robust and growing reactive approach, that, using subtle linguistic tools, negative and often criminalizing image of the immigrant collective. The main guidelines and examples of good practices for this purpose are also detailed.

## **Keywords**

Press speech. Criminalization and immigration. Image of the immigrant collective. Discursive racism. Critical discourse analysis.

## **Summary**

1. Introduction 2. Analysis of the issuing subject 3. Empirical analysis of the press in Spain: El Mundo and El País 4. Proposals for good practices in the press treatment of immigration and cultural diversity 4. Conclusion

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The press discourse on migration is often characterized by simplification, failure to consider the complexity of concepts, bias and over-simplification of the phenomenon. According to Van Dijk, the image of migrants, minorities, refugees and everything that represents otherness, in the discourse promoted by the elites responds to a series of features. The first of these is *the general strategy of positive self-representation and negative presentation of the other*<sup>2</sup>. The difference between "us" and "them" is nuclear and is clearly perceived in the themes, lexicon, hyperbole, euphemisms, disclaimers, narrative, argumentation, images and other properties of the discourse. The representation of "the others" usually emphasizes a set of stereotypical themes such as irregular immigration, difficulties in the reception of immigrants and in their integration into the host society, criminal acts, drugs and abject behaviors that are associated with the immigrant set. As a whole, everything that has to do with difference, deviation and threat is emphasized, conveying a vision that *a priori* criminalizes the immigrant collective.

In the strategy of positive self-representation, especially in the discourse of the elites, the maneuver to deny racism in a taxing manner or, at least, to dilute it, is fundamental. When it is addressed in the press, it is generally referred to as biological racism. That crude, crude and ostentatious racism that is sustained only from the most

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<sup>2</sup> VAN DIJK 2006, 15-34.

extreme positions and is rejected by most of public opinion. However, news about the racism of the dominant groups is rarely reproduced. There is an important lack of self-critical news about the reactive and criminalizing discourse present in the press itself.

Discourses dealing with minorities are essentially in the hands of white elites. Minority people have virtually no access, representation, or influence on what is written or said about them. And when they do, they are not given the credibility and status they deserve as the protagonists of what is being told. Stories about them are usually biased and conditioned by ingroup considerations, judgments, and biases. Likewise, there is hardly any presence of professionals belonging to minorities in the newsrooms, much less in managerial positions. Thus, the discourse of the press is gestated in an exclusionary environment from the outset.

On the other hand, the discourses on minorities that we observe in the press are rarely addressed to the very minorities they describe. They generally ignore them as potential receiving agents. The most negative aspects are emphasized and hardly any attention is paid to the problems experienced by immigrants, their lives, their work, their conditions, their contribution to the country's economy. Van Dijk elaborates on this, stating that *the European press in general does not define the ethnic situation in terms of the ethnic protagonists themselves*<sup>3</sup>. The vindictive discourse, formulated and issued by the

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<sup>3</sup> VAN DIJK 2006, 15-34.

ex-group, by "them", is generally perceived as uncomfortable and destabilizing and is usually limited in its transmission process.

## 2 ANALYSIS OF THE ISSUING SUBJECT

Bañón Hernández makes a very enlightening analysis of three types of discourse on immigration that are fundamental to understanding its treatment in the media<sup>4</sup>. The first is the vindictive discourse, formulated by "them", the ex-group. The other two, very different from each other, are formulated by "us", the ingroup: the committed discourse and the discriminatory discourse. In the analysis of the journalistic representation of the discourse of vindication and the vindicators, Bañón points out mechanisms and actions that the media usually use to distort it, reducing its significance, validity, credibility, legitimacy, depth or, as a whole, its mobilizing force. In the first place, the suppression of the discourse of demands and of the claimants. The choice is made to annul or minimize the discourse, "not to let it be said". However, once the protest discourse has been produced, its representation can also be hindered by giving it spaces with low audiences, publishing articles on inside pages, jamming radio frequencies, preventing the public from listening to the speeches, etc. It is a matter of not facilitating the transmission of the message under the right conditions. On many occasions, the absence of direct claims by immigrants is justified by the lack of knowledge of the Spanish

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<sup>4</sup> BAÑÓN HERNÁNDEZ 2002.

language, an issue that could be solved without major problems using simultaneous translation or subtitles.

A very common recourse is to state the existence of the claim and then omit its content, thus diluting the claim discourse. It is reported that there is or has been an act of protest, but there is no mention of its causes, its arguments, its claims. In this way, it is made to appear that immigrants have a voice, thus projecting a democratic image of "us" - the positive self-representation of which Van Dijk speaks - but no reference is made to the substance of the message they intend to convey.

