

VALUES OF A PROFESSION IN CRISIS: the tensions and challenges journalists from traditional media face while doing journalism at a time of internet consolidation

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ABSTRACT – The objective of this study is to understand the tensions and challenges which traditional media journalists face in light of the Internet and its increasing impact on production routines and professional identities. This study is a result from a Journalism Theory seminar held for journalism graduate students at Positivo University. The focus was to understand the structural changes which journalism is going through, and to raise questions about a business model crisis affecting journalistic companies. The study used semi-structured interviews with 14 journalists from Curitiba (Paraná, Brazil) and compared them with the report *Post-Industrial Journalism: Adapting to the Present*, penned by Anderson, Bell & Shirky (2013). Through the use of content analysis for the interview process, we observed a certain reluctance from journalists toward the new ecosystem presented in the report, as well as some difficulties they have in recognizing the power of new spaces of internet journalism.

Key words: Post-industrial journalism. Journalism theories. Crisis. Professional profile.

VALORES DE UMA PROFISSÃO EM CRISE: tensões e desafios de jornalistas de veículos tradicionais em meio à consolidação da internet no modo de fazer jornalismo

RESUMO – No presente estudo, buscou-se compreender tensões e desafios enfrentados por jornalistas que atuam em meios tradicionais com a intensificação dos impactos da internet na rotina produtiva e na identidade profissional. A pesquisa, originária de um seminário com graduandos da disciplina de Teorias do Jornalismo do curso de jornalismo da Universidade Positivo, buscou entender o contexto das mudanças estruturais que suscitam questionamentos sobre uma crise no modelo de negócios das empresas jornalísticas. O estudo surgiu com a aplicação de entrevistas semiestruturadas a 14 jornalistas de Curitiba (PR) e a confrontação desses conteúdos com o dossiê Jornalismo

Pós-Industrial: adaptação aos novos tempos, escrito por Anderson, Bell & Shirky (2013). Observa-se, a partir de uma análise de conteúdo das entrevistas, resistência dos jornalistas ao novo ecossistema apresentado pelos autores do dossiê, bem como dificuldades para reconhecer as potencialidades dos novos espaços abertos ao jornalismo na internet. Palavras-chave: Jornalismo pós-industrial. Teorias do jornalismo. Crise. Perfil profissional.

**VALORES DE UNA PROFESIÓN EN CRISIS:
tensiones y desafíos de periodistas de enseñanza en medio
de la consolidación de Internet en el modo de hacer periodismo**

RESUMEN – En el presente estudio se buscó comprender tensiones y desafíos enfrentados por periodistas que actúan en medios tradicionales con la intensificación de los impactos de la internet en la rutina productiva y en la identidad profesional. La investigación, originaria de un seminario con graduados de la disciplina de Teorías del Periodismo del curso de periodismo de la Universidad Positivo, intentó entender el contexto de cambios estructurales que suscita cuestionamientos sobre una crisis en el modelo de negocios de las empresas periodísticas. El estudio surgió con la aplicación de entrevistas semiestructuradas a 14 periodistas de Curitiba (Paraná, Brasil) y la confrontación de esos contenidos con el dossier *Periodismo Post-Industrial*, escrito por Anderson, Bell & Shirky (2013). Se observa, a partir de un análisis de contenido de las entrevistas, resistencia de los periodistas al nuevo ecosistema presentado por los autores del dossier, así como dificultades para reconocer las potencialidades de los nuevos espacios abiertos al periodismo en internet.

Palabras clave: Periodismo post-industrial. Teorías del periodismo. Crisis. Perfil profesional.

1 Introduction

The fact that the business model of journalism is currently undergoing structural changes is nothing new. It has gone from being limited to a group of fairly restricted and privileged people who disseminated informative/opinion-based content to the public, to being exposed to an array of independent productions which clearly focus on special interests, sometimes with no commitment to the rigor of verifying and checking information. From incredibly high circulation and audience ratings to a segmented public; from higher profitability in comparison to other business sectors (Sant’Anna, 2008, Costa, 2014) to a culture of *hackers* and amateur productions based on participatory culture (Shirky, 2011). From the intrinsic need to objectively report on main public issues to the rejection of long-standing informative genres and formats attributable to the development of numerous narrative forms. From a daily life filled with the ethical and deontological dilemmas (Sánchez-Vázquez, 1987)

surrounding the trade, to voiced biases or even post-truth politics¹. From relationships (not always friendly ones) between those holding power in the public and private sectors, to covering news stories in a distinctly different form from what had previously been done before, including having to constantly deal with *fake news*. Ultimately, it has changed from a fairly established professional culture to a world in flux, in transformation, or in the words of Anderson, Bell & Shirky (2013), a place in which “the recent changes were so unpredictable and came so rapidly that traditional organizations were incapable of adapting” (p. 73), which, as they claim, has led to a crisis in the current business model and also to the legitimacy of journalism.

