

## Racist Discourse Of The Brazilian Sports Media At The World Cups

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**Abstract: Purpose.** We analyzed and interpreted media manifestations within the field of Brazilian sports, regarding white and colored players, in the context of different events in the history of Soccer. **Basic procedures.** We focus our study on the use of metaphors by the sports media to describe performance failure, based upon the principles of *Critical Discourse Analysis*. **Main findings.** Racism, an ideology forbidden by law in Brazil, continues to negatively impact the lives, careers and status of colored soccer players, often in very subtle ways, by comparing the treatment given by the media to poor performances by white and colored players. **Conclusions.** The analysis shows that white players are consistently evaluated based upon their professional performance, whereas colored players are evaluated by means of racially-loaded, often offensive, categories which directly attack their character. **Keywords:** Racism, critical discourse analysis, metaphors, World Cup, soccer.

### Introduction

"Ronaldinho chokes under pressure, before the game, and shakes the Brazilian Team". This statement was published in the newspaper *O Dia* (1998:1), after the Brazilian team's defeat against France in the 1998 World Cup. The colored player was considered responsible for the Brazilian team's disaster and such sentence denounces his lack of toughness. In this article we will explore the *choke* metaphor<sup>1</sup> and other image constructions which are associated with white and colored players' bad performances in the World Cup's international games.

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Sterkenburg & Knoppers (2004:311), when dealing with white superiority in sports in Holland, affirm that the racist discourse dominates the labour market. In their terms, this representation “is also evident when members of ethnic minority groups are associated with a lack of education and as having inherent character flaws”, following Van Dijk (1993), to whom the media discourse stereotypes ethnic minorities as criminal, illegal and deviant people. It is possible that such discrimination manifests itself in an unconscious way; that journalists, who are mostly white, don’t see themselves as representatives of the white hegemony. However, in Brazilian literature, there is enough evidence that the racist discourse in sports media is built naturalize. This naturalization process is worth mentioning in Brazil, as well as elsewhere in western countries, since sports media is, primarily, a white-dominated institution with a great deal of power in confirming and reconstructing images that are congruent with hegemonic discourses about social group relations, according to Hargreaves (1986). We define discourse according to Fairclough (1995:94) as “constructions or significations of some domain of social practice from a particular perspective”.

Brazilian everyday language is marked by metaphorical expressions of racist nature, in a way that people rarely recognize the offensive tone of jokes (as – things are black, a black man/girl of white soul, let them who are white to get along themselves<sup>2</sup>). The belief in racial integration is one of the myths that founds the identity of “being Brazilian”, despite society’s manifestations of racism.

In this study, the process of racist manifestation interests us, and we try to describe how such process infiltrates itself in the sporting failure metaphors, in the World Cups reports on the Brazilian team defeats.

The racist sentence that opens this article entitles a report on the Brazilian National team's defeat during the 1998 World Cup. The *choke* and *shake* metaphors, which personify failure and lack of responsibility during the competition, were addressed to Ronaldo by some members of the Brazilian media and population, who blamed him for the defeat. The verb corresponding to *choke* was used by the media to negatively evaluate the lack of toughness by the player, who might have succumbed to fear, before his performance in the final game, against France. The metaphor was printed on the first page of the newspaper *O Dia* (1998:1), in the headline: "Ronaldinho chokes before the game and shakes the Brazilian team". The message's content is offensive, in moral terms, to the point that Ronaldo defends himself in newspaper *O Globo* (1998:39): "I will not allow people to say I choked". The soccer player refuses, specifically, the term "*amarelar*", "*to choke*", with attention to the metaphorical language content.

In the course of this article we take the newspaper's statement as an empirical data analysis. The examination of the article shows the use of evaluative metaphors was neither a single nor an isolated fact in 1998, since it has happened in other similar events such as when Brazil suffered defeats in 1950, 1966, 1982, 1986, 1990, and 1998.

The Brazilian media traditionally presents polemic interpretations on players' performances as well as coaching staff and managers, with polarized criticism using racial terms. In 1950, Barbosa, a black goalkeeper, was considered responsible for the defeat<sup>3</sup>; in 1966, Pelé was criticized with the term "grubby"; in 1982<sup>4</sup> and 1986, it was a white player's turn, Zico. In 1990, it was another white player called Dunga<sup>5</sup>. In 1998, the target was the colored Ronaldo. In 2006, great part of the blame was placed on Roberto Carlos<sup>6</sup>, who was fixing his socks when the opponents scored the game winning goal.

