

WHICH CRIMES MAKE THE NEWS?

An analysis of discursive matrices permeating Brazilian investigative reporting

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ABSTRACT – In this paper, we try to identify the discursive matrices that permeate the notion of “investigative journalism” in Brazil, from the military dictatorship until the present day, in order to observe displacements of meaning in the act of naming the practice. Our research brought to light two principal approaches to investigative reporting, which we reconstitute in this paper: a police matrix, predominant through to the dictatorial period, which was characterized by the exploration of popular themes and emphasized the courage of journalists; and a political matrix characterized by the predominance of investigations of corruption, as influenced by institutions like the Brazilian Investigative Journalism Association (Abraji), dedicated to the growing professionalization of journalism.

Key words: Discursive matrices. Investigative journalism. Police reporting. Corruption.

QUE CRIME É NOTÍCIA?

Uma análise de matrizes discursivas que perpassam a reportagem investigativa no Brasil

RESUMO – Neste artigo tentamos identificar matrizes discursivas que perpassam a noção de “jornalismo investigativo” no Brasil, desde o período de ditadura militar até os dias atuais, para observar deslocamentos de sentido nos atos de nomeação da prática. Assim, tentamos reconstituir duas abordagens do investigativo: uma matriz policial, predominante até o período ditatorial, que se caracterizava pela exploração de temáticas populares e enfatizava a coragem dos jornalistas; e uma matriz política, caracterizada pela predominância de investigações de corrupção e pela atuação de instituições como a Associação Brasileira de Jornalismo Investigativo (Abraji), dedicadas à crescente profissionalização do jornalismo.

Palavras-chave: Matrizes discursivas. Jornalismo investigativo. Jornalismo policial. Corrupção.

**¿QUÉ CRIMEN ES NOTICIA?
Un análisis de matrices discursivas que atraviesan
el reportaje investigativo en Brasil**

RESUMEN – En este artículo buscamos identificar matrices discursivas que atraviesan la noción de “periodismo investigativo” en Brasil, desde el período de dictadura militar hasta los días actuales, para observar desplazamientos de sentido en los actos de nombramiento de la práctica. De esa manera, intentamos reconstituir dos enfoques del investigador: una matriz policial, predominante hasta el período dictatorial, que se caracterizaba por la explotación de temáticas populares y enfatizaba el coraje de los periodistas; y una matriz política, caracterizada por el predominio de investigaciones acerca de corrupción y por la actuación de instituciones como Associação Brasileira de Jornalismo Investigativo (Abraji), dedicadas a la creciente profesionalización del periodismo.

Palabras clave: Matrices discursivas. Periodismo investigativo. Periodismo policial. Corrupción.

1 Introduction

In this paper, we try to identify the discursive matrices that permeate the notion of “investigative journalism” in Brazil, from the military dictatorship era (1964 to 1985) until the present day. Our argument is that, during the 1960s and 1970s, this notion was mainly associated with crime reporting and in-depth reporting that dealt with the country’s political and social “realities”. In contrast, during redemocratization, especially during the 1990s, the discursive matrix shifted toward the investigation of government corruption.

In a previous survey (Melo, 2016), at least three appropriations of the discourse of “investigative journalism” were observed in an analysis of theoretical works on Brazilian journalism: at times it appeared synonymous with in-depth reporting, at other times it was identified with crime reporting, and in other instances it was used to describe almost exclusively political scandals (Correia, 2012; Dines, 1986; Faro, 1999; Lopes & Proença, 2003; Sequeira, 2005; and others). From this survey, it was ascertained that the last two appropriations were more frequent and better demarcated. This is why we chose to use this approach for our analysis. The goal of the present study is not merely to re-enforce this type of survey, however; it also tries to highlight the Brazilian Investigative Journalism Association’s (Abraji)

role in organizing and systematizing this type of journalistic practice in the 21st century as a strategy to occupy a place of authority, underlining this topic's importance.