These changes to the production and circulation of information suggest that the world of journalists is no longer an exclusive one. Some of the changes to this area (listed in the first paragraph) brought on by the advent of the internet have produced, and continue to produce, new and difficult dilemmas and challenges to both business owners and journalists. In less than two decades these professionals have had to acquire knowledge of social media and mobile devices, and have faced changes to how news is being produced; changes that go hand in hand with new strategies for producing and divulging multimedia content. Not only that, but they also have to concern themselves with understanding *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram* algorithms and working with tags and SEO techniques in order that their content can be found on *Google* and other search engines. And if that were not enough, they also need to learn the basics of programming and routinely search through new social networks and other virtual tools in order to adapt to how the profession is now being done. All of this virtual existence can help uphold journalism as a fundamental institution essential for democracy.

Without trying to be nostalgic and say the trade was better before the advent of the internet, this article resulted from a seminar held in the second semester of 2016 with second-year journalism students² at Positivo University. The seminar was an exploratory and heuristic pedagogic activity which included a course on Journalism Theories. This seminar was administered by one of the authors of said course. The objective here was to have students, through semi-structured interviews with journalists from media vehicles in Curitiba (capital of Parana State, in the South Region of Brazil), identify and understand the dilemmas, challenges, adaptations and perspectives of said journalists and the companies they work for, and compare it

to elements of the report, *Post-Industrial Journalism: adapting to the present* (Anderson et al., 2013).

The report (which served as the basis for the pedagogic activity) opens by stating that, since the popularization of digital networks, journalism has been going through a real crisis in terms of its business model. As a result, this crisis has had an effect on the institutional side of journalism, leading to credibility issues within the profession. According to the report, “the visible crisis of news institutions is the shrinking of their traditional functions. But a second, less discussed crisis, is the need for institutional stability, predictability and a margin of sources for new projects” (Anderson et al., 2013, p. 87). These authors believe that this crisis was initially the result of a reduction in newsroom functions, but that it was also brought on by a decline in revenue, a loss of readers and, as Costa adds (2014), the “emergence of new discoveries in technology and network communication” (p. 54). Firstly, despite lacking statistics which are methodologically in line with the numbers³, 1.2 thousand journalists in Brazil lost their jobs in 2016, the worst registered rate in the history of journalism in the country (ABI, 2017). The crisis, heightened by economic and political instabilities and the advent of new technologies, led to 15 traditional vehicles having to cease operations in 2016, and also led to an 8-15% drop in the circulation of five of the country’s major newspapers (ABI, 2017). But the outlook was not great even before 2016: data from Agência Volt, an agency which specializes in data journalism and tracking layoffs in Brazilian newsrooms, reported that more than 1.4 thousand journalists were laid off between 2012 (the first year statistics were collected) and 2015. A little more than 300 journalists lost their jobs in 2017, a number that almost doubled in 2018: 580 professionals had been laid off by the time this article was written (Volt Data Lab, 2018).

Given the need for a restructuring in the area, which the data seems to also suggest is consistent for most journalistic companies in Brazil, the report focuses on the fact that journalism in North America should be reshaped as of 2020, starting with the forms for economic subsidiaries of information and also how it can continue as an institution for democracy. They state that part of the dilemma is due to the technological and social changes that the internet has produced, insofar as “the ability to recognize, find and tell an important story in the most appropriate format and for a specific audience is essential, but [with the internet] the number of formats

and divergence of audiences have grown” (Anderson et al., 2013, p. 46). This principal could apply to the Brazilian context, although with differences in time, space and intensity (Rodrigues, 2013), and could be used in classrooms and further interviews with journalists.

Before evaluating the interviews (through content analysis) and how they dialogue with the report, we take a look at the concept of *post-industrial journalism*, in particular, the challenges it poses to Brazilian reality.

2 The Report and the Reality in Brazilian Journalism

The context of adaptation in North American journalism, discussed in the report, cannot simply be applied to the challenges facing the Brazilian model. The development of the journalistic industry in Brazil is rife with structural inequalities, historically, economically, politically, culturally and socially, which makes producing journalistic information different, if not more complex, than in other countries such as the United States and Western Europe. Despite the fact that the hegemonic references for producing news are American (which reveals a lot about why there is a lack of understanding in terms of the potential the area could explore in Brazil) the journalistic industry has had a unique development in this country: a) the media has an unrivalled monopoly in the private sector, sustained by public funds and in defense of neoliberal values (Kucinski, 2005); b) there is a hegemony of conservative media companies that place a high importance on technical innovations⁴; c) most people do not have access to formal education, and therefore do not fully understand their social rights in a virtual world which, for most of the population, starts with and is consolidated by mobile devices – particularly smartphones⁵.

Despite these caveats, the report is an important document for understanding some of the dilemmas that face journalism and advertising in Brazil. As Anderson et al. (2013) explain, the fact that the internet has done away with the subsidy of traditional advertising in journalistic media lends credence to the idea that the area is in need of restructuring. More than just highlighting a breakdown in the business models, the report also states that the industrial production of news itself has become anachronistic. Rodrigues (2013) reminds us that all modes of capitalist production go through structural changes, and goes on to say that the problem that traditional journalistic industry has is

with adapting to the three words of order associated to this new form of economic organization: creativity, reactivity and flexibility. These factors are different from the developments described in the previous paragraph. She assesses how one of the major reasons for rejecting the business models is the impossibility of traditional industry to restructure itself to the new values, “since one of its main features is a strongly hierarchical and centralized structure, committed to ensuring control of internal processes and, most importantly, of what will be communicated” (Rodrigues, 2013, p. 138).

