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Otherness as a form of intersubjective social exclusion

Conceptual discussion from the current communicative scenario

Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to review the theory based on «otherness» as a form of social exclusion and symbolic violence from the constructions of realities of the media, with particular emphasis on the ethics and aesthetics of language and its role in materializing identity differences.

Design/methodology/approach – A search for specific criteria and *boolean* algorithms is carried out in WoS and Scopus on «otherness» [AND] «social exclusion», to then submit the emerging results to a co-occurrence matrix by citations with VOSViewer v. 1.6.13. From the relation tree of the most cited documents [min=7] of the downloaded articles, a critical/analytical reading is made.

Findings – «Otherness» is reviewed to a greater extent from a Western perspective, and more specifically, from a Eurocentric one. This implies that the study of «otherness» is not sufficiently analyzed by Asian or African authors, who are excluded from the analysis. In this sense, «otherness» is understood as a theoretical construct and as any symbolic construction of the other (phenotypically, but also in ideology, values, and customs), but which carries a load of stereotypes that can become polarization, demonization, *ergo*, violence.

Originality/value – Revisiting «otherness» as an informative construct becomes imperative in light of the emergence of extremist groups and xenophobic parties, as well as separatist policies such as Brexit or the Catalan split in Spain. Few articles contribute to elaborating a complete conceptual construct on «otherness» as an epistemological category of communication and information, so this research effort attempts to compile its theoretical discussion.

Keywords Media, Language, Stereotypes, Demonization, Polarization, Discursive violence, Collective Imaginary

Paper type Conceptual paper

1. Introduction

People tend to classify and organize societies into binary oppositions, i.e., opposing elements that are generally excluded. This conceptual simplification serves us as an element of primary understanding of the «group notion», aligning it with principles of homophily and assortativity. Thus, creating the concept of «we» (with integrative subjective characteristics) and «others» (separated from our conception of unity) offers apparent tranquility and favors our belonging to the group as opposed to the opposite group (López, 2015). In our daily life, we continually speak of the «other» to refer to everything different from our own «I».

This binary classification also has a secondary effect: not only does it accept classified reality and imposed differences, but it also implies a position of power, a feeling of moral superiority, while, by contrast, it means negation and devaluation of the opposite. Binary views create borders between groups of people and place one group on a scale more substantial than the «other» (Robbins, 2015). This is what is conceptually known as «otherness».

Habitually, when an opinion is expressed, the way of seeing the world and our experience in it is narrated. The media tell us about its knowledge of the world using specific informative frames, which becomes a construction of the notion of identity. The stories determine the dominant thought forms and construct a non-existent world with very peculiar identity traits

(López, Castillo, and Carrera, 2018). From social discourses, it is possible to carry out the description of the subjects and facts, or social aspects thematized, that is to say, the construction of scenarios and actors.

This research will analyze the most relevant literature to know the main consequences of otherness along with the channels that are used to foster social division in «us» and «others», thus causing the existence of one superior group and another that is socially excluded. To this end, an exploration of the most relevant databases (WoS and Scopus) was carried out, under the search criteria «otherness» and (*boolean* AND) «social exclusion», limiting the search to journals in the social sciences category. In this way, the scientific literature mapping was carried out and will serve for and reflect on the connection between the concept of otherness and social exclusion. Web of Science and Scopus were selected for being the two most relevant databases in Social Science research, offering a wide variety of references to scientific literature from high impact journals (Hernández-González, *et al.*, 2016).

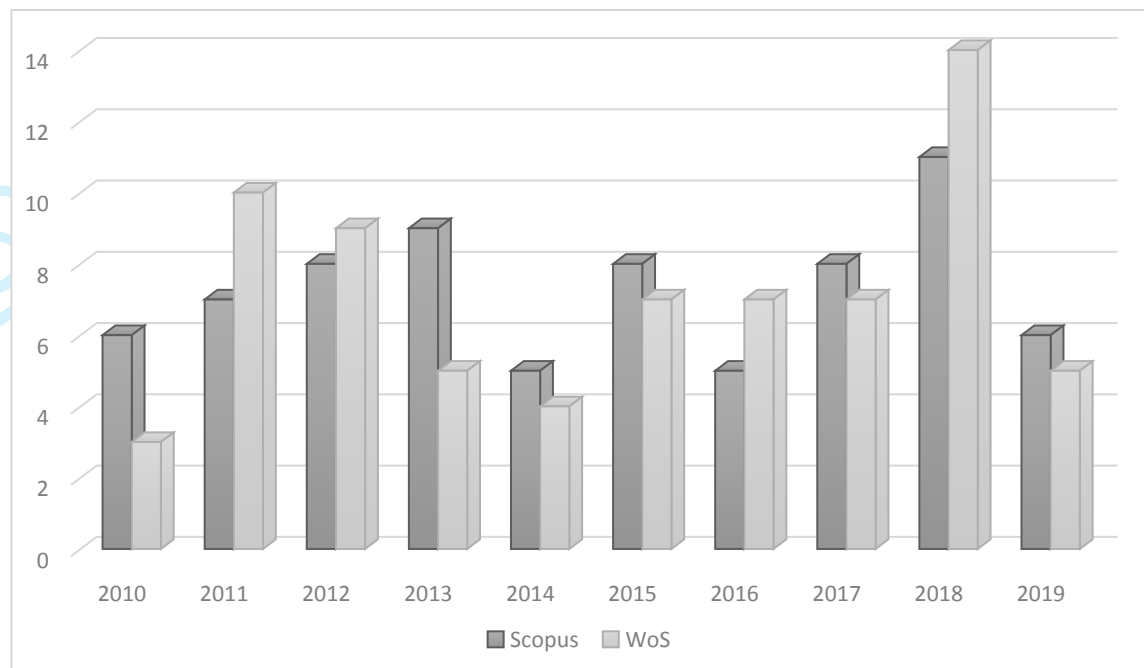
This research has an exploratory and conceptual character since, in order to achieve our objectives, we rely on the mapping and review of the literature on otherness and its consequences in the current communicative ecosystem. The development of the study has been structured in two differentiated phases: i) the compilation of specialized literature on otherness, language, and the media, and ii) the analysis of the extracted information. Thus, the main objective of this study is to deepen the concept of otherness, understand and analyze its form of dissemination through the media, and investigate and learn about the main consequences.