We point out that part of the sports media codifies racism in Brazilian soccer in subtle terms, but not less discriminative, where prejudice is mitigated by the metaphorical language used. We offer evidence that the racial discrimination in Brazilian soccer is effective and that the moral stigma of the “black” race, from a slavery feature, persists in the media as well as in culture, strengthening itself, maybe unconsciously, whenever Brazilian players are not successful. In the media excerpts taken into account here, racist prejudice is revealed when we compare journalists’ opinions regarding colored and white players.

This article’s central thesis is that the media discourses which describe white players’ bad performances focus on their performance as athletes. On the other hand, criticism addressed to colored players mainly approaches their character, labeling such players as fragile, unstable, and not reliable in high-pressure psychological situations. The verbs and adjectives used in these evaluative descriptions, in general, point out differences of degree, with irony and mockery, concerning the attitudes and the racist stereotypes in the written press.

The analysis of unsuccessful sport events contributes to the rescue and the understanding of the troublesome features of the Brazilian people’s identity emergence- analyze structure of sentence, in which the media plays a crucial role in the reproduction and consolidation of racism in Brazilian national sports<sup>7</sup>.

We use the content analysis resources, based on Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995), to describe and interpret the sports media discourse on white and colored soccer players’ performances. We use Critical Discourse Analysis as an analytical research tool for studying the way social power, violence, supremacy and inequality are reproduced by text and talk in the social and political context. The study reveals that colored players are treated as less capable than whites, in terms of perseverance, persistence, and courage, in facing challenge. The effect of

naturalization is confirmed here, as it was established by Knoppers & Elling (2004), once sports journalists, publishers, and media owners, in general, are white men<sup>8</sup>.

This study details the role of the Brazilian media following Sterkenburg & Knoppers (2004) work on the international and Dutch media. As it happens in Holland, the Brazilian media is also dominated by whites, having discriminating discourses regarding those who are colored. On the first part of this text, we focus on (the preferred readings) of the sports media discourses about white and colored players' performances. Next, we analyze the Brazilian team's negative performances in different World Cups to offer an alternative reading of such performances, based on arguments presented by our informing journalists and Ronaldo as well. We do not present nor argue what would be the sources of the sports media social representations.

However, we assume that these representations textualize and synthesize the social-historic context of Brazilian cultural imaginary since slavery was abolish in the country in 1888. Colonial slavery ended but the abolishment of the representations of whites' good qualities and colored imperfections are still very present today.

### **Material and methods**

The data sources for this study were mainly newspapers and interviews. Two hundred forty-four articles from the main periodicals in Brazil were analyzed: *Correio da Manhã*; *Diário do Povo*; *Diário do Rio*; *A Manhã*; *Jornal do Brasil*; *Jornal dos Sports*, *O Dia*, and *O Globo*. We also used data from *TV Globo*, 2002. Five important sports journalists gave in-depth interviews: Luís Mendes, Sérgio Noronha, Tino Marcos, José Ilan, and Carlos Gil. The former player Jair da Rosa Pinto was also interviewed<sup>9</sup>.

The data collection context was the following: for each World Cup, we examined the newspapers that covered Brazil's first game, and we continued analyzing the same newspapers for two weeks. We concentrated on the reading of articles which presented evaluations of the Brazilian players' performances.

We examined sports media dominant discourses on Brazil's defeats in World Cup's decisive matches (1950, 1966, 1982, 1986, 1990, and 1998). We compared the linguistic treatment given by the sports media press when evaluating white and colored players who had underachieving performances, focusing on the qualification offered for both racial groups. From the analysis, we found out that colored players performances are related – by most of the press – in offensive terms, addressed to these players' character, whereas whites are treated as professionals, whose performances are described as result of bad luck. The analysis also shows that the discourse of sports media when describing Brazilian soccer, having race as one of the reference points, makes clear how racism is still strong in the social imaginary of Brazilian national sports.

### **Theoretical approach**

We consider relevant the task of describing dominant discourses used by the Brazilian sports media concerning white and colored players' performances during a Brazilian team's defeat in World Cup's decisive matches because the Brazilian imaginary in such context manifests itself in a more acute way. Besides the analysis of the media dominant discourses, we also present alternative interpretations, with evidence of subtle racism, inscribed in the metaphorical language. These interpretations are mainly formulated by the interviewed journalists, who are sports specialists.