Another way of discrediting the vindictive discourse or its issuers is what Bañón calls semantic-pragmatic displacement. It consists of using semantic associations and metaphors to associate immigration with areas such as begging, violence or even entertainment, and to focus attention on them. In this way, the vindictive content of the complaint is blurred and the credibility of its authors is undermined. If the act of protest has also been complicated by some kind of violent altercation or has had a tone that is somewhat out of the purely vindictive, it is also often used to dilute the claim.

Sometimes its authorship can be manipulated by presenting it as the work of immigration aid associations, NGOs or other social actors always belonging to the ingroup. In this way, the capacity of the claimants to associate and carry out approaches in a normalized manner is devalued and it is implied that the claim has been produced as a self-criticism that comes from "us", not as a claim from "them".

Immigrants are sometimes portrayed in the media as people whose demands are exaggerated, who have come with too high expectations of what can be offered to them and who are unwilling to negotiate or compromise.

The end of the Cold War brought with it, in addition to the resolution of many international tensions, the end of a series of well-established textual and semantic habits within the media sphere<sup>5</sup> that gradually mutated to become part of other frames of reference such as ethnicity<sup>6</sup> or Islamic terrorism<sup>7</sup>, which directly or indirectly affect immigration. The media itself has contributed to this, especially with the representation of immigrants of Arab origin and their association with Islamism. On the other hand, the word illegal is one of the most frequently used words to refer to immigrants. Placing so much emphasis on the immigrant-illegal association<sup>8</sup> stigmatizes people of foreign origin and conceptually places them within the framework of criminality, linking them with dangerousness, threat or disturbance.

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<sup>5</sup> For a more exhaustive knowledge of the Cold War, and the propaganda strategies created around it, see: GADDIS 2008; LAFEBER 1987; VEIGA 1997; ARON 1990; HIXSON 1997; SAUNDERS 2001; NEVILLE 1995; SNYDER 1995.

<sup>6</sup> SEATON 2000, 29-59. *Op. cit.* in BAÑÓN HERNÁNDEZ 2002, 170.

<sup>7</sup> On the identification of the Islamic world with terrorism, it is of great interest: CHOMSKY 1984; about the "Islamization" of international terrorism: GIORDANO 2000, 77-88.

<sup>8</sup> The association of immigration with marginality and delinquency has been highlighted by, among others: CASERO RIPOLLÉS 2007, 69-90.

This promotes depersonalization and unjustified criminalization of the immigrant and serves as a further rationale for fear and prevention.

The biased selection of situations, anecdotes, examples and testimonies can contribute to the reproduction of numerous clichés and prejudices. Sometimes the idea of inactivity or lack of interest on the part of marginalized groups is intensified as the cause of their situation. In this way, they are presented as the only ones responsible for their situation and other external factors that may have had an influence are avoided. Another of the most frequently used resources is to present marginalized people as people who do not distinguish between the indispensable and the superfluous, who take advantage of public benefits, who squander their resources, or who prefer to devote themselves to leisure activities rather than to covering their basic needs.<sup>9</sup>

All these are ways, strategies and tools that are too often used to diminish the vindictive charge of the discourse of immigrants, to place

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<sup>9</sup> Bañón's example is taken from an article published in *El Mundo* in February 2000 (SIMÓN 2000, 39): *In the same context [the dramatic riots in El Ejido], on February 26 we read: "Once a momentary peace has been signed, the people go on with their lives. This is the case of Karim, who has not touched a bell pepper plant since the outbreak of the racist coven. It is the case of Ahmed, who lost his most precious treasure: a transistor to listen to Deportivo de La Coruña's goals". Did Ahmed say that the transistor was his most precious treasure or does the journalist interpret it?* In: BAÑÓN HERNÁNDEZ 2002, 185.

"them" in delegitimized positions and to make a representation of "us" in which we are relieved of all responsibility in these processes. In this way, the image projected of the vindictive discourse is substantially blurred, it is significantly reduced, and a substantial part of its mobilizing potential is lost.

The discourse of commitment is elaborated from the "we", members of the endogroup who are interested in the processes and situations derived from the migratory phenomenon, who manifest themselves and act to respond to the needs of immigrants and who try to contribute to their integration into Spanish society. The representation of this phenomenon by the press does not cease to condition the message and the image transmitted, both discourse itself and of its issuers. The first particularly significant characteristic is the hyperbolic image of commitment in Spain. As previously mentioned, most of the professionals working in the mainstream media who deal with the subject of immigration do not belong to immigrant groups, but tend to be Spaniards belonging to a medium-high socio-cultural level. Thus, in accordance with the positive self-representation of which Van Dijk speaks, it is natural that they tend to emphasize the positive image of the autochthonous group. This is particularly clear when dealing with topics such as Spanish solidarity with the Third World, aid to refugees or commitment to ethnic minorities.