In Scopus, the search criterion «Otherness» was carried out with the *boolean* algorithm AND intersection with «social exclusion». To refine the search, we opted for the selection of emerging documents 2015-2019, from the area of [social sciences], type of document [article], and type of source [journals]. The decision to refine the quest between 2015 and 2019 is due to the fact that a current vision of otherness as a form of social exclusion is being pursued, taking into account the changes in the forms of interaction that Information and Communication Technologies have brought about in the field of communication and their development in recent years. After carrying out the search, from which 104 documents emerged in Scopus and 94 in WoS, it is refined with the following document selection criteria in order to develop a sieve based on current events and references:

- A. Subject relation: Those articles that were not closely related to the subject of otherness as a form of social exclusion were discarded.
- B. Document actuality: Information and Communication Technologies have radically changed the way we interact and communicate. In this sense, taking into consideration the speed with which changes occur in the digital ecosystem and, understanding that this research seeks to study the otherness according to the new founded theories, the criterion of actuality is fundamental. In this sense, the search was limited between 2015 and 2019.
- C. For the most cited: The immediacy factor of the citations is another important criterion taken into consideration for this study. In this sense, the analysis was limited to those documents that had more than 20 citations, understanding this as an indicator of reference.

Before the first screening, 104 documents emerged, which after refining (by criteria of immediacy, actuality, and referentiality), became 28. In the case of the Web of Science (WoS), the same search criteria were made, appearing in the first filtering of 94 documents. For the refined search, the period 2015–2019 was selected in the thematic area of [Social Sciences and Humanities] and type of document [Article], obtaining from this sieve a total of 45 papers.

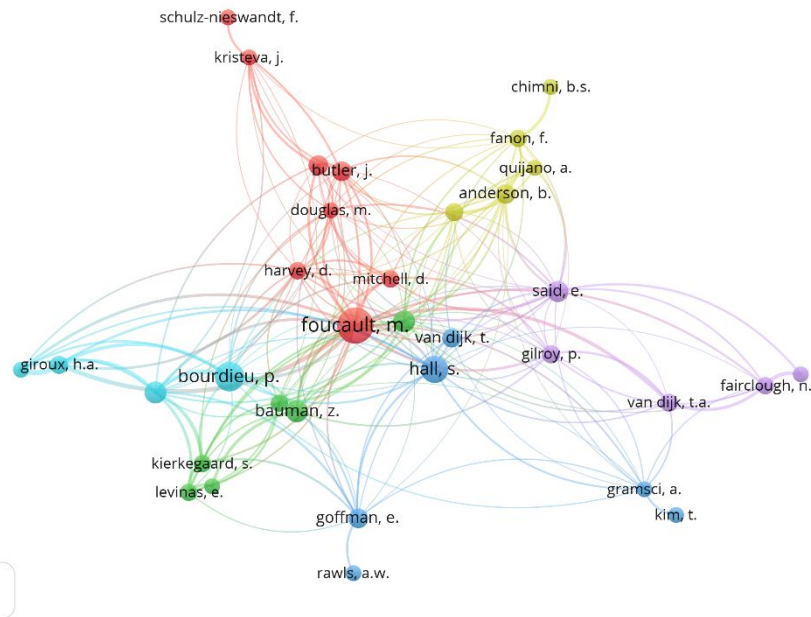
Figure 1. Emerging documents in the WoS and Scopus databases 2010–2019



*Note: Data for 2019 have been collected until November 25, 2019.