We explore the extent to which the medias dominant discourses gave favourable evidence to Sterkenburg & Knoppers (2004), to whom the sports media discourse is able to handle the white male journalists' representations on values, mental organization, intellectual capacity, and natural physicality of whites and colored athletes.

Knoppers & Elling (2004), by means of her studies on racism in sports in Holland, support our interpretation on Brazilian colored players' failures. The "*glass ceiling*" metaphor, as formulated by Doll-Tepper, Pfister & Radtke (2006) in their studies on the culture of organizations, is applicable here, helping us to interpret the unequal opportunities offered to whites and colored goalkeepers<sup>10</sup>. Our interpretation is based on several points of view, among which we highlight the social representations built by whites about themselves and about colored people over the three hundred years of the history of slavery in Brazil.

Based upon the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis, we assume that racism against colored athletes is subtle, almost invisible, since racism is an unbailable crime according to the Brazilian Constitution. Nonetheless, as it is illustrated in this text, sports media uses special rhetorical resources of metaphorical language in order to escape from the burden of law and, thus protected, keeps on discriminating against colored players when they are pointed out as scapegoats for the Brazilian team's failures.

The social representations of racism, present in sports media, are unconsciously reproduced in the community. This was detailed by Bourdieu & Passeron (1970), who describe the reproduction of *habitus* when referring to the process of inculcation and reception of values and beliefs. This reproduction does not happen calmly; it is a relation of forces, in which violence is present, but is dissimulated by the communication mechanisms. The school contributes to transmit the ideology, knowledge, and culture of the dominant classes and ends up

helping to reproduce this existing social classification as well. The reproduction frequency results in the *habitus*, which tends to consolidate “the system of the objective conditions of which it is the product” (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 1970:9). The reproduction goes unnoticed, since communication, through metaphors and other imagetic resources, dissimulates the power and the symbolic violence which exist in human relations. For Coulon (1995), *habitus* is a silent cooptation and recognition principle, which operates classifications. Thus, certain types of discrimination are silently perpetuated, favoured by *habitus*. According to Bourdieu & Passeron, *habitus* is a set of: “generative schemes of classifications and practices susceptible of being classified which function in practice without having access to the explicit representation and are the product, under cover dispositions, of a distinguishing position in the social space.” (1970:9)

We give evidence of how, by force of *habitus*, sports media shares values with society, so that it assembles and recognizes itself. Its daily language practices, with euphemistic and attenuating resources, tends to reproduce a set of values and beliefs that spread out in society. However, the beliefs generated in form of distinct *habitus*, and even the analysis of public events such as a Brazilian World Cup defeat, create disagreements between common people and different media representatives, as we can verify in the statements made by the journalists we interviewed.

Social representations which relate sports and race mainly emerge through language, in form of images, usually identified as stable metaphors, which last in the course of time, linked to the collective memory and to the group's history.



### **In the 1950s World Cup, Brazil was defeated by Uruguay**

In 1950, when Brazil lost the World Cup final to Uruguay at Maracanã Stadium, two black players were to blame: the goalkeeper Barbosa and Bigode. Among the media's foundation metaphors then, was *lack of toughness*<sup>11</sup> and *to tremble*, meaning lack of courage and determination, lack of commitment and assertiveness.

Brazil was defeated by Uruguay in the final match in the just-inaugurated Maracanã Stadium when the team needed simply a tie take the championship. The metaphorical expression *lack of toughness* came up in the periodical *Diário do Rio* (1950:1): "Our national players lacked toughness<sup>12</sup> and did not meet the expectations of 50 million-Brazilians". Such toughness was presented as a mandatory component for high level competitors. *Toughness*, which the Brazilians did not show, was opposed to the *flame*, which exceeded the opponents. There are evidences that the word *toughness* handed round the sports media, so that *Correio da Manhã* (1950:1) retook the metaphor in the expression *without toughness* to underqualify Brazilians facing the opposing team's flame and courage: "Without toughness, Brazilians did not know how to face the flame of a brave adversary".