The manipulation of the tones of commitment can give rise to different interpretations of the intensity of what is being said. The tone of the committed discourse can be raised or lowered with various resources. For example, when one verb is selectively replaced by



another: claim, ask, appeal, denounce, demand, request, request, require, urge, etc. Also when what is requested or requested for immigrants is reduced or not mentioned in the headline.

Acts such as a communiqué, a press conference, a demonstration or a lock-in are usually carried out jointly by claimants and committed agents. This increases the number of participants, unifies the discourse and gives the event itself greater persuasiveness. Greater social awareness is achieved if the denunciation of discrimination or the demand for a particular right comes not only from people in the ex-group, but also from members of the in-group. However, sometimes this discursive co-responsibility is omitted by removing one of the two agents from its authorship: either the committed agent, reducing the importance of the commitment component coming from the majority endogroup; or the vindicating agent, reducing the value of the vindicating component of the enunciated message.

The use of the indirect style can give rise to semantic variations that modify the appearance of the assessments made by the actors involved about immigration, immigrants or their approaches. In this way, words, expressions and reasoning that they have not stated can be attributed to them, thus projecting a more or less delegitimized image.

The discriminatory discourse<sup>10</sup> is the opposite side of the discourse of commitment. Both are formulated from the sphere of "us". Their bearers are members of the dominant endogroup. However, both reflect very different mental universes and conceptions of human beings and intergroup relations. In the media's treatment of this discourse, certain shortcomings denounced by Bañón can also be perceived, which should be noted. Discriminatory discourse sometimes finds in the media a platform that allows it to arouse interest and obtain free publicity, which, regardless of the evaluations obtained, is considered a real success by its promoters.

Sometimes the news is presented in such a way that it seems that a series of objective realities exist, such as the economic crisis, unemployment, the growth of immigration or the increase in citizen insecurity, which result in violent reactions by minorities of groups linked to extreme right-wing ideological positions. In this sense, *the justification of racist and xenophobic aggressions by means of elusion or discursive attenuation is an emblematic case of this type of non-negative assessment of discriminatory behavior*<sup>11</sup>. In order to provoke this attenuation, there are formulas such as relating an aggression to the fact that the aggressor had a history of aggression; giving special importance to the statements of other members of the ingroup who highlight the aggressor's qualities in their daily behavior, attention

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<sup>10</sup> On discriminatory and racist discourse, see: VAN DIJK 1997; BAÑÓN HERNÁNDEZ 1996; CALVO BUEZAS 2000; DÍEZ NICOLÁS 1999.

<sup>11</sup> BAÑÓN HERNÁNDEZ 2002, 267.

that is not usually given to members of the outgroup; or even presenting aggressors as mentally disturbed, as disoriented youths or as marginalized minorities.

Finally, there is a concept, the "settling of scores", which is sometimes used in an exaggerated manner to classify certain violent events, which does not always correspond to the reality of what happened and which produces the pernicious effect of gratuitous criminalization of the immigrant and, by extension, the entire group. The "settling of scores", which is widely used in violent acts linked to crime, implies that prior to the aggression there was inappropriate behavior on the part of the assaulted, which is not always true. It is an expression that should be used with great caution if one does not want to fall into defamation. However, on many occasions, it is used as an almost automatic formula that distorts reality and has the sometimes disturbing and pernicious effect of identifying the aggressor and the aggrieved as members of the same category.

These are all characteristics that can be appreciated if we critically analyze the journalistic discourse on immigration in Spain. Within a global, overall assessment, two priority groups are perceived: on the one hand "us", the endogroup, the native host society; and on the other hand "them", the ex-group, the collective formed by all immigrants. The treatment that "they" receive by the Spanish press has, as has been said, a series of common elements to a greater or lesser extent. However, if we stop to observe the differentiated treatment of the members of the different nationalities or, rather, ethnic groups that make up the immigrant collective, we can also appreciate certain

peculiarities that may occur to a greater or lesser extent depending on the nationality in question.

### 3 EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PRESS IN SPAIN: EL MUNDO AND EL PAÍS

Zapata-Barrero proposes an analysis of the political discursive framework in Spain with respect to immigration based on two categories: the reactive discourse and the proactive discourse. The reactive discourse reacts against the process of historical change towards multiculturalism brought about by immigration, seeking to reestablish the monocultural past; it perceives the arrival of immigrants as something negative; and it assumes a population frame of reference in which priority is given to the citizen population as opposed to non-citizens. The proactive discourse assumes the process of historical change towards multiculturalism, trying to contribute to its normalization and success; perceives the arrival of immigrants as an opportunity and a challenge to be faced; and takes a frame of reference in which the interests of the entire population are taken into account, regardless of whether they are citizens or non-citizens<sup>12</sup>.