Costa (2014) adds to this with his discussion on the main changes to values in journalism. He believes the logic of post-industrial journalism needs to overcome the model restricted to content production. It is essential for companies and professionals to be aware of the fact that, because of the internet, newspapers are no longer in complete control of the production chain. In other words, journalism has gone from having an industrial production chain, shaped by four well-defined sectors (content production, administrative-financial sector, commercial department, and the logistics of circulation), to depending on external companies, particularly *Facebook* and *Google*.

These social networks not only modify the production chain, but also provide journalists with a range of previously unthought-of industrial information. Therefore, the crisis could be seen as a moment of instability and restructuring within the journalistic ecosystem. In theory, these reconfigurations provide more freedom to professionals and the public (Anderson et al., 2013), something which is in conflict with the historical hierarchical structure of newsrooms (Rodrigues, 2013). The report also draw attention to the increase in creative possibilities; in other words, the changes and evolution of online tools have helped produce and circulate visual (aesthetics), multimedia (several elements) and interactive (touch sensitive) information. Another factor is the ubiquity of access with the popularization of mobile devices and networks - Wi-Fi, 3G and 4G – in users’ daily lives.

In fact, the popularization of mobile devices and the ensuing social networks and changes it has brought about were the focus of a study conducted by the *International Center for Journalists* in 2017 called *The State of Technology in Global Newsrooms*⁶. Here are some of the main findings from the study: a) there is a serious technology gap in newsrooms; b) gaining the public’s trust remains a challenge; c) models for generating revenue continue to be a problem; and d) journalists seek a specialization that their employers do not offer.

We would like to point out the main challenges as they pertain to Latin America: unreliable profitability; gaining the trust of the public; and creating quality content. In addition, newsrooms find it more difficult to adapt to changing business models and to obtain new sources of revenue. This is an example of the Brazilian reality. These features are in conflict with the hierarchical hegemonic structure found in traditional journalistic companies. However, understanding these features is important towards reassessing the values of professionals and the trade itself.

While discussing the concept of post-industrial journalism, in particular the problems it presents to Brazilian reality, we need to look at the methodological profile and contributions, including the analysis of the interviews, respectively.

3 Interviewee profiles and methodological procedures

These are some of the discussions proposed in the pedagogic activity: evaluating how producers relate to news since the popularization of the internet; understanding the essential nature of journalism; and how these professionals perceive the challenges and possibilities of reshaping the field to adapt to the reality they now work in. There were a total of 14 interviews, all of which were organized by students and took place between the months of August and September of 2016. These interviews were conducted with journalists from radio and television stations and print newspapers from Curitiba, in the state of Paraná.

The group of interviewees (an equal number of men and women) was compiled of professionals working for affiliates of the four major television broadcasting companies in Brazil: *Rede Globo (RPCTV)*, *SBT (Rede Massa)*, *Rede Record (RICTV)* and *TV Band*, including *É-Paraná* (local educative broadcaster). Other professionals work in printed press (*Tribuna do Paraná*, a best-selling daily newspaper in Curitiba and the metropolitan region, and *Gazeta do Povo*, which stopped daily circulation on May 31, 2017) and in radio (*BandNews FM*, the main all news broadcaster with an audience base aged 25-40 and *Banda B* Curitiba, one of the main AM broadcasters in the region). None of these journalists work directly with the internet although most of them have had some experience with it as all the aforementioned companies have web portals.

The interviewees, randomly selected by the students, worked in the newsrooms of major local media vehicles and had a singular profile, which relativized some of the study results, but also placed most of the journalists under pressure. For example, Bergamo, Mick & Lima (2012) conducted a study to identify the profile of Brazilian journalists. In that study, 59% of professionals were aged 18-30. The age range of the interviewees for this study is not an issue: many fall in the age bracket of 31-40 (J1, J4, J6, J10, J11 and J14) and 20-30 (J2, J3, J5, J7 and J9); the remaining interviewees are all over the age of 41 (J8, J12 and J13). Only one of the journalists does not have a degree in journalism (J13). The oldest journalist graduated in 1997 (J6) and the youngest in 2015 (J7). With the exception of four (J3, J5, J11 and J13), all journalists have complementary education whether that be another graduation course or *latu sensu* post-graduation courses (specializations or MBAs). None of them have a *stricto sensu* post-graduation course (Master's degree, Professional Master's degree or PhD). All of them work in the formal labor market and, with the exception of two (J2 and J12), are salaried employees. All but two (J12 and J14) work in the private sector. At the time of this study, only four interviewees (J1, J7, J9 and J10) had been working at a media vehicle for less than two years, one belonging to the younger age group (J7).