Once both screens have been had, the documents are submitted to a third one in which the downloaded results of the searches are referred to in both databases. In RIS format, they are forwarded to a citation analysis by authors under a co-occurrence scheme for [min=7 citations] using the software VOSviewer v. 1.6.13. This third screen will allow us to find out the authors and documents most cited by the 73 papers that are part of the universe of this study, to determine the leading references on «otherness» as a form of «social exclusion» (see Figure 2). From this last procedure, analytical and detailed reading of all the cited documents (with at least seven citing documents) is carried out to fulfill the objective of this study.

Figure 2. Most cited authors for articles on «otherness» and «social exclusion» in WoS and Scopus 2015-2019



2. Otherness: Towards a conceptual construction

«Otrism», according to Langaney (1981), consists of an elementary human attitude, which is probably universally extended, of distrust or fear toward the unknown or strange and which can be transformed into xenophobia or racism when it is rationalized so that excluding categories are produced, identities are defended, and theories are elaborated.

Otherness thus facilitates the creation of an isolated concept of the experience of a «we» that also helps to define one's existence more precisely and, in some cases, creates the symbolic framework of «who I am» or «who we are» (Guzmán, 2018). Then, stratification, the gadget management of domination, and geography will help to establish the difference between «we» and «others», consequently constituting a symbolic category that dominates and controls the difference (Pérez Benavides, 2015).

Gómez-Müller (1997, p. 10) explains that the «other» is “the one who does not do as I do, the one whose body—color, size, facial features—is not like mine”. Therefore, the «other» has always been considered to be the one who is not like one, who is inferior to one, and who is, consequently, subordinated to being excluded from society. *Ergo*, when the concepts of «they» and «we» are created—as excluding binary categories—the following behaviors are provoked within the different civilizations:

- Sense of superiority or inferiority concerning those who are different.
- Fear or lack of trust in the «other».
- Obstacles in communicating with them because of language barriers and what is considered civilized conduct.
- Lack of familiarity and empathy with the «other».

From psychoanalysis, Reginster (2012) performs a classification based on the three otherness points of view. In the first place, there is otherness understood as narcissistic loss, where to be another is the character of objects that are beyond the control of the omnipotent subject, that is, that the recognition of the «other» would suppose the separation or loss of oneself. On the other hand, it also classifies otherness as difference, where it is required to see others as different, but