More offensive terms in the same semantic area of *lack of toughness* and *courage* occur. They are related to fear and imperfection of character: *to be intimidated*, *to tremble* and *to choke*. *Cowardice*, one of the hardest words that can be addressed to an athlete, is directly associated to lack of both self-confidence and character nobility. *Diário do Povo* (1950:8) registered an illustrative accumulation of these negative attributes to characterize, with mockery, the colored players' incapacity of combat: "(...) they were taken by nervousness and played below standards, including Jair da Rosa Pinto, who was intimidated by the old Obdúlio Varela's severe

defense”. Some articles are a little more assertive and offensive, combining negative traces of cowardice, and fear of bruises and punches.

It is the case of *Diário do Povo*, which describes “a sound defeat, generated from the dark flanks of cowardice. Due to fear of getting bruises and punches, we lost the world cup championship” (*Diário do Povo*, 1950:2, 2nd section). For the white Uruguayans, who were winners, the media made a specific reference to their (white) race, using heart and soul, as symbols of the winning team’s character. *Jornal da Manhã* (1950:1) synthesized this idea of symbolizing a sense of superior values with : “Victory of race – fighting with heart and soul, Uruguayans re-conquer their supremacy in soccer by winning world championship”.

The defeat to Uruguay in the 1950’s World Cup helped to consolidate an incapacity stigma, which had already been following the colored goalkeepers. They became more and more neglected in relation to white goalkeepers. Even the journalist Mario Filho, author of *The Negro in Brazilian Football* (2003)<sup>13</sup>, in another book made a comment, which reinforced the fear stereotype, regarding Barbosa, in the “*trembler*” metaphor: “Then Barbosa came up, a great keeper indeed, a great trembler though. He trembled so much in a game against the Argentines in 45, that he had to change his shorts when the first half was over” (FILHO, 1994:193).

Barbosa, the directly offended goalkeeper who has been humiliated for more than 40 years due to his performance in 1950, attributed to racism the blame put on Bigode and himself as if they were scapegoats, responsible for the country’s misfortune, in interview with Neto (2000:50): “By the way, I would like to know the reason why they put the blame on us – me and Bigode”.

Brazil’s fiasco in 1950 stressed the representation of colored players as not reliable by the media, due to their weakness of character and bad decision making as well as lack of

commitment and courage in face of a big challenge. Journalist Máximo (2000), refers to an excursion to Europe in 1956 when the Brazilian team was studied by a commission formed by the coaches, physicians and managers who were in charge of deeply observing the Brazilian players' behaviour and attitudes. According to the journalist interviewed, the commission's report contained the following evaluation, in which the term corresponding to "to choke" appeared for the first time as the synthesis of negative character traces:

The Brazilian player was immature, emotionally vulnerable, and insecure. In a word, he "choked". The report pointed out, euphemistically, to certain racial features which made us suffer more than an Anglo-Saxon, a Gaul, a Nordic or a Tedesco, the terrible homesickness, the deep nostalgia, and the banzo. There was no other reason for the Brazilian team to debut in Gothenburg with a team as white as possible (MÁXIMO, 2000:490-491).

Máximo's analysis reveals confrontation in relation to the content of his comments on the report. Through such analysis, we can verify the lack of consensus between the media representatives, with favourable manifestations for a re-analysis and recovery of the image and terms of their character suffered by the colored athletes<sup>14</sup>.

Jair da Rosa Pinto Played the final match at the World Cup 1950. For him, Barbosa was crucified by media without being given the right to defend himself. In Ronaldo's situation, Jair says: "Ronaldo has a big advantage because Barbosa had nobody to look out for him; Ronaldo has Hike, that will defend him with everything they got. The International of Milan will give him full support (PINTO, 2002).

The *Diário do Povo* (1950:8) wrote: "(...) they let themselves be carried away by nervousness and played below their capabilities, including Jair, who was covered with severe defense by the old Obdulio Varela". Luis Mendes (2002) examines this episode and says:

That's all there is now. The legend Obdulio Varela at one point helped Bigode off the ground by the hand, after Bigode fell. He then slapped Bigode face as if he was fraternizing with him or hitting the head of a child. This loving gesture by Obdulio Varela became a sequence of three slaps to his face (MENDES, 2002)

## **The confrontation discourse in sports media**

Luis Fernando Veríssimo's analysis on the risk of hiring colored goalkeepers, found in the newspaper *O Globo*, supports the idea that this racist imagery is built from old stories which are verbally retransmitted to us. This is how *habitus*, according to Bourdieu, firms and disseminates itself. These stories, without specific authors or questioning from the listeners' part, become folkloric nature narratives and end up assimilating the narrators' imagery, as prejudice and, above all, as superstition:

I grew up hearing that the best goalkeeper ever in Brazil was Veludo. (...) but he was not the starting player, they said, because he was black. (...) Racist stereotypes about agility and elasticity even favoured an inverse thesis, that a black player is more trustworthy than a white man at the goal. But when Barbosa let that ball by Ghiggia pass, in 1950, prejudice, until then disguised, hardened and became superstition (VERÍSSIMO, 1999:7)

In an in-depth interview concerning the period post-1950's World Cup, the journalist Sérgio Noronha refers to a document that would have circulated throughout the Brazilian sports milieu, trying to dissuade clubs from putting colored goalkeepers in their line up by using the risk of cowardice argument at the decisive moment:

What happened was, it is said that after the 50's World Cup, but I can't prove it, there was a document advising to keep black goalkeepers out of the line up because they would be intimidated at the decisive moment. I do not know if this document exists. If it does, it has already been destroyed (NORONHA, 2002).

This same folkloric narrative reappears, in other terms, as it is verified in the analysis of reporter José Ilan. In an interview to the authors, he was emphatic in relation to the issue of racism in Brazil, especially regarding the resistance of having colored goalkeepers in the starting line up:

I've already heard this kind of thing many times... that black goalkeepers are not good. The very fact of the existence of such comments shows that there is at least some resistance, which is already a difference in relation to a white goalkeeper (...) A black goalkeeper is not good ... black goalkeepers are not good, this comment is based on

nothing, maybe on factoids, or a folkloric tale. In my opinion, this is kind of racist (ILAN, 2002).

In an in-depth interview, the journalist Tino Marcos says:

What strikes me is hearing people say that black goalkeeper suck, that there are no good black goalkeepers. This is absurd. As Barbosa said: the maximum penalty for a crime in Brazil are 35 years, but he has carrying the conviction of guilty for Brazil lost for over 50 years. This myth has traveled the whole world and other reached different generations (MARCOS, 2002).

### **1966 – Pelé is “grubby”**

During an in-depth interview covering the period in time after the 1966 World Cup, Mendes (2002) and Gil (2002) describe that in 1966 Pelé was hunted on the field. Brazil was defeated by Portugal and returned home without even qualifying to the cup quarterfinals. This World Cup had a different scapegoat: (the large number of players selected on the basis of political agreement between the various regions of Brazil. Pelé was criticized because of his repeated injuries that occurred from 1962 on, when he played just one game. The metaphor used was "grubby"(Review Metaphor under "grubby" definition). This term means that Pele could no longer survive as a footballer (he was considered to have no capacity to play soccer anymore). Over the next four years, until 1970, Pelé was being pressured to perform well in the upcoming world cup competition in Mexico and there were still questions about his ability to perform on the field. Rumors of his disability were constantly evoked and a lack of credit upon him and his image in general was being displayed.

With the victory in 1970, Pelé was claimed the king of Brazilian soccer; he was redeemed like a phoenix, reborn from ash. Despite of this, Pelé has always been criticized for being married, twice, with white women. Nowadays, Pelé continues to receive attacks from part of the media that insists he is absent in the country's movements against racial discrimination.

### **1982 – Italy eliminated Brazil**

In 1982, Brazil was defeated by Italy, with three goals by Paolo Rossi, resulting in the country's elimination. The headlines focused on the players' individual faults, especially on the white goalkeeper Valdir Peres, who was spared and well understood though in the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* (1982:22): "The goalkeeper started guilty and left without guilt, for in Valdir Peres's failure, in this World Cup, there was time, spirit and soccer for the recovery".

The media uses the term *failure*, in relation to terms like *trembler* and *intimidated*, presenting a technical *status* of evaluation that is soft in relation to the athlete's performance and neutral in relation to his character.

Saldanha (2002:194), a sports journalist and the Brazilian teams coach at the time, concludes that placing the blame on the goalkeeper for the team's failure, mainly in World Cups, is very common in Brazil. However, in the article entitled: *Whose fault was it?*, after having looked for an explanation for the defeat, he affirms that right after Italy's third goal, everybody started looking for someone to blame, choosing the goalkeeper: "We did not have replacement players... yes... that's it" (SALDANHA, 2002:194). Brazil did not have worthy replacement players. He concluded ironically: "The blame ended up with the Cameroon goalkeeper" (SALDANHA, 2002:194)<sup>15</sup>.