This study focuses mainly on journalists whose careers are consolidated in the traditional market. The interviewees were not chosen at random; the students interviewed those who were seen as references in local journalism. As a result, more than half the interviewees either worked or work as editors or in management for their respective companies, and are therefore familiar with the industrial model of news production or at least were trained to work with it. Even though they are professionals who work specifically in journalism, analyzing their perceptions about the changes in which the activity is going through is relevant as some of these same journalists have had, have, or will have opportunities to outline and propose strategies for the media vehicles they work for.

The interviews, consisting of 30 questions, were recorded and published. Not all questions were included in this text due to editing purposes. Furthermore, five of the initial 19 interviews were omitted as they did not match the activity guidelines. The first half of the questions are closed⁷ and focus on collecting data on academic backgrounds, professional history and other information relevant towards understanding the interviewees' profiles – the main data from

this section is presented at the beginning of this article. The remaining questions are open-ended⁸. They focus on the institutional crisis of journalism (as identified by the report referenced in this paper) and the impact new digital technologies have on production routines.

The answers were transcribed and collected into one file (containing almost 50 pages and more than 20 thousand words). They were organized and compared using content analysis, organizing the data according to inferences; i.e., identifying patterns in the answers. The answers from each analysis were compiled and compared to each other. In this regard, the study followed Bardin's (2010) methodological principle that "analysts are like archeologists. They are looking for clues; 'documents' they might discover or unearth. But the clues are the manifestation of states, data and phenomena" (p. 41). Understood as a set of rules and methods, content analysis uses heuristics to broaden the exploratory character of the study, which in turn "increases the propensity for discoveries" (p. 31).

The analysis, presented in the following sections, was divided into three parts. All three parts were based on the argument presented in the report used in the seminar. The first part looks at the interviewees' impressions and experiences with how the journalistic market and the profession are shaped, and if there really is a crisis in the business model or not. These discussions led to the realization that professionals who work in industrial news production have the essential nature of journalism in democratic regimes. Lastly, the analysis elaborates on the pressures these professionals face in their jobs and how goals and results are identified within newsrooms.

4 Values of a Profession in Crisis

According to most of the interviewees, journalism is essential to society and the profession needs to be appreciated. They also believe that it is going through a period of uncertainty even though there is no consensus about the origins or consequences of said period. The production routines are full of pressures that affect the day-to-day practice of work, from the shortage of human resources and materials to the very real possibility of losing one's job, not to mention the strain of meeting goals and the pursuit of audiences. Lastly, the journalists in this study feel that their employers are being transparent about the economic situation yet do not seem to have much information about their companies' revenues.

When asked about their assessment of the crisis in the field, a significant number of the interviewees (except *J7* and *J10*) recognized that the companies they work for were in fact experiencing such a situation. One interviewee (*J10*) said that the television broadcaster he works for was not experiencing any kind of business failure, and that he keeps himself informed about the crisis in the profession by talking to colleagues from competing companies; in other words, he believes the problem is exaggerated. Yet this needs to be seen in relative terms as this is one interviewee who had only been working in the field for less than a year. There is a tendency for this type of professional to have less pressure on them as their salary is closer to the minimum wage⁹. There is another journalist who also does not believe there is a crisis, he claims that “communication companies are not transparent when it comes to this issue” (*J7*), and that the lack of a collective journalistic organization means professionals have to take the businesses’ word about whether there is instability or not.

Almost half of the interviewees did not see this time period as being unstable – this includes the two journalists mentioned above who believe it to be exaggerated (*J7* and *J10*). They believe there is no strain on business models, contrary to what the report says. At least four interviewees¹⁰ believe there are serious instabilities in the field, but attribute them as *immediate or natural* consequences of economic stagnation¹¹ (*J2*, *J5*, *J8* and *J14*). One interviewee strongly believes the unstable economy has had an effect on editorials but tries to minimize it when he says: “The editorial crisis is always going to exist and it is a good thing that it does, because editorial issues always need to be discussed” (*J8*). Two other interviewees believe the crisis is augmented by factors like the public’s poor reading habits, the popularization of the internet, and/or the tedious form in which news is produced by traditional vehicles; but they do list the economy as the reason for the crisis (*J11* and *J13*). Of course, business models are affected by this type of situation. For example, Sant’Anna (2008), in her assessment of print media, points to a direct relationship between the circulation of print newspapers and changes to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP): “Like with other goods and services, the consumption of newspapers, advertisements and classifications tend to increase as the economy increases” (p. 44). Nevertheless, even though this factor does need to be taken under consideration, when it is compared to the report we can see that it might not be able to explain the complexity of what the field is going through.

Five of the journalists believe that stagnation affects everything, but is more prominent in the traditional forms of news production (*J3, J4, J6, J9* and *J12*). Interviewee *J6* disagrees with the idea that the main reason for the crisis lies with the country's economic deficit, stating it is similar to a combined instability, a point of view which is more in line with what is discussed in the report. This same interviewee believes the biggest challenge that face companies is understanding the journalistic and economic power of the internet, and that the problem is related to

... a decline in the way that news is consumed as we know it, **the way that I learned to do it**. Nowadays it is much easier to build your own *hall* of information, which is different from what we do, which is choosing what information the reader or viewer will receive. And **we are still unable to understand this**. What readers want, what viewers want. Television is not the predominant source of information for the younger age groups in the market today. And if television isn't the main source, you can imagine how it is for radio and newspaper (*J6*, emphasis added).