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3 within intersubjectivity, so that values and variations can be appreciated. And, finally, with
4 otherness as freedom, in this case, the «other» can no longer be conceived as an object of possible
5 control, since this would alter its natural essence.
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7 It is necessary to point out that this research theoretically analyzes the construct of otherness
8 from the position of Eurocentrism and Westernism; that is to say, the «other» will be understood
9 as being inferior and as an object of control. We have chosen to take this epistemological line as
10 a consequence of the fact that this approach is one of those that most distorts the perception and
11 knowledge of others, favoring their own culture and attributing a negative value to «others»
12 (Martínez, 2011); but it is also the dominant position of most of the studies extracted from the
13 revised databases *ut supra*. This line of thought is legitimated by Bessis (2002), referring to the
14 fact that the West has governed the world for so many years that its supremacy seems natural
15 because the centrality of the West organizes the world, a position also supported by Wallersteins
16 (2003, p. 93) when explaining that “Eurocentrism is a monster of many heads that have gone
17 through multiple ups and downs.”
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20 To begin to understand the concept of the «Other» from the Western European position, it is
21 necessary to understand in general lines the reasons why Europe is positioned as a dominant
22 civilization. The Europeans promoted the Industrial Revolution, and have maintained growth,
23 founded modernity, capitalism, bureaucratization, or individual freedom. These historical events
24 positioned Europe as pioneers in the current ideas of modernity itself (but which have been doing
25 so since ancient times), and it stands as a place that the rest of the world should envy. Also,
26 modern Europe is considered the only “civilized” or particularly “civilized” Europe (Wallersteins,
27 2003; Rozuel, 2014). Nevertheless, it is necessary to warn that behind this dominant positioning
28 hides a lack of knowledge and contempt towards other cultures, reflection of a mental construction
29 that makes it impossible to understand the «Other».
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32 According to Said (2003), the concept of «otherness» is used to name a culture different from
33 the western one, since this notion is a creation originating from the West (Said, 1996). Thus, the
34 assignment of social patterns and stimuli on the foreigner in the West has become that of the
35 «other», particularly that of the «non-Western other», which is why it is gestated that identity
36 redefinitions follow the European constructor: “them/us, national/non-national, European/extra-
37 European, local/global” (Rea, 2006, p. 160). After an extensive review of the documents in the
38 state of the art/mapping, the form commonly used to refer to the «other» is that of European/non-
39 European, which determines majority/minority positions based on geographical and phenotypic
40 reasons, constructed through different routes (Rea, *ob. cit*):
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- 43 • Discourses and messages from the media select various aspects of reality and use
44 discursive techniques to represent them (i.e., media framing).
- 45 • Social dynamics and mobilizations could be defined as the behavior of the masses in the
46 face of a specific stimulus. These respond to the social conditioning to which people are
47 exposed throughout their lives.
- 48 • Other means of representation create differences between groups and individuals.
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51 With the construction of the European identity, the promotion of cultural diversity is broken,
52 and the fears of Europe (cultural conflicts, clash of civilizations, and terrorism, among others) are
53 fomented and located as a generic origin. An example of this could be the sub-Saharan and
54 Muslims, two specific figures of the «otherness» prevailing in Europe and the European media.
55 This process of creating a European identity is known as «Europeanisation», a set of social and
56 cultural elements that place European culture as predominantly based on the ethnic division
57 between Europeans and non-Europeans. ‘Europeanisation’, therefore, creates social and legal
58 norms, as well as social representations. It is in the process of building a European identity that
59 the term ‘others’ is defined, as comprising everyone who is not European.
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3 [...] what is at stake here is the power to impose a vision of the social world through
4 principles of division which, when imposed on a group, establish meaning and consensus on
5 meaning, and in particular on the identity and unity of the group, which creates the reality of the
6 unity and identity of the group (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 221).
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8 This need to create a single reality and make it dominant could justify otherness as a way
9 of reification of the «other». Objectness refers to the process by which a human being is converted
10 into an object (thing/*res*), limiting his rationality and dignity. Two significant consequences of
11 otherness understood from this point of view are:
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- 13 • Demonized construction of the «Other»: Demonization is the process through which a
14 real or imaginary confrontation is created against the «Other» to cause social fear,
15 presenting a person or social group as dangerous to society (Romero-Rodriguez, Aguaded
16 and Gadea, 2015; Romero-Rodriguez and Römer, 2016), causing them to be culturally
17 unaccepted, rejected or reified and damaging their social identity (Goffman, 2006). The
18 formalization of the «Other», as well as the stigmatization to which it is subjected, is
19 variable according to the context in which it is found. For Goffman (1970), stigma implies
20 a social identity that is devalued in a particular context in the eyes of others, that is,
21 demonizing the subject. It is a social construction that demonizes and creates limits
22 between them and us (Link and Phelan, 2001). The criminalization of groups belonging
23 to lower social categories is so widespread that sometimes even the victims themselves
24 end up reproducing and internalizing these stereotypes (Caldeira, 2007), which can
25 collaborate in problems of self-esteem and weaken personal aspirations, causing the
26 homogeneity of networks and social self-exclusion.
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- 28 • Social polarization: From a sociological point of view, «polarization» is defined as a
29 manifestation of extreme and opposing beliefs, causing the creation of contrasts between
30 societies (Isenberg, 1986; Sustein, 2002). In the media, to construct a unique «must be»,
31 rhetoric is used through language, discarding any alternative option, creating a stereotype,
32 and disqualifying the «other». This is what some authors, such as Romero-Rodriguez
33 (2014), consider «discursive violence». This technique is the primary constructor of
34 confrontations between societies, which creates social fear, paranoia, or collective
35 hysteria, allowing the side with the most significant power to exercise it without limits.
36 In this case, the West positions itself as the superior and influential group, making the
37 East the enemy, thus creating a barrier, dividing society into two North and South
38 (Zafaroni, 2012).
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44 These consequences of symbolic otherness become inexcusably «humiliation», this being the
45 denial of recognition by others, argued by Honneth in his theory of recognition (1996). This theory
46 of the Frankfurt Critical School has its antecedents in the ethnicity and phenomenology of Hegel's
47 spirit. The significant difference between Hegel and Honneth is that the traditional interpretation
48 of conflicts as mere self-preservation is overcome.
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50 From Honneth's point of view, it is exposed that subjects can only create an identity if others
51 recognize them in different ways. Thus, the development of society and social change arises in a
52 rational process of recognition relations (Ramaglia, 2008), where subjects participating in the
53 exchange must recognize themselves with certain qualities of value before establishing an
54 understanding. That is to say, if you do not feel accepted by the other subject, the relation of
55 understanding and empathy will take longer to be forged than when the interaction is carried out
56 from a perspective of equality (Sauerwald, 2008). The theory of the struggle for recognition
57 (Honneth, 1996) and its relation to «otherness» suggest examining these aspects in terms of denial
58 of acceptance, which can take various forms of dissent. First, we find the denial of social esteem
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3 through negative opinions about culture and, on the other hand, rejection by religion (Sanchez-
4 Mazas, 2004).
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6 As a solution to the denial of recognition is the intersubjective recognition from which the
7 «other» is seen as a source of learning, endowing it with an essential moral value for me, thus
8 generating bases for the recognition of the «other». This allows for improved social development
9 and inclusion. For this process to take place, it is necessary to eliminate the fear that leads to the
10 prejudice and submission of the masses. On the contrary, prejudices, stereotypes, and social
11 exclusion will be encouraged (Faundes Peñafiel, 2017). Social exclusion provokes a feeling of
12 not being a valid subject and morally equal to others, since it implies a presumed lack of a capacity
13 to form moral judgments, which leads to its reification, giving way to the narrative construction
14 of the «other» through the media as a phenomenon and not as a part of society.
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19 **1. Otherness and language: Beyond the symbolic**