### **1986 – France took the trophy**

In 1986, Brazil lost to France in the world cup final match in the penalty shootout. Once again the media focused on individual faults, this time choosing Zico's and Sócrates'. The newspaper *Jornal dos Sports* (1986:12) decided to place the blame for the defeat on those two players, according to popular opinion: "Everyone is blaming Zico and Sócrates". The newspaper *Jornal do Brasil* (1986:3) described Zico's bad luck in gently and friendly terms: "In a very hot

afternoon during a hot game, Zico was cold when he kicked the penalty to Bats' defense". In the same article, one also could read a compliment note to the great player, emphasizing, in moving terms, that he was not used to make such fatal mistakes:

(We must respect his drama as poignant as a Greek tragedy.- please review) Nobody has fought more than him to be a world cup champion. But fate was inexorable by the inexplicable punishment. Zico said goodbye to the World Cup as the anti-hero in the melancholy of a semi-final classification thrown out the window by a mistake that he was not used to make (*Jornal do Brasil*, 1986:3).

### **In 1990, Brazil lost to Argentina**

In 1990, Brazil was defeated by Argentina but this time it was difficult to find a scapegoat. This defeat was personified by the white player Dunga, who represented a style of soccer inspired by brutal strength and was considered responsible for leading the team in this direction. The sports media, usually focused on the technical dimension, explored, analyzed, and questioned his playing style, disapproved his "strength-soccer", but spared the player as human being. In the newspaper *O Dia* (1990:3): "The attempt to schematize Brazilian soccer by giving up natural talent and improvisation did not work. (...) The Dunga era did not go well (...) the loss to Argentina reveals a need for re-examination of these 'strength inspired soccer' concepts".

Dunga was respected as a person, and moved on with great prestige in the Brazilian sports community, to the extent of being invited to be the national teams coach, position he held during the World Cup in 2010.

Marcos says, when referring to the 1990's World Cup: "One thing that occurs me when I look back at the 1990's World Cup, some people like to joke about this: our defense was black, right! We started with Cafu, Aldair, Junior Baiano and Roberto Carlos" (MARCOS, 2002).

### **In 1998, Ronaldo choked**

As we covered in the beginning of this article, in the 1998 World Cup, the metaphorical use of a verb equivalent to *choke* was used in order to blame the loss on Ronaldo, accused displaying weakness and affecting the national team with his lack of character. The sentence containing this metaphor was printed on the first page of *O Dia* (1998:1), in the headline: “Ronaldo chokes under pressure before the game and shakes the national team”.

When analyzing newspaper and television media statements made about the 1998 event, we verify a change of course in the denunciation trajectory in relation to 1986’s and 1990’s. We could expect that criticisms addressed to Ronaldo would also be limited to his performance as a soccer player. However, they were addressed to him as a person, especially to his character. Ronaldo’s immediate response concerning the use of *to choke* reveals that he felt unfairly affected, as an individual. In the newspaper *O Globo* (1998:39), the player stated: “I can’t allow them to say I’ve choked”. The second part of the utterance, that he has shaken the national team, was not refuted by Ronaldo.

### **Discussion and analysis**

The analysis of the metaphorical language used by the Brazilian sports media shows that stereotypes are created against the colored players’ character. The use of metaphors, such as verbs, adjectives or crystallized nominal forms, is part of the daily language. As the frequency of these metaphorical constructions increases, their semantic and pragmatic content are not realized by group members, who naturalize offences. On the other hand, these indicial expressions work as codes that do not need explanations, since they are *habitus* constituent elements of the group, as patterns that take their meaning from the context.



The presupposition, to the analyst, could be that there is no racism in Brazilian journalism covering soccer, since the athletes' performances is what should be at stake. However, the semantic-pragmatic representations of *choking* do not give chance to this aseptic reading. Indeed, the offence synthesizes the worst we can expect from an athlete. The fateful sentence, focused on Ronaldo, is an eloquent testimony of the discourse power, as well as its deleterious effects, to the extent that the player himself, usually reserved, disapproved the use of the term *to choke*. If we consider that meanings are created through use, the sentence shows a meaning condensation produced by sports media. Ronaldo was affected, both in his moral and in his dignity, by words that consolidated an unpleasant representation. In fact, *to choke* characterizes a cowardly attitude, which is beyond the jest, beyond the joke, which nobody acknowledges, even in the informal context of a game, because it morally offends the player.