In his doctoral thesis, the author of this article conducted an exhaustive analysis of the journalistic discourse in Spain with respect to immigration and cultural diversity. For this purpose, he analyzed the news published on this topic by the two newspapers with the

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<sup>12</sup> See: ZAPATA-BARRERO 2008, 117-157.

highest circulation and impact in Spain, the newspapers El Mundo and El País, between 2008 and 2010, which were the years in which the political discourse on immigration shifted from a more sensitive position towards the situation of the immigrant community to more restrictive policies. This work, published in 2012<sup>13</sup>, shows that the journalistic discourse gives great importance to issues such as irregular immigration, the underground economy or crime, aspects that devalue or criminalize the image of the immigrant, and, however, pays less attention to denouncing restrictions on the rights of immigrants and, in particular, workers. There is a contrast between the receptiveness shown by the national press to the negative aspects referring to immigration and the aspects that offer a more positive vision of it or to the vindictive and committed agents.

Common features can be perceived in the discourses of the media chosen for the press analysis and certain divergent elements that emerge as a product of different editorial lines. Thus, with nuances and exceptions, El Mundo, which is known to be close to the PP<sup>14</sup>, shows a greater coverage of the discourse that tends to hyperbolize the volume of immigration; it reproduces to a greater extent news, events, happenings, demonstrations, which offer a representation of the immigrant associated to illegality and even to criminality occasionally;

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<sup>13</sup> GARRIDO RODRÍGUEZ 2012.

<sup>14</sup> Hegemonic party of the center-right in Spanish democracy.

it echoes the protests against the Reform of the Immigration Law<sup>15</sup> and against the extension of the stay in the Centers for the Internment of Foreigners<sup>16</sup> ; reflects in a neutral or positive tone the change in the PSOE's discourse<sup>17</sup> on immigration, more hardened, in order to underline its confluence with the positions of the PP in some of its budgets, during the second legislature; it is more explicit and insists to a greater extent on the divergences between the leaders of the PSOE on migratory matters; supports or is more favorable to the European paradigm of immigration management, which emphasizes the control of migratory flows and bets on a selective immigration in the labor field, in line with the PP and reference countries in Europe such as France and Germany; it includes news in which the contributions of immigrants to the productive system and to the Welfare State are highlighted. In the field of education, El Mundo frequently stresses the negative repercussions of immigrant students and their integration difficulties; it criticizes the concentration of immigrant students in certain centers and, however, it is wary of the possibility of segregating newly arrived foreign students in special centers, as has

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<sup>15</sup> HEAD OF STATE. *Organic Law 2/2009, of December 11, 2009, reforming Organic Law 4/2000, of January 11, on the rights and freedoms of foreigners in Spain and their social integration*. BOE No. 299, of December 12, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> The Law 2/2009 extends the maximum period of stay in the Center for Internment of Foreigners (CIE), in which immigrants in an irregular situation are interned while their expulsion file is being studied. The fact that an administrative infraction, such as the fact of not being regularized, implies internment in this type of center has been harshly criticized by many associations and NGOs.

<sup>17</sup> Main party of the center-left in Spain.

been proposed and put into practice in Catalonia; it echoes good practices in intercultural education. With regard to cultural diversity, the "one size fits all" policy leads it to accommodate a wide range of opinions, including those of people from other cultures who explain their cultural identities and share their experiences; it collects the explanations of experts, scholars and people from other cultures, who explain their cultural identities, refute false beliefs and share experiences; it reproduces and celebrates examples of good intercultural practices; it is tolerant or criticizes in a lax manner initiatives such as the integration contracts, proposed by the PP on the lines of the contracts promoted in France.

In El País, which, as is well known, is sympathetic to the PSOE, the presence of a discourse that tends to hyperbolize the volume of immigration can also be observed, as and when necessary. Occasionally, although to a lesser extent than in El Mundo, the dissemination of news, events, happenings and demonstrations that offer a representation of the immigrant associated with illegality or criminality is perceived. On the other hand, in an effort to appear as an independent media, in line with an image of center-left, it reproduces and joins the criticism against the Reform of the Immigration Law and especially against the Immigration Detention Centers and the extension of the period of stay in them; It criticizes harshly initiatives such as the integration contracts for foreigners, both in Spain and in Europe; it is more critical than El Mundo with the changes in the PSOE's position regarding immigration and its rapprochement with the PP in the second legislature and, when dealing with the divergences between the political leaders of the