20 The construction of the «other» can be understood from sociological theories in which
21 some concepts such as the «social imaginary» proposed by Blazkco (1984) are part of the use of
22 language for the construction of the «other». The «social imaginary» is defined as the ideas of the
23 individuals about the order, institutions, people, and everything that this society occupies in
24 general. Other authors use the concept of «social representation» that Mosovici (1961), from
25 psychoanalysis, describes as a particular modality of knowledge, the function of which is the
26 elaboration of behaviors and communication between individuals. Representations can be created
27 for various purposes such as solving problems, shaping social interactions, or providing a mold
28 for behavior (Jodelet, 1989). The difference between the «social imaginary» and «social
29 representations» is a semiotic struggle that we will not focus on in this research since it does not
30 bring us closer to fulfilling the main objectives of this thesis.
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34 From the linguistics of discourses, the narration is a form of evaluation of human beings
35 about themselves as well as of telling the type of relationship we establish with others (Bruner,
36 1990). In this sense, identity is an «I» that camouflages itself to have a personality and to
37 differentiate itself from others. In order to understand the narrative construction of the «I», it is
38 considered necessary to revise the two modes of thought presented by Bruner (1986):
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- 40 • The modality of paradigmatic thinking is primarily concerned with describing and
41 analyzing phenomena, i.e., it creates a hypothetical world, and this must be demonstrable.
- 42 • Paradigmatic thinking seeks to create arguments by attempting to list rules and
43 consequences.
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45 Both are very different from the modality of narrative thinking, which is responsible for
46 placing the experience in a certain time-space. This narrative capacity to construct the world
47 makes it possible for us to have an identity, which results in the construction of an «I». The
48 discourses that allow us to construct the «I» and reality are formed by a set of unstable
49 representations in continuous transformation (Vidal Claramonte, 2003; Alhusban, Alhusban and
50 AlBetawi, 2019), where the description of the «Other» is never innocent (Bassnett and Lefevere,
51 1990).
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54 According to Huntington (1996), the identity of each person depends on several factors. First,
55 each person has many identities: parental, cultural, emotional, educational, or territorial, although
56 cultural identity seems to be more important than the other dimensions of identity. Second, the
57 creation of identity is also influenced by socio-economic levels and modernization. Finally, the
58 identity of any person is constructed with the definition of the «other» interactively.
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3 Language, with the collaboration of the media and ICTs (digital media, social media...),
4 has a significant influence on the construction of foreign cultures (Soto, 2018). According to
5 Carbonell (1996), the frame with which culture is inserted is constructed by a set of signs adhered
6 to by an endless number of connotations, denotations, and stereotypes that are used as a powerful
7 strategy. Manipulation is one of the most used strategies to account for hierarchy
8 (domination/subordination). Foucault, with his understanding of otherness, also shares this line
9 as the power of socio-political domination based on cultural representations. Carbonell (2013:
10 381) explained that manipulation occurs in almost all texts through:

- 11 • Necessary pragmatic or discursive adaptations, as the convention of the gender in
12 question change.
- 13 • Construction of a text whose discursive characteristics differ substantially from the
14 original.
- 15 • Recreation of a reality that does not exist as such.

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19 Therefore, it can be affirmed that the use of discursive elements to refer to the «others» are
20 mechanisms used for the self-affirmation of some and the segregation of the «others». According
21 to van Dijk (2009), the discourse of the members of a group uses many variants to highlight the
22 dominant group to which they belong while demonizing the «others». Thus, the author above (*op.*
23 *cit*) analyzes how ethnic prejudice is introduced into interpersonal relations, the media, and
24 politics. The general strategy usually used is polarization and was mentioned earlier. The strategy
25 of polarization at the discursive level tries to minimize the opponent's achievements and
26 maximize one's own, as well as minimize one's own mistakes and maximize those of others (van
27 Dijk, 2003, p. 209):

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30 [...] critical discourse analysis is a type of analytical discourse research that primarily
31 studies how the abuse of social power, dominance, and inequality are practiced, reproduced, and
32 occasionally combated by texts and speech in the social and political context. Critical discourse
33 analysis, with such peculiar research, explicitly takes sides and hopes to contribute effectively to
34 resistance against social inequality.

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36 Mata (1983) affirms that, if communication is approached as a form of exchange, which
37 helps us to create identities, norms, values, and the concept about the «other,» it ends up
38 constructing, through discourses, the sense of social order. To investigate the spirit of discourse
39 is essentially all that is omitted, what is not said, and also what is stated explicitly. Since the
40 construction of the «other» in political speeches, Verón (1996) maintains that the political
41 enunciation seems inseparable from the creation of an «adversary» and generates the concept of
42 «counter-recipient, » which is the discursive enemy that is trying to be combated.