The Brazilian media represents colored athletes as more vulnerable, as having less strength of character, as more emotive, and closer to their African slaves' ancestors. The representation built in Brazil is partially distinct from the Dutch's, since in the Brazilian case colored people have no superior trace whatsoever than whites, while black/Surinamese origin athletes are considered more apt for sports that demand special physical resistance, such as Track & Field.

The doctoral thesis of Silva (2002) and master's dissertation by Tonini (2010) touch on racial-ethnic issues and the soccer labor market. Silva (2002) introduces a discussion about the structures of domination that hinder the rise of black coaches in Brazil. It was evident that black people face several difficulties in entering the labor market as soccer coaches.

Tonini (2010) from the analysis and interpretation of 20 interviews, conducted with former players, referees and other folks involved in everyday soccer, concludes that there is a

legacy of slavery ideology, whose idea is that black people are not meant to think and, therefore, would be unable to control.

Marcos (2002) says: “I think something is wrong regarding the situation with soccer coaches. You see that a lot of soccer players are black and there is a large segment of coaches who are former players. But you do not see nearly as many black coaches as we see white coaches. I mean, something is strange here, right?!”

Part of the journalists react critically to the racist imagery, and the players themselves reject the interpretation which presents colored athletes as not being tough, faulty in character, weak, *tremblers*, and *chokers*.

## **Conclusion**

The study’s result points out negative representations propagated in subtle language in the Brazilian sports media addressing colored players through the use of metaphors. The Bourdieu’s *habitus*, which manifests itself in sports media written opinions, reflects and synthesizes the Brazilian national imaginary *habitus*, which sees whites as brave and strong and non-whites as weak and not tough enough under great tension and pressure. People repeat the media metaphors and jokes spread throughout the soccer country; players are execrated for their mistakes. It is so regarding white players because they failed. It is so in what concerns non-white players because they are not reliable.

We conclude that the metaphorical language used, elegant and poetic, allows the sports media to evaluate colored players with offensive terms, associating cowardice traces to these players, who were represented in this study by the goalkeeper Barbosa, in 1950, and by the striker Ronaldo, in 1998.

Brazil's sports media does not know how to coexist with the cultural and ethnic differences; it naturalizes the dichotomist evaluation of racial values and has difficulty in recognizing each segment's qualities. It remains treating sports with a cultural slavery feature, which devaluates the "black" race.

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**Carlos Alberto Figueiredo da Silva** possui graduação em Educação Física pela Universidade Gama Filho (1979), graduação em Direito pela Universidade Federal Fluminense (1993), especialização em Didática e Metodologia do Ensino Superior pela Universidade Estácio de Sá (1995), mestrado em Educação Física pela Universidade Gama Filho (1997) e doutorado em Educação Física pela Universidade Gama Filho (2002). Realizou estágio de pós-doutorado na Universidade do Porto. Atualmente é Professor Adjunto do Centro Universitário Augusto Motta, Professor Titular da Universidade Salgado de Oliveira, membro - Corpus et Scientia, membro - Brazilian Journal of Investigative Pathology, Morphology and Morphometry, membro - Pulsar (São Paulo), membro - Revista Augustus (Rio de Janeiro), Membro - Aliança Intercontinental de Gestão do Desporto, membro - Revista da Educação Física/UEM (Impresso), membro - Movimento (UFRGS. Impresso), Avaliador de Instituições de Ensino Superior do Ministério da Educação e membro - Revista Intercontinental de Gestão Desportiva. Tem experiência na área de Educação Física. Publicou 38 artigos em periódicos especializados e 48 trabalhos em anais de eventos. Possui 11 capítulos de livros e 4 livros publicados. Possui 32 itens de produção técnica. Entre 1995 e 2010 participou de 9 projetos de pesquisa, sendo que coordenou 6 destes. Atualmente participa de 6 projetos de pesquisa, sendo que coordena 5 destes. Realizou outros estudos na . Publicou 32 artigos em periódicos especializados da (país não informado) , Argentina e Estados Unidos e 5 trabalhos em anais de eventos do Canadá, Dinamarca, Estônia, México e Portugal.