This opinion is shared by another journalist who states that the reason for the decline in advertisers is due to the "format itself" (*J9*). He believes that the challenge lies with changing information into something "more palatable, that keeps the people's interest and doesn't **become boring** Everything is more dynamic nowadays and we have to adapt to that. I think that is where the crisis lies" (*J9*, emphasis added).

Even though they may differ on its origins, all the interviewees recognize that a period of instability does exist. They all agree that journalism is essential (also posited in the report) and its inexistence would make life in society "even worse" (*J9*). Reasons vary from normative (at times platonic) views of what the profession is, to more pragmatic and contextualized ones. The metaphor fourth power (*J5*) and some of its derivations are used as normative views. Some examples are: a) the innate ability to control and denounce (*J4* and *J7*), a kind of argument that disregards production routines, making them increasingly disperse and dependent on the Public Ministry and the Federal Police, among other institutions; b) the view that journalism produces impartial, true or real narratives¹² (*J1, J2* e *J6*) since the press "has had more freedom" after its re-democratization (*J13*).

In terms of political polarization in Brazil (which a large part of journalism clings to) this idealization of the profession is almost non-existent: control, denunciations and producing impartial narratives take a back seat to increasingly more biased or propaganda-like coverage which these journalists, to some degree, appear to have incorporated.

Before we present the more pragmatic arguments we would like to point that the metaphor, fourth power, has become even more obsolete ever since the popularization of the internet. The term refers to the idea that journalism represents social interest and “the public not only had to see the press as its legitimate political representative, but also believe that this same press was able to understand and correctly portray the basic empirical reality of the world” (Anderson et al., 2013, p. 68). This ratifies the idea that, apart from the business model crisis, journalism also faces problems with its credibility in the public’s eye, a belief not shared by most of the interviewees.

Some of the more pragmatic arguments on the importance of the profession are: a) divulging everyday developments considered to be important or interesting (*J10*); b) the ability to provide people with knowledge outside the scope of formal education (*J1* e *J10*); c) withdrawing or presenting arguments, either informative or opinionated, so the public can form an opinion on or be made aware of the main issues of the day (*J3*, *J13* and *J14*). Even though they recognize this perspective, Anderson et al. (2013) and Costa (2014) believe the profession’s new ecosystem needs to overcome the logic that the role of journalists is reduced to just content production. This change in perspective may also reveal gaps in which journalistic activities are able to compete for space with aggregate companies such as *Google*, *YouTube* and *Facebook*, and develop technologies while appropriating the principle of participative culture: they aggregate content created by third-parties which feed off each other. According to Costa (2014), traditional journalism does not “see information as a service but as something pure, something that functions by itself...Overall, this industry is concerned with digitalizing its analogic content and making it free for internet users” (p. 57).

Irrespective of the kind of approach, none of the interviewees had any ideas about how the internet could be used to solve the crisis, which suggests a lack of knowledge or objection to the existing changes. Costa (2014) attributes these objections and business issues to generations. He classifies the generations into three categories: 1) analogic natives: adults from the 1990s, individuals who are “experienced, most of whom are adept at criticism. Analogic natives prefer recognized sources when searching on the internet, the kind of sources that have achieved credibility in the analogic world” (p. 58); 2) digital natives: advocates of the digital world, they learn on the internet and give it new meanings; 3) digital analogs: born in an analog world, but immerse themselves in a digital one. These

kinds of people “do everything they can to adapt to the new world. They often accept the digital world; yet do not comprehend it in its totality” (p. 59). He goes on to say that businesses from the sector are essentially controlled by analogic natives. This also applies to the interviewees in this study as they set the principles and values of the profession based on structured industrial guidelines.

Recognizing the essentiality of journalism does not project confidence in terms of employment security. Five of the interviewees believed in employment preservation (*J7, J10, J12, J13 and J14*). Some of them see this as a kind of business policy for the journalistic vehicle where they work, which shields them from the pressures and/or considers them as journalists with large market potential.

Most of the interviewees concerned about the possibility of losing their jobs say that it is a daily thing; it comes with the profession (*J1, J2, J4, J8, J9 and J11*). Some others fear losing their jobs over the medium or long term. One interviewee from this group argues that his low wage, lower than other employees from the same company, makes it almost impossible for him to be let go over the short term (*J3*). There are even others still who believe that effectively fulfilling their job is a determining factor in growing their careers, as it reduces the possibility of being laid off, facilitates a quick repositioning in the labor market or makes it difficult to find an immediate replacement due to said employee’s high level of qualification and professional engagement (*J2, J5 and J6*). Only one of the interviewees listed the growth of the traditional journalism market as a reason for being laid off: “We have a group of company owners who probably make up four large media companies in Paraná. I’ve worked for two of them, so my restriction is pretty low¹³ [*sic*, right?” (*J11*).