PSOE on immigration issues, it is less incisive than El Mundo. It criticizes, however, those aspects of European Migration Law which it considers undermining the rights of immigrants, especially in issues such as the Return Directive or the Blue Card Directive; it gives ample space to news which make explicit the contributions of immigrants to the productive system and to the Welfare State, offering a broad vision of immigration and its implications and dismantling false beliefs. Within the educational field, it gathers data that speak of a higher rate of school failure on the part of immigrant students and of a negative impact on the global statistics of school failure, but it does not associate it so much to the students themselves, but rather relates it to management phenomena such as the concentration of immigrant students, the ghettoization in certain centers and the shortcomings of the educational system to respond to the new pluricultural reality; criticizes initiatives such as school segregation of newly arrived foreign students in Educational Welcome Spaces, despite being defended by some PSOE leaders, such as the then Minister of Labor and Immigration, Celestino Corbacho, and echoes and celebrates good practices in interculturality. Within the field of cultural diversity, it criticizes the politicization of sensitive issues such as the veil, in line with the then Vice-President of the PSOE Government, M<sup>a</sup> Teresa Fernández de la Vega; it reproduces the contributions of people from other cultures who explain certain aspects related to their cultural identity and share experiences and, above all, it gathers the explanations of experts and scholars belonging to different cultures who try to clarify aspects related to diverse cultural identities, refute false beliefs and share experiences; it gathers, to a greater extent than El Mundo, studies, research, events, opinions, testimonies that offer a



more conciliatory vision between Islam and Western democracies and the International Discourse of Human Rights.

In addition to these substantial differences in the treatment of immigration in the newspapers *El Mundo* and *El País*, we can appreciate certain common features in which the reactive and proactive discourses are materialized. We see how the discourse of the political elites is widely reproduced, as has been shown by authors such as Van Dijk. There is a great media coverage of their agreements, their debates, their laws, etc., but no proportional importance is given to the claims made by immigrant associations and NGOs, which are also protagonists of the processes derived from immigration, as well as direct addressees of the agreements made in the political sphere, but who are only occasionally given a voice.

Throughout the press analysis carried out, we perceived the ambivalent presence of two discourses. One is rather reactive or suspicious with respect to immigration and its various political, socioeconomic, and cultural implications and the other shows a more proactive, tolerant or favorable character to these processes<sup>18</sup>.

The reactive discourse is characterized with regard to the reception of immigrants by giving greater importance to the most negative aspects

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<sup>18</sup> As mentioned above, the terms reactive and proactive are used in the analysis of journalistic discourse, similar to the terminology used by Zapata-Barrero in his analysis of political discourse on immigration. On this, see: ZAPATA-BARRERO 2008, 117-157.

such as irregular entry, connections with mafias, delinquency or citizen insecurity, almost always seen from the eyes of the ingroup, as well as the use of exaggerated, derogatory terms or terms with unnecessarily negative connotations to refer to immigrants. Special emphasis is placed on irregular employment, the underground economy, fraud, the denunciation of these issues as a positive self-representation maneuver, the presentation of immigrants as consumers of social resources and the minimization of the importance of the contribution of immigrant workers to Social Security. The most problematic aspects of the heterogeneity of cultures and of a multicultural society are often emphasized instead of its potentialities, and certain cultural identities are presented as hardly compatible with a democratic society such as ours. This is especially true for the Islamic community. We find numerous news items, articles, reports and opinion columns highlighting the most retrograde precepts, approaches and actions carried out, under the argument that the Islamic religion demands it. On occasions, we see that when cases are denounced in which, in the name of culture, the cultural rights and even the human rights of people who are denied the freedom to choose are violated, rather than being made in defense of these people, the case is used as an argument to negatively represent the cultural identity in whose name this abuse is committed, little emphasis is placed on the fact that this type of action often involves other types of political, economic and power interests, which in reality have nothing to do with culture itself, but which are used as a paragon to justify such actions. It is also evident how, on many occasions, a reductionism that is not at all objective is used when it comes to making assessments of the cultures of the exogroup. The most notorious example is perhaps

the identification between Islamism and fundamentalism, when, if we stick to reality, we see that fundamentalism is more linked to political and economic interests than to religion and culture per se. We also perceive that it is not a phenomenon in which the whole of the Islamic population is involved, but rather that it occurs in a rather polarized manner in certain countries where this fundamentalism, far from growing naturally among the population, is encouraged in a self-interested way from spheres of power that do not act motivated by religious or cultural belief, but rather by political and economic interests. At the same time, much less space and attention is given to the requests of the associative movement as well as to the initiatives in favor of integration into Spanish society that come from the immigrant communities themselves and that demonstrate their commitment to be an active part of a multicultural society based on exchange and mutual enrichment on the basis of respect for democratic values and human rights.