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45 Within this concept, it is intended to differentiate the different modalities according to
46 which the positive «other» is constructed and the negative «other». The positive recipient can be
47 defined as the one who participates in the same ideas and values as the one who sends the message.
48 On the other hand, we find the negative addressee, who is known as the counter-addressee, with
49 values, ideas, and imagination dissimilar to the one who constructs discursive reality with
50 language. In this sense, the counter-recipient can be defined as one who has an inverse belief and
51 who receives a destructive reading, since what is sincerity for the enunciator is bad faith for the
52 addressee.

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55 The mediatization of societies makes discursive strategies increasingly complex to create
56 the construction of an image and the counter-addressee. In addition, today, with citizen
57 participation through social networks, there is more interference between the enunciator and the
58 addressee, since there is extreme intermediation, not only of the platforms and algorithms, which
59 decide for machine learning to whom the message reaches or not, but also of the prosumers
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(second-step communication), which contribute to the decoding of the messages, with subjective loads and multiplication of the diffusion.

2. The representation of the «other» in media ethics and aesthetics

As has been pointed out, the media are in charge of constructing realities, constructs, and concepts. This connects with the above-mentioned use of specific news frames, while in recent years framing theory has occupied a prominent place in communication studies because any text, whether informative or persuasive, requires strategies to organize discourse (Ardevol-Abreu, 2015).

According to Entman (1993, p.52-53) framing is selecting some aspects of perceived reality and making them more prominent in a communicative text, so that they promote particular problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral assessments and/or recommendations for the treatment of the described issue. Goffman (1974) compares this theory to a photo frame, since he states that the photograph represents the content and the frame the frame that one wants to offer of that image.

They do this through specific lexical, syntactic, and semantic resources that constitute actions of deprivation of identity when they corrupt the principle of essential equality since they expose existential differences as essential (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). The conceptions created about people who do not belong to the dominant group through the deprivation of identity influence their relations with the rest of society (Vasilachis, 1997), and this situation is exteriorized in the media through specific linguistic resources. In this line, Vasilachis (2007, p. 87) describes three aspects of identity deprivation in the media:

- Photography is considered a representation of reality and is used by the media to accompany the text and encourage the creation of a wrong idea.
- The use of similar words in headlines do not coincide with those used in their respective texts and create a «politically correct» title.
- The use of a lacking resource determines a social hierarchy, where possessing a good gives the individual a higher relevance.

The «ventriloquist effect» helps us to create the concept of the «Other», since, as Daroqui says (2009, p. 15) “The media only access another source at the moment when another version of the fact becomes visible, that is, when the label does not fit perfectly.” The linguistic resources most used to create the vision of the «other» from reification and non-understanding as well as to create the feeling that the «other» is an enemy to be combated are essentially six: stereotypes, metaphors, euphemisms, dysphemisms, demonization, and polarization.

- Stereotypes: The media selectively represent actions and events and, at the same time, give society the potential language to categorize and evaluate those actions. These create so-called stereotypes, which are linked to relations of domination between social groups. According to Ardevol and Muntañola (2004, p. 105), the stereotype is a “discursive practice that substantiates a supposed characteristic of the «other», tracing its image from the fixation, repetition, and naturalization, of certain features considered essential”. The media are responsible for creating social identities by developing knowledge structures that include clichés or stereotypes. Stereotypes develop a greater force in the emotional plane of discourse and force the consumer of information to follow the schemes elaborated by the media on the basis of constant repetition, the aim of which is to make the mirage become an indisputable reality (Romero-Rodriguez, De-Casas-Moreno, and Torres-Toukoumidis, 2015; Torres-Toukoumidis *et al.*, 2017; Romero-Rodriguez *et al.*,

2018). The use of stereotypes can lead to the following consequences (Vasilachis, 2007): i) the tendency to generate a negative image of otherness, emphasizing what differentiates them to the detriment of what identifies them with the rest of the people; ii) the extension of discriminatory processes; iii) the denial [demonization] of some and the recognition [sacralization] of «others»; and iv) the exercise of violence—symbolic or material—through repeated ignorance of the principle of essential equality. In short, stereotypes help to justify social inequality and discriminatory practices, making them worthy of the stereotyped roles they play. An example of this occurred on 12 February 2020, when the mayor of Vic [City] and member of parliament for the Catalan independentist party JxCat, Anna Erra, in a parliamentary session, said "We have to make the native Catalans aware that there are people born abroad who want and need to learn Catalan, and put an end to the custom, very present in certain areas of the country, of always speaking in Spanish with anyone who, because of their physical appearance or their name, does not appear to be Catalan" (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Example of the use of stereotypes in the Catalan conflict: "The practice of not speaking Catalan because of physical appearance"

CATALÁN ›

La costumbre de no hablar catalán por el “aspecto físico”

La alcaldesa de Vic y diputada de JxCat pide que no se use el castellano con “alguna persona que por su nombre no parece catalana”



Source: El País (Retrieved February 16, 2020, from: <https://bit.ly/2UUrXl>)

In the case reviewed *ut supra*, it is evident that the Catalan conflict has escalated to the point that some of the politicians consider that there are phenotypical, physical and appearance differences between Catalans and Spaniards, which may clearly show that a stereotype has been constructed on the basis of otherness.