### **Sebastião Josué Votre**

Bolsista de Produtividade em Pesquisa do CNPq - Nível 2. Formação na área de sociolinguística, tendo concluído o doutorado pela PUC-RJ e obtido a livre docência pela UFRJ. Seguiram-se vários estágios de pós-doutoramento, com destaque para o de sociologia do esporte na Universidade de Strathclyde, Escócia, com Dr. James Mangan. Na carreira acadêmica alcançou a posição de professor titular da UFRJ (atualmente aposentado) e da UGF. Pesquisador e bolsista de produtividade do CNPq desde 1979, atua também na rede CEDES, do Ministério do Esporte. Cofundador do Laboratório das representações sociais em educação física e coordenador do grupo de estudos Semiótica das atividades humanas. Desde 1986, quando passou a participar do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação Física da UGF, implantou a análise do discurso das representações sociais na área sócio-cultural. A produção científica dos últimos dez anos está voltada para questões relacionadas à linguagem e discriminação por gênero, raça, idade e deficiência nos espaços de esporte e lazer. Nessa temática, no período referido, orientou seis teses de doutorado, 17 dissertações de mestrado, e 13 alunos em iniciação científica.

## Notas

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<sup>1</sup> The original metaphor in Portuguese is “*amarelar*”, whose literal translation is “*to turn yellow*”. Yellow here in this sentence means that the person was not able to do something well because he/she was afraid. The closest expression in the English language is “*to choke*”.

<sup>2</sup> We decided to literally translate such sentences to make clear their racist content in Portuguese, since correspondents in English do not necessarily have a racist content implied. For instance, “things are getting bad” is the correspondent of “*a coisa tá preta*” (“things are black”), the first example above mentioned.

<sup>3</sup> Bigode, who was also a black player, was accused of being slapped by Obdulio Varela and did not strike back in the final match. Part of the blame for Brazil’s defeat was also credited to arrogance, because they underestimated Uruguay’s team.

<sup>4</sup> In 1982, part of the blame was also placed on the coach, Telê Santana, who did play Batista, one of the best defenders of all time.

<sup>5</sup> People also accused Branco of not giving Maradona, his pal and friend, an efficient combat.

<sup>6</sup> This work goes up to the 1998 World Cup.

<sup>7</sup> A supplemental evidence of this thesis, not discussed in the present work, is that in the case of white players’ failure, there have been reactions from the readers’ community, demanding less sharpness and more understanding on the media’s part. On the other hand, there have not been reactions on the readers’ part against the press that accused Ronaldo of choking.

<sup>8</sup> The hegemony is never total, since our most valuable soccer athlete of all time, Pelé, is black. The list of Brazilian notable athletes includes colored figures such as Romário, Ronaldo and Ronaldinho Gaúcho.

<sup>9</sup> The colored player Jair da Rosa Pinto also participated in the game and was execrated in 1950 (he was criticized because of his performance in the final game. Before that, the press considered Jair as a genius).

<sup>10</sup> Many people affirm that the black Veludo, a goalkeeper also from Club Fluminense, was better than Castilho and, thus, should have been the starter; he couldn’t, though, since he wasn’t white.

<sup>11</sup> The original metaphor is “*falta de fibra*” and the literal translation is “*lack of fiber*”, in a sense that a person is not brave enough in dealing with a specific situation.

<sup>12</sup> Referring indirectly to the Brazilian colored players.

<sup>13</sup> *The Negro in the Brazilian Football* was originally published in 1947.

<sup>14</sup> In order to be fair, it is necessary to mention that colored athletes were also praised, both in victory and defeat situations: Leônidas, *The Black Diamond*, was appraised in the 1938 World Cup, even with Brazil’s defeat; Didi, in 1958, in the finals against Sweden, took the ball from the back of the net right after Sweden scored (1 x 0) and walked towards mid field saying: “*we are going to fill these gringos with goals*”. At the end of the game, the king of Sweden came down to the field to shake hands with the greatest “black” player ever, Pelé, who was then 17 years-old; Jairzinho (*The Steel Chest*) who “made a comeback” in 1970 when Brazil started the game losing to Czechoslovakia; Romário, who carried the team on his back in the 1994 World Cup; Ronaldo and Rivaldo, who were a real threat to the opposing defenses in 2002, until the end, when they humiliated Oliver Khan in the final match against the German team.

<sup>15</sup> Cameroon goalkeeper, N’Kono, failed to stop an easy shot of Italy, which led Cameroon team to classify and play against Brazil. The African team tied with Italy in points, but was declassified for having one goal less than Italy. The irony reveals sports media discrimination against colored goalkeepers, even though they were not Brazilians.