As mentioned above, the media discourse also presents, as a reflection of the political discourse, a more proactive, tolerant, or favorable character with respect to immigration and its implications. This is manifested by publications, still a minority, with a more balanced approach to immigration in Spain and what it represents. Also, the concession of certain media space to the vindictive actions carried out by immigrant associations. News critical of the situation of immigrants and the response given by the system to the drama of irregular immigration. Articles recognizing the contribution of immigrant workers to the Welfare State from multiple aspects, especially for their contribution to Social Security and for the increase in the birth rate.

We also perceive the progressive presence of a proactive or tolerant approach to the issue of diversity in Spain.

#### 4. PROPOSALS FOR BEST PRACTICES IN THE TREATMENT OF IMMIGRATION AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE PRESS

The media's treatment of immigration and its numerous implications is not only analyzed within the framework of academic research. There are also important and illustrative works carried out by social organizations, NGOs, and press associations. Among these numerous and diverse studies, reports, guides, etc., the document *Guía práctica para los profesionales de los medios de comunicación: tratamiento mediático de la inmigración*<sup>19</sup>, directed and coordinated by the Observatorio Español del Racismo y la Xenofobia, deserves special attention for its degree of plurality and consensus, its transcendence and its institutional level. The Guide, published in 2008, was prepared by a group of collaborators including representatives of various media and communication agencies, social organizations, NGOs, and immigrant associations<sup>20</sup>. It is also based on the *Community Action*

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<sup>19</sup> SENDÍN GUTIÉRREZ 2008.

<sup>20</sup> The authorship of the *Guía práctica para los profesionales de los medios de comunicación: tratamiento mediático de la inmigración* is the responsibility of José C. Sendín Gutiérrez and Patricia Izquierdo Irazo, of the *Grupo de investigación sobre comunicación sociedad y cultura* (GICOMSOC), of the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos. As for the group of collaborators for its preparation, it is made up of: Ana Rodrigo (Agencia EFE), María Pin Agencia (EUROPA PRESS), Julio García (Agencias SERVIMEDIA), Abigail Campos (Agencia FAX PRESS), Cruz Morcillo

*Program to Combat Discrimination (2001-2006)*<sup>21</sup>, aimed at all those agents involved who could help develop appropriate and efficient policies and regulations to eliminate discrimination. The Program has three priority objectives: to improve understanding of issues related to discrimination; to develop the capacity to deal effectively with discrimination; and to promote the values underlying the fight against discrimination. The Guide, as explained in the first section of the Guide, within the section dedicated to the challenges faced by media professionals, was created with the aim of being an *aid instrument agreed upon with media professionals, both general and aimed at the immigrant community, in order to offer guidelines for the understanding and treatment of this phenomenon of immigration, as*

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(ABC), David Gracia (Expansión), Luis Izquierdo (La Vanguardia), Eva Revenga (COPE), Jordi Ferrerons (CUATRO), Minerva Oso (RNE), Nicolás Castellano (SER), Patricia Villarruel (El Universo de Ecuador and "Raíz" Magazine), Félix Damián Roman (In Lume), Soraya Constante (Semana Latino), Angel Sabat Diario (Sí se puede), Africa Martínez (Pueblo Nuevo), Gabriela Puerto Magazine (Lazo Latino), Itziar Marañón Magazine (Toumai).

<sup>21</sup> COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION. *Council Decision 2000/750/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a Community Action Programme to combat discrimination (2001-2006)*. Official Journal of the European Communities L 303/23 of 2 December 2000. To achieve the objectives, three transnational actions are envisaged:

- Analysis of factors related to discrimination (collection of statistics, studies, evaluation of policy effectiveness and dissemination of results).
- Transnational cooperation between specific actors and creation of European NGO networks;
- Raising awareness of the European dimension of the fight against discrimination.

*recent in our country as it has been normal throughout the history of Spain, especially in the last century*.<sup>22</sup>

The basis of this commitment is the social responsibility of communication professionals given the capacity of media content and its staging to influence audiences<sup>23</sup>. In this sense, it is stated that the development of journalistic activity has evolved greatly in recent years from a single perspective, focused on highlighting the negative and picturesque aspects of immigration and reproducing stereotypes created by the in-group, to an increasingly pluralistic approach in which a greater diversity of points of view is contemplated. However, on the other hand, certain professional processes and routines have also been denounced, influenced by a Eurocentric social context that reproduce, veiled, tacitly or even unconsciously, subtle manifestations of discursive racism.<sup>24</sup>

The Guide contains a state of the art, an analysis of good and bad practices and a series of recommendations. It does not start from scratch. It gathers the fruits of the experience of extensive and diverse previous work carried out by different professional journalistic associations, as well as public institutions specialized in the coverage

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<sup>22</sup> SENDÍN GUTIÉRREZ; IZQUIERDO IRANZO 2008, 10.