- Metaphors: One of the resources most frequently used by the media are metaphors, which consolidate the interpretative models of reality presupposed by the speaker and the forms of social differentiation that this model postulates, defining the nature of the situation and the respective roles of the key actors (Vasilachis, 2003). The rhetorical figure in charge

of the displacement of meaning between two terms is known as a metaphor. A case on the use of metaphors to explain otherness occurred in the middle of the Brexit conflict, when comedian James Acaster, in a viral video, made a Brexit analogy about a tea bag: He described a situation where his roommate was making him a cup of mint tea and asked him if he would like to leave the bag in the cup or if he would prefer to have it taken out. The humorist responded to his roommate: "If you leave the bag in, the tea in the cup will become stronger over time. The bag may seem to be losing its strength, but it is now part of a stronger cup of tea. Whereas if you take the bag out, the tea weakens and the bag goes straight to the dump". Acaster later acknowledged that the comparison had hurt many people's feelings, as the comparison could diminish Brexit voters to being considered "trash".

- Euphemisms: Etymologically, the word euphemism (*Eufemia* [εὐφημία]) means «good speech» or «favorable speech». It is a rhetorical figure whose primary intention is to minimize an unpleasant or politically incorrect term through the use of another with less harmful meanings. In this sense, the euphemism can be understood as a sub-category of evasive metaphor that seeks to present and construct a positive reality to the negative one, so it is a manipulation of language with misinformative effects under relations of lexical minimization of an event (Romero-Rodriguez, 2014). In this sense, the application of the euphemism avoids the existence of critical reasoning in the cognitive process (Eco, 1995). According to Chamizo (2004, p. 46), there are three stages in the lexicalization of euphemisms from the diachronic perspective, which are:
 1. The new euphemism or neo-euphemism: It is the creation of a new euphemistic term that did not belong to any previous conceptual family.
 2. The semilexicated euphemism: It is the euphemism that has become part of the heritage of a language through its frequent use and is understood by those who share that habitually. For this reason, it is possible to distinguish the differences between the literal meaning and the euphemistic meaning of the term.
 3. The lexical or dead euphemism: They are those to whom the common, frequent and continuous use of the euphemism builds reality on it, so it loses its metaphorical character to constitute a new word with the same literal meaning, and it ceases to be ambiguous and makes it necessary to reinvent another euphemism that serves to cover it up.

One example that has been on the rise in recent years is the use of the word "Islamophobia" to lexically counter the hatred of the Muslim population that is occurring in many countries in Europe and North America, particularly since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. What is most interesting about this is that even media in Arab countries have taken up the term to lessen anti-Muslim sentiment in the West (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Arab media referring to hatred of the Muslim population as "Islamophobia"

The Arab Weekly

The fight of Egypt's Dar al-Ifta against extremism, Islamophobia

Dar al-Ifta's observatory of takfiri fatwas offers a comprehensive system to confront extremism and its endeavours to spread sectarian strife.

Sunday 02/02/2020



Source: The Arab Weekly (Retrieved February 15, 2020, from: <https://bit.ly/2uQotkH>)

- **Dysphemisms:** This resource usually appears in the hegemonic discourse, not as instruments of transmission of a propositional content, but as a means of persuasion, since it is typically used to exercise ideological control, so that the connotative or evaluative content of the chosen words usually prevails over the purely denotative value (Crespo, 2010). The boundaries between euphemisms and dysphemisms are often very blurred. Moreover, one and the other are convertible (Chamizo, 2004). Even mixed processes can occur whereby a euphemistic expression is used with a dysphemistic intention or vice versa. Crespo Fernández (2010) calls these phenomena «quasi-dysphemism». In summary, dysphemism is a way of naming reality with a pejorative expression, which usually occurs in satirical media or totalitarian regimes (Romero-Rodríguez, Aguaded & Gadea, 2015). An example of this occurred in Venezuela, when on January 25, 2020, Nicolas Maduro referred to Juan Guaidó, president of the Venezuelan Congress and leader of the opposition, as follows: "We have never had such an imbecile and stupid opponent. Never has the opposition been so degraded" (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Nicolas Maduro (Venezuela) referring to the president of the parliament as an "imbecile and stupid opponent"

VENEZUELA

Maduro arremete e insulta a Guaidó antes de que aterrice en Madrid

DANIEL LOZANO
Caracas

Sábado, 25 enero 2020
- 00:14



Ver 40 comentarios

"Nunca habíamos tenido un contrincante tan imbécil y estúpido. Nunca se había degradado tanto la oposición", bramó durante la clausura del Encuentro Mundial Antiimperialista