We have to point out that, at the time of the 2016 survey, we opted to use the expression "appropriations" when talking about the different meanings of the "investigative" category among authors from the 1980s until the 2000s. Nowadays, however, we see the need to revise this expression to better serve the notion of the discursive matrix, which has become understood as a way to approach reality and implies the use of certain categories of designation and interpretation (Sader, 1988). The refinement that the notion of the "discursive matrix" brings to the work concerns, above all else, the understanding that subjects are not entirely free to produce their own discourses, but rather are compelled to refer to established matrices.

We will employ as a methodology in this paper the reconstruction of the discursive matrices by first recognizing the characteristics of the social place where these matrices originate (their internal nature and the particular manner in which they establish relations); and secondly, by recreating the mold, that is, the language acts involved, the main statements and other elements expressed in the argumentative organization of the matrix. Thus, this work will start by analyzing the discourses about investigative journalism (self-referential) in an attempt to better understand the meanings given to journalistic experiences linked to these practices, their values and attributes, and the naming habits of the agents connected to them. (Sader, 1988, p. 145).

We started our source selection by analyzing nationally produced theoretical works on investigative journalism that proposed a definition of the category "investigative journalism" (Lopes & Proença, 2003; Sequeira, 2005; Fortes, 2012; Nascimento, 2010; Bucci, 2014; Christofoletti & Karam, 2011). After identifying the matrices, we searched for the study subjects' recollections, statements and discussions of police, political and investigative journalism. We emphasize that, when we talk about "investigative journalism," we are not adopting a specific understanding or affiliating ourselves with a particular definition. We selected our sources based on self-labelling and on the use of the expression, that is, we looked for agents who described themselves as investigative journalists, who used this expression to qualify their work or characterized their practice in the same way authors mentioned above characterized investigative journalism.

One of the aspects that stands out in agents' recollections of the type of journalism practiced in the first matrix is the question of the reporter's personal courage, since these journalistic practices involved tense relations with police, criminals and the military dictatorship's repressive agencies. With regards to the second matrix, starting with the creation of the Brazilian Investigative Journalism Association (Abraji) in 2002, we noted an attempt to regulate the investigative journalistic practice, opening the way for the development of the understanding of investigative journalism as a way to publicize corruption cases. Also, one of our goals is to start thinking about the growth of this second discursive matrix as influenced by an international agenda and to look at the institutions involved in this network.

2 The Police Matrix

The ascendance of crime news is related to the encroachment of journalistic practice into daily urban life and the ensuing transformation of the reporter into its main agent (Schudson, 1978) at the end of the 20th century. The ensuing normalization of “facts” over “cause-oriented” journalism largely ignored the historical bonds that had been established between journalism, literature and politics (Chalaby, 1996) and created the basis for the creation of an independent professional culture among journalists. This movement, however, varied according to historical-cultural contexts—it was more prevalent in the United States and faced strong resistance in France, where journalism was still seen as a first step toward a literary career (Chalaby, 1996).

The French case resembles somewhat what happened in Brazil. Autobiographical accounts, such as the ones from Coelho Neto (1921, p. 241) highlight José do Patrocínio's (editor of the *Evening Gazette*) complaints regarding the contempt literary men had for reporting: “But the boys don't want to understand it like that, they see news as humiliating and make faces when one asks them for a news piece”. According to Broca (2004, p 288) not all literary men were able to adapt to the reporter career and ended up protesting against its “corruption of intelligence”. Rodrigues (2000, p. 24) asserts that reporters such as João do Rio etched themselves into popular memory by doing news reports as “daily chronicles”, much like 19th century French journalism did, when authors like Emile Zola

and Victor Hugo inspired young reporters to portray the Parisian proletariat and underground life conditions in detail in bourgeois newspapers (Chalaby, 1996).

In order to reconstruct the police matrix, which represents a kind of journalism more in line with popular themes, it is important to emphasize two aspects of Brazilian journalism history. The first has to do with the industrialization of the press in Brazil. Newspapers oriented toward popular themes only took shape in the 1950s with the emergence of populism as a political mass phenomenon (1945 – 1964). The expansion of populism’s “cultural universe” happened through the media (Montes, 1981; Goldstein, 2017), with its ideology (laborism) tied to radio’s dissemination capabilities (Gomes, 1988). But its sensational dimension gained importance through the print media. *O Dia* (1951), *Última Hora* (1951) and *Luta Democrática* (1954) were successful enterprises because they focused on the triad of crime, sex and trade unions. These papers’ success in the political and mass markets brought their readers closer to the “dog-eat-dog world” and exposed readers to the newspaper owners’ political platforms (Siqueira, 2002; Sarmiento, 2008).