<sup>23</sup> Contrasting theories such as agenda-setting (agenda-setting) or the creation of interpretative frames or news frames (framing) have particularly studied the phenomenon.

<sup>24</sup> VAN DIJK 1997.

and reproduction of immigration in the media<sup>25</sup>. Among all these Spanish and European works on the correct media treatment of immigration, the following are of particular importance: *Manual of style on ethnic minorities*, elaborated by the College of Journalists of Catalonia<sup>26</sup>; *Recommendations of the Audiovisual Council of*

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<sup>25</sup> In this regard, the Audiovisual Councils of Catalonia (CAC), Navarre (COAN) and Andalusia (CAA) are particularly noteworthy, as well as professional associations of journalists, such as the Federation of Press Associations of Spain (FAPE) and the Andalusian Federation of Press Associations (FAAP). For a deeper knowledge of the most relevant proposals on, it is also very illustrative the document: *Inmigración y Medios de Comunicación. Compilation manual of good journalistic practices*, prepared by the Coordinadora de ONG de Euskadi de apoyo a inmigrantes. Their materials have also been of great help in the preparation of this section. It can be consulted on the website: <http://www.mugak.eu/gunea/obsmedios/buenpract/> [21/07/2016].

<sup>26</sup> COLLEGE OF JOURNALISTS OF CATALONIA. "Manual of style on ethnic minorities". In: *Quaderns del CAC*. Number 12. January-April 2002. Pp. 68-70. Available at: [www.audiovisualcat.net](http://www.audiovisualcat.net) [21/07/2016]. The *Ethnic Minority Style Manual* is based on seven fundamental principles:

- 1) Ethnicity, skin color, country of origin, religion or culture should not be included if it is not strictly necessary for the overall understanding of the news item.
- 2) It is necessary to avoid generalities, Manichaeism and simplification of information. Non-EU foreign residents are as inhomogeneous as local residents.
- 3) Negative and sensationalist information should not be promoted. Avoid creating useless conflicts and dramatizing them. The search for positive news should be promoted.
- 4) Equanimity in the sources of information. It is necessary to contrast institutional versions. It is necessary to promote those of ethnic minorities and

*Catalonia on the Informative Treatment of immigration*<sup>27</sup> ; *Recommendations to avoid the invisibilization of immigrant women and their victimization in news reports*, by the Center for Studies and Documentation on Immigration, Racism and Xenophobia (MUGAK) of SOS Racism<sup>28</sup> ; *Manual for journalists on the protection of children in the media*, by the Unió de Periodistes Valencians<sup>29</sup> ; *Racism and*

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to take special care in the information referring to the countries of origin. The publication of rectifications as elements that affect the quality of the news media.

- 5) Responsibility of professionals. The importance of the physical location of information. "The domino effect. Use of graphic material.
- 6) Journalistic militancy: towards a multi-interculturality enriching for all. The empowerment of positive information.
- 7) The use of the masculine grammatical gender to refer to mixed groups makes women and their contributions to different spheres of life invisible, simplifying and, in many cases, distorting reality.

<sup>27</sup> AUDIOVISUAL COUNCIL OF CATALONIA. "Recommendations of the Audiovisual Council of Catalonia on the Informative Treatment of Immigration". In: *Quaderns del CAC*, Number 12. January-April 2002, pp: 63-67. Available at [www.audiovisualcat.net](http://www.audiovisualcat.net) [21/07/2016]. The recommendations of the Audiovisual Council of Catalonia are classified into four areas: recommendations addressed to the authorities; recommendations addressed to audiovisual companies; recommendations addressed to audiovisual information professionals; and recommendations of a general nature.

<sup>28</sup> PÉREZ WOLFRAM 2005. Available at: <http://revista.mugak.eu/articulos/> [21/07/2016]. After a complete state of the issue, this article proposes a series of recommendations to avoid the invisibilization of immigrant women and their victimization in the information.

<sup>29</sup> The *Manual for journalists on the protection of children in the media* , prepared by the Unió de Periodistes Valencians , provides a series of guidelines for the



*Cultural Diversity in the Mass Media. An overview of research and examples of good practice in the EU Member States*, by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC)<sup>30</sup> ; Euro-Mediterranean Seminar *Racism, Xenophobia and the Media. Towards*

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informative treatment of minors that can be applied to the specific case of minors of immigrant origin. For further information, please consult: <http://www.unioperiodistes.org> [27/08/2019].