Source: El Mundo (Retrieved February 16, 2020, from: <https://bit.ly/3bIVwbh>)

- Demonization and polarization: Demonization and polarization are two concepts that have been treated throughout the introduction of this research as consequences of the creation of the "other" as an object. Demonization is a rhetorical technique that lays the foundations of a real or imaginary confrontation to create social fear. The goal is to misinform or modify perceptions and realities about an event, description, or person by presenting them as harmful to society, generally with little reasoning but with high emotional charge (Romero-Rodríguez and Römer, 2016). Polarization, from a sociological perspective, is a social phenomenon that appears when individuals align their beliefs in extreme and conflicting positions while other individuals hold more moderate or neutral opinions (Isenberg, 1986; Sunsteins, 2002). This situation occurs in practically any space where there is a political division, not only ideological, but also of conflicting visions. Thus, while the media in the United Kingdom encouraged the disagreement of the "brexiteers" vs. the "remainders", the Spanish do the same among the "independentistas" vs. the "constitutionalists".

4. Discussion

It could be concluded that, if the relationship between otherness and social exclusion comes from placing a society in a higher position—in this case, according to the authors cited in this research—then Western society would be considered superior. This causes negative patterns and stimuli to be assigned to the one who is not like «us», placing the «others» in a position of inferiority that can lead to social exclusion. Although many authors, such as Santos (2007), argued that globalization would end the polarization of societies, the truth is, this behavior is being reinforced. This can be seen in political actions such as Brexit, or the search for the Catalan split in Spain, and other protectionist measures (Meneses *et al.*, 2018; Gómez-García *et al.*, 2019).

Different Eurobarometer surveys show that the fear of the «other» is quite intense. This has recently been confirmed by processes of de-globalization that are being carried out with the

consolidation of extreme right-wing groups. The fear of the «other» does not only affect new migrants but also those with different nationalities, who are continuously put into the question of belonging (Balibar, 1992; Rea, 2006). This permanent state of non-membership has severe social consequences, such as the violation of human rights.

As we have seen, it is the media through various language resources that help forge negative images and hate speech by classifying a group of people as if they were not individuals. These discourses and the great power of the media to disseminate them denote why those who have privileged access to the social discursive podium are in the hands of the establishment. Besides, with the emergence of new media in which there are citizen participation and interaction, it is easier to establish an idea in society that this is disseminated quickly. Prejudice and discrimination are elements present in almost all cultures and have been associated with self-esteem, showing superiority over others to impose specific cultural schemes (Martínez, 2011).

Far from reformulating the concept of otherness and uncovering the positive aspects of it, such as the knowledge of different cultures, we find that, with new digital communication media, the interaction of the public the effective and rapid propagation of the frames that collaborate with the demonized construction of the «other» is encouraged, promoting their social exclusion. According to Balibar (1991), this combination of practices, discourses, and representations creates a network of effective stereotypes that allow the construction of excluded communities.

As a result of all the arguments presented above, it is proposed to make the media aware and educate the population so that they can begin to use and manage the concept of otherness from a positive point of view, that is to say, that in spite of the division between «us» and the «Others», the positive aspects of both are disseminated. The minority is empowered, and the creation of multicultural and fundamentalist societies is promoted, so everyone feels part of a group in spite of their recognized differences. This requires the use of language resources that do not foster fear and are independent of any political idea, as well as educate on the recognition of fake news and news harmful to society, so citizens are unwilling to disseminate them through the new media.

Media literacy is necessary to educate people in this sense and to rebuild the concept of otherness. Through this tool, understanding and knowledge are not given, but rather the message that the media want to transmit is reflected upon and deepened, helping to identify otherness and inviting reflection (Barbas, 2012). Media literacy also aims to equip every person with the expressive skills essential for normal communication and the development of creativity. Likewise, it offers the instruments to: understand the social production of communication, know how to value how power structures work, which are the techniques and expressive elements that the media handle and be able to appreciate the messages with enough critical distance, minimizing the risks of manipulation (Aguaded & Romero-Rodríguez, 2015). In order to teach media literacy correctly, Moeller (2009) proposes the following lines of action

- Incorporate educommunication elements in teacher education to be transmitted to future generations of educators.
- To promote the development of programs in educational institutions.
- Give great importance to the pedagogical skill of critical language analysis.
- To bring educators and communicators closer together.
- To develop resources to transmit the values of media literacy.

It is considered that with the implementation of media literacy and following Moeller's (2009) lines of action, the media's capacity to influence public opinion, dividing society between "us" and "others", will be diminished due to the ability developed by citizens to identify and decode media messages in order to understand their interests and biases. Therefore, this research

can provide a firm basis for future research on the relationship between otherness and media literacy, as well as those related to the new concept of otherness developed as a consequence of the emergence of Information and Communication Technologies and the current communication ecosystem.

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