5 The Economic Life of Media Vehicles: Pressure and Transparency

After identifying perceptions on the crisis in the profession and to the business models, and looking at how these professionals deal with the fear of losing their jobs, we now turn to looking at the interviewees’ understanding of their companies’ economic life – including the increases or decreases to advertising revenue. The focus here is to see how, and if, this situation adds pressure to their working lives.

With the exception of one journalist (*J7*), all others believe that their companies are transparent in how they present their economic figures. Three journalists did not objectively describe how this process works on a day-to-day basis (*J9*, *J13* and *J14*). Another eight stated this transparency occurs through actions such as formal meetings (monthly, quarterly, biannually), or through meetings with managers and/or advertising departments (*J2*, *J3*, *J4*, *J5*, *J6*, *J8*, *J10* and *J11*). Pressure from the Union of Journalists (*J1*), informal conversations¹⁴ with colleagues (*J8*), or precarious working conditions (*J12*) are also ways the interviewees are able to learn about their companies' financial situation.

However, when looking at the science behind increases or decreases to advertising revenue, most interviewees seemed to give an opposite answer to that of the last question. Nine (*J1*, *J2*, *J4*, *J7*, *J8*, *J9*, *J10*, *J12* and *J14*) have little to no information about the increases and decreases of revenue. The remaining interviewees say the data is transparent: a) two of them said this transparency comes from meetings with management or from daily newsroom meetings (*J11* and *J13*); b) another said it comes from the company's profit-sharing mechanism (*J3*); c) and another two said it comes from holding management positions or working close to those who do (*J5* and *J6*). The last interviewee was the only one who, over the last few years, measured the results of the company he works for, which is echoed in the temporal logic of increased layoffs presented in the introduction of this study: "From 2013 to 2014, the decrease was practically zero. From 2014 to 2015, there was a sharp decrease, and from 2015 to 2016 the decrease was precarious. The decrease in advertising revenue is scary" (*J6*).

The lack of structure in the profession is cited as a reason for how their company's economic situation affects their day-to-day work.

I honestly fear telephone journalism or "CTRL + C, CTRL + V"¹⁵, which happens quite a lot. And as journalists, we really need to fight against this. When you're on the street, looking at the interviewee or at an event, you have another view. And when you have a totally simple structure, or no structure, to approach an event with, this is what really worries me, and it happens every day (*J1*).

Even though some respondents claim that they do not think about the company's financial situation on a daily basis (*J5*, *J6*, *J7*, *J9*, *J10*, *J11* and *J12*), the inevitable possibility of dismissal (*J2*, *J4* and *J8*), working towards a goal (*J3*) and the constant search for

audiences (J14) are also pressures experienced every day. One of the respondents, although he rejects the term *pressure*, said that “uncomfortable” working situations do exist (J13).

Two statements are worth looking at on this issue: The first is *self-censorship*. One interviewee claims that the goal of generating less overhead and/or seeking more revenue lead to some reports being excluded: “You don’t write up an important report **on your own** in order to seek an audience and increase the company’s revenue” (J11, emphasis added). The second statement is about how the Collective Labor Agreement, an annual contract that regulates salaries, interferes in the workplace:

É It is a very delicate negotiation in which both parties threaten each other. These threats are hidden, they’re not explicit. So, you might be in a certain situation in which you do not know if you’re going to even finish your work day or have a job to go back to the next day...If you walk away, you don’t even know if you’ll be able to get back into the market. 15 years ago, you could walk away and be certain that you could come back. 10 years ago, you would be almost certain. Nowadays, there’s no certainty (J6).

There is no consensus among the interviewees about whether journalists should or should not concern themselves with their companies’ revenue. Eight interviewees believed (J1, J2, J5, J7, J8, J9, J11 and J14) that thinking about strategies to increase the company’s revenue is important – one such strategy is to do your job well at the lowest possible cost. Doing your job well does not mean writing click-bait headlines: “You write your material with clicks in mind, and then [you] entice [readers] with it, but there is no information in it, I find this difficult” (J9). Interviewee J7 said that, despite being practical, having journalists worry about the company’s revenue is a paradigm shift that only future generations should have to face.

Those who disagree that newsrooms should be the ones concerned with the company’s revenue also believe that the way to help the company grow is by doing your job well (J3, J4, J6, J10, J12 and J13). “In the same way that companies have journalists, they also have people who think about this [revenue]. Commerce has to think about commerce, marketing has to think about marketing, we have to think about what is happening in politics and the economy in Brazil” (J3). “It’s good to know about the financial part. I just don’t see that we should actually participate in the business directly. This can disrupt our work as journalists” (J13).

6 Old Models for New Practices

The interviewees had differing opinions when asked how their companies' business models should be assessed¹⁶. Some think the model is too traditional, citing the fact that it can be run by a family-oriented management (*J1, J4, J5 and J7*). There are others who warn that the business standard is characterized by job insecurity, which jeopardizes a company's economic and/or political independence (*J3, J8 and J12*). Issues like bureaucracy, being resistant to innovations, and economic and political pressure in news production are factors that are uniquely linked to the logic of industrial news production.