<sup>30</sup> EUROPEAN OBSERVATORY ON RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA (EUMC); WAL 2002. The study analyzes how immigration and cultural diversity are being treated in the media in different European countries (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom). It also makes a number of recommendations. Firstly, in the field of research and observatories, it suggests that greater emphasis should be placed on aspects relating to the production of information (access and participation of immigrants, training of communicators, professional codes, etc.); and on the reception of messages. With regard to media professionals, the recommendations focus on the use of sources and language in political information, for which it proposes offering a voice to actors with diverse positions and maintaining greater control over the language used by politicians and official sources, clearly criticizing any prejudices it may contain; the search for diversity of sources, moving from "talking about immigration" to talking "with immigrants"; and the promotion of investigative journalism programs and initiatives that offer greater knowledge of the origin, life context and history of immigrants. Finally, recommendations are made to promote diversity, among which are to support training oriented to immigrants, so that they can join the media, through scholarships and collaboration agreements; as well as to natives, so that they become aware of the subject and of their responsibility. In this sense, it is also proposed to promote the exchange of information, cooperation and self-regulation in the media. Available at: <http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/> [27/08/2019].

*respect and understanding of all religions and cultures. Euro-Partnership (2006)* <sup>31</sup>.

Taking all these previous works as a reference, the *Practical Guide for Media Professionals. Tratamiento de la Inmigración*<sup>32</sup> includes its own recommendations oriented towards three main areas: the group of media professionals; communication companies; and training centers for communication professionals and public institutions.

## 5 CONCLUSION

Political and media discourses influence society that is clearly perceived. There are multiple opinion polls in which we can see, as

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<sup>31</sup> As for the Euro-Mediterranean seminar *Racism, Xenophobia and the Media. Towards respect and understanding of all religions and cultures. Euro-Partnership (2006)*, gathers the contributions of the members of the Euro-Mediterranean agreement (25 from the European Union and 10 more Mediterranean partners: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey, plus Libya with observer status since 1999). It establishes recommendations by areas, including recommendations addressed to media companies, recommendations addressed to media training institutions and professional institutions, recommendations addressed to civil society and minority groups, and recommendations addressed to international and European institutions. The conclusions of the Euro-Mediterranean Seminar are available at:

[http://fra.europa.eu/fra/material/pub/general/euromed\\_conference\\_report\\_220506\\_en.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/fra/material/pub/general/euromed_conference_report_220506_en.pdf) or at: [http://www.euromedalex.org/sites/default/files/euromed\\_en.pdf](http://www.euromedalex.org/sites/default/files/euromed_en.pdf) [21/07/2016].

<sup>32</sup> SENDÍN GUTIÉRREZ; IZQUIERDO IRANZO 2008.

mentioned above, that the perception of immigration by Spaniards has worsened since 2008, coinciding with the economic crisis, the shift in political discourse and the modulation of press discourse, which acts as a mirror of the former. Immigrants tend to be valued in terms of a problem, relating them to irregularity, criminality and insecurity, their contributions to the country are downgraded, they are seen more as competition for jobs than as a factor of growth for the productive system, and their contributions, actual or potential, to the country are estimated to a lesser extent. All of this makes clear the deterioration in the perception of foreign workers and the worsening of immigration planning by Spanish society.

For its part, the immigrant community is uncomfortable with this situation and claims its rights through protest actions, demonstrations, and activities, such as those that took place in 2009 in relation to the Reform of the Immigration Law and the extension of the period of stay in the Alien Internment Centers. In these protests, immigrant associations have usually had the support of committed social agents, mainly members of NGOs and solidarity institutions. However, they have not always had the expected media coverage or political and social receptiveness.

The intensification of political discourse on immigration, often supported by the media, has perverse effects on our society. It can contribute to the awakening of suspicious attitudes towards immigration that serve as a breeding ground for the emergence of groups and movements with a discriminatory profile. This is currently noticeable on the world scene, where parties and platforms with

positions that are openly reactive to migration, if not stigmatizing, xenophobic or blatantly racist towards immigrants are finding unprecedented social support.

It is crucial that this kind of ostensibly reactionary approaches that are incompatible with the rule of law, far from finding shelter in ignorance of the socio-cultural reality, in pure political pragmatism and in the absence of values of coexistence and solidarity, generate rejection and have no place in a modern and democratic society such as ours. To achieve this end, it is necessary to disarm prejudices, erroneous beliefs and unsubstantiated reasoning against immigration and immigrants, as well as to offer a panoramic approach that integrates all the variables involved in the very complex reality of migrations. This is the only way to ensure that migration management is consistent with the positive international normative discourse on human rights.

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