On the other hand, some of the interviewees believe that companies look for investments from other sources like classifieds and web space, to ensure that their models are ideal or at least more suitable to post-industrial journalism (*J10, J11 and J13*). The dependence of companies on other activities within the same business group is viewed as an efficient strategy (*J14*) as well as a policy for preventing unrestricted relationships between the commercial department and the activity, factors that improve how these companies are managed (*J6 and J9*).

Statements concerning the professionalization of companies tend to vary when it comes to new financial possibilities. This professionalization is affected by the actual structure of business models and can be seen in the hegemonic cynicism expressed by the interviewees when they talk about surviving without the support of traditional advertising (*J1, J2, J3, J4, J6, J7, J8, J9, J10, J12 and J14*). There are others who, although don't believe that journalism could survive without this kind of income source, do believe that investing in the public sector would promote businesses. This is a factor that would keep private communication conglomerates in Brazil dependent on the state, even if it were rejected on a cultural level. There are examples of this on an international level, where media vehicles "sustain themselves without any financial support from advertising; instead they rely on funding from the public and even from companies. But it is difficult to imagine this happening in Brazil, at least over the short term, without having it affect the journalistic content being produced" (*J7*).

There are professionals who believe media vehicles can survive without the support of traditional advertising, whether through the growth of the digital market or by applying some kind of strategy outside the scope of traditional advertising (*J5, J11 and J13*). The most typical

example cited by the interviewees was sponsored content. Here, the idea is to provide entertainment and/or informative content in a feed at the bottom of the page. This content, included by Google, generates on average about 2 million clicks per month. Aggregating external content, and not having to produce it, pays for the salaries of a little more than 10% of the company's employees. This action can be a disruptive component, but it then raises a number of concerns as the media vehicle no longer has control over the type of material being made available on the site.

The Ethical/deontological implications taken from the professional culture of journalists and the disruptive components (these components being the sharp decrease in the way that news is produced and distributed in the digital world) show that journalism seems to be facing more challenges, and maybe more possibilities. In this regard, there are more successful forms of business models in the digital world that appropriate the aggregate logic. Technology companies such as *Google* and *Facebook* are examples of this. Despite the lack of transparency in how algorithms work (Brown, Wenzel & Roca-Sales, 2017), they are tools for expanding circulation, including interaction and measuring impacts through comments and/or reactions. On the other hand, there are collectives in these spaces which have the power to share information. It is up to the new profile of professionals, from the post-industrial model, to use the machines and the audiences in the production process (Anderson et al., 2013).

7 Final Considerations

One of the more well-known excerpts written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1998) says "all that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind" (p. 14). If, two or three decades ago, the structure of the production chain for news media was said to come to an end, it would have been seen as a joke. Even though there have been structural changes to journalism, as highlighted in the beginning of this study, some business owners and journalists (who are the focus of this article) are still reluctant to accept them:

Nowadays, the luck of journalism in the United States lies much more in the hands of each individual journalist than it does in the institutions they work for. In order to achieve they type of journalism that a complex and technocratic democracy demands, we need each professional to assume the most

difficult part of the job, that is, to decide what quality journalism is in a world which has no shortage of information. (Anderson et al., 2013, p. 85).

For the purpose of discussing the crisis to business models this article conducted semi-structured interviews with 14 journalists from the city of Curitiba and compared the content of their interviews with the *Post-Industrial Journalism: Adapting to the Present* report, written by Andersen et al. (2013).

Even though there is no desire to end the discussion on this topic, and even less desire to suggest that an evaluation restricted to only a handful of respondents reflects and summarizes the entire context of the crisis, this article shows how much resistance there is from professionals to see the new potentials of the trade. This reluctance comes more or less from recent graduates, highlighting challenges faced in the teaching of journalism itself, which is the main reason for writing this study.

A world where anyone is capable of producing, and especially, distributing information to a wide range of people can present a number of problems, but also a number of opportunities. However, even if there are structural changes in the way the profession is conceived, it needs to be contextualized in order to bring it to the Brazilian reality. Contrary to Western European countries and the United States, journalism in Brazil is different in at least three ways: a) the private media is a monopoly, but one that relies on public funds; b) editorial lines are predominantly conservative and, as a result, so is its content; and c) unstable access to formal education and a lack of access through mobile devices, particularly smartphones.

For most of the interviewees, journalism is important to society and it needs to be valued. They believe it is going through a period of instability, even though there is no consensus on the origins of said instability and even less on the consequences of it. Production routines have pressures that have an effect on everyday work, from the lack of human and material sources to the high likelihood of losing one's job, the pressure to meet deadlines and the endless search for audiences. Lastly, most of the interviewees feel that their employers are transparent when presenting the company's financial situation; conversely, they do not have the slightest idea about the company's revenue.

TRANSLATED BY: Lee Sharp

NOTES

- 1 Post-truth is not synonymous with lie, but “describes a situation in which, while public opinion is being formed, the objective facts have less of an impact than the people’s emotions and beliefs”. Post-truth relativizes the truth, downplays the objectivity of the data and favors emotional discourse (Zarzalejos, 2017, p. 11).
- 2 The following students participated in the study: Adrian Wosniak, Ana Beatriz da Luz, Ana Clara Faria, Andr  Luiz Moraes, Andr  Luiz Slosavski, Brayan Val ncio, Bruno Laurentino, Camila Abr o, Camila da Fonseca, Daiany Barth, Dieneffer Santos, Estela Cruz, Gabriel Belo, Gabriel Domingos, Gabriel Krambeck, Gabriel Zilli, Gabriela Rodrigues, Gabrielly Domingues, Giovana Canova, Guilherme Carraro, Guilherme Coimbra, Guilherme Dias, Heloise Sim es, Jamille Maltaca, J ssica Mariani, Jos  Leonardo Coelho, Julia Bianchini, Let cia Neco, Lucas Capanema, Lu s Farias, Marina Ortiz, Nathalie Eimi Oda, Nicole Smicelato, Patr cia Sankari, Phaenna Assump o, Rafaella Silva, Raul Daniel, Ricardo Heidegger, Talita Brasileiro, Vinicius Severiano and Vitor Teixeira.
- 3 By and large, the Ag ncia Volt numbers are relative to media layoffs. What’s more, they do not necessarily reflect the decrease in positions as the ones filled by other professionals are not separated from this total.
- 4 This is not to say that there are no technological gaps in Brazilian newsrooms.
- 5 According to *Brazilian Media Research* (Brazil, 2016), which studies the habits of media consumers in Brazil, “cell phones are by far the most common devices for accessing the internet, more so than personal computers, and around three out of every ten interviewees state they use only one device for this. The average daily time spent online, including midweek and weekends, is a little more than four hours and thirty minutes (p. 33).
- 6 The study is from Georgetown University and was supported by *Storyful*, *Google News Lab* and *SurveyMonkey*. Retrieved from goo.gl/DQq6f3.
- 7 The closed questions helped in describing the profiles of the interviewees. The questions were: 1. Name and media vehicle where you work; 2. Country of origin; 3. Age; 4. What kind of institution did you study at? (public, private, or no post-secondary education);

5. Name of the institution you graduated from; 6. Have you taken any other courses? Which one(s)?; 7. Have you taken or are you taking an MBA or specialization course? Which one?; 8. Have you studied a Master's or doctorate course? Which one?; 9. How many jobs do you have?; 10. What kind of contract do you have at your main job? (salaried, legal entity, freelance, informal; others); 11. The communication channels used at your previous workplace(s); 12. The communication channels where you currently work; 13. Length of time at current job; 14. Positions you have had at previous workplaces; 15. Positions you have at your current job.
- 8 The open-ended questions are divided into two segments. The questions in the first segment relate to the newspapers and the reforms they have gone through to adapt to the internet: 16. How would you assess the "crisis" faced by journalistic vehicles?; 17. How and why is journalism still important to society?; 18. What do you know about your company's economic situation?; 19. How does your company's economic situation affect your job on a day-to-day basis?; 20. How would you assess the business model for the company you work for?; 21. Are you aware of any increases or decreases in public funding at your company?; 22. Are you afraid of being laid off?; 23. Should journalists concern themselves with company revenues? If these revenues are poor, should journalists offer help in some way?; 24. What are some ways that your company could survive without the support of traditional advertising? The second segment of questions pertain to the internet and how new technologies affect the production process: 25. How have the internet and new technologies contributed to the failure of traditional business models?; 26. What does traditional journalism have to offer to the public?; 27. There are a number of companies investing in web portals and working with social media and *mobile* content. Does this represent a lack of vision? Why?; 28. What expectations does your company have for online media results?; 29. What are the main challenges to realizing good journalism nowadays?; 30. Where do you see your company 10 years from now?
- 9 At the time of the interviews, minimum wage for reporters in the state of Paraná was R\$ 2,963.60 (about US\$ 800.00) for a five-hour work day (Sindijor, 2015).
- 10 Even though *J1* clearly agrees that there is a crisis, no origin for it was given in the audio or transcription.
- 11 Since the end of 2014, when Dilma Rousseff was re-elected as president, Brazil has been going through an economic recession aided by a critical political scenario, which includes the *impeachment* of

President Rousseff, the legality of which still generates controversy. Taking over from Dilma was vice-president Michel Temer (MDB), who publicly supported Dilma's dismissal and was also one of those investigated in the Car Wash scandal. Since 2013, he has been investigated on accounts of corruption in the country.

- 12 In another interview excerpt, the journalist relativizes the existence of exemption when he says that, despite existing, it is becoming rarer in journalism.
- 13 After reviewing the audio file, the interviewee was trying to say that the restriction is *high*, not low.
- 14 *J7* claims that he only knows about his company's situation because his work colleagues tell him about it.
- 15 This expression relates to two, very frequent commands in computing. "CTRL + C" is a command that allows one to copy content from any source, while "CTRL + V" pastes that content into the newspaper.
- 16 Interviewee *J2*'s response was unclear and therefore disregarded.

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