The second aspect of Brazilian journalism history to consider has to do with *who* was practicing crime reporting, as the 1950s were characterized by the adaptation of Rio de Janeiro’s papers to the narrative style and deontology of the journalistic model practiced in the United States. Who *were* the crime reporters, then? We find some clues in Nelson Rodrigues (1977, p. 203) autobiographical writings. For him, “the news was more emotion than information” during the era before the copy desk, that is, before the creation of the copy editing role and the standardization of language in newspapers. There was an “indescribable authorial voluptuousness” among journalists, and “whoever wrote about a hit and run felt like a stylist” (Rodrigues, 1977, p. 64). Therefore, one of the side effects of the strong discursive systematization imposed on newspapers by journalistic objectivity rules – which were established with the introduction of the copy desk – was the restriction of newspaper men’s creative and narrative freedom. In Nelson Rodrigues’s (1977, p. 210) accounts, we also notice that in the press there were the “great journalists” and an “illiterate mass,” a kind of men of letters’ sub-proletariat that unproblematically made up the editorial room universe.

We have to draw attention to the reaction of a group of journalists against copy desk tyranny and the strictness implemented

in the new middle-class journalism, whose followers were categorized by Nelson Rodrigues as “objectivity morons” (Ribeiro, 2007, p. 231). This type of reaction did not involve, at least not openly, the defense of a popular style of journalism that these reforms aimed to vanquish (Roxo, 2016). It did, however, defend originality and subjective expression that the rigorous discursive systematization implemented threatened. The police matrix developed in this paradoxical context of attempts at “elevating” reporting with the values and practices of the objective journalism model (which might have engendered the investigative journalistic work’s social prestige), while these self-same reporters were trying to defend values driven by an “honest indignation” much like that of American “muckrakers” (Ettema & Glasser, 1998, p. 61), who were starting to inspire Brazilian journalists.

However, this did not stop the agents who belonged to these two extremes of the journalistic community from looking for social prestige through the use of resources such as narrative quality, social visibility, proximity to the sources and war correspondent courage (Neveu, 2005, p. 28). That is the reason for the appreciation and popularization of reporters such as David Nasser¹, Edmar Morel², Joel Silveira³ and others, who had gained notoriety through scoops uncovering murders, adulteries, corruption scandals, and so forth (Ribeiro, 2007, p. 319) and whom the newspaper companies fought over tooth and nail.

The establishment in 1956 of the Esso Journalism Award (which became the ExxonMobil Journalism Award in 2015) was paramount in this context as a way to strengthen the identity and professional bonds between reporters and catapult the practice of in-depth reporting. The award, sponsored by the American oil and gas multinational company ExxonMobil for 60 years, cemented itself as the most important honor offered to press professionals in Brazil. It was in the midst of this process that the reporter Octávio Ribeiro, known as Pena Branca (White Feather), became famous. Already known among his peers, he gained notoriety through a series of interviews he did in 1976 for the weekly alternative paper *Pasquim*.

Given the success and repercussions of Pena Branca’s adventurous accounts of Rio de Janeiro’s favela alleys and backstreets and his chronicles about the daily life of these places, he published *Barra Pesada* (Rough Reality) in 1977 with the Codecri publishing house. The book cover is a photo of the dead body of José da Rosa Miranda, nicknamed “Mineirinho,” a delinquent who, at the end of the 1950s, was considered by Rio de Janeiro police to be the city’s most

wanted criminal. In the photo, Mineirinho is seen lying face up on the ground, with his arms outstretched, showing the bullet wound to his forehead, as well as the solitary tooth in his dental arch.

Pena Branca was an intern at *Última Hora* in 1959 when he interviewed Mineirinho in the Mangueira favela. Despite the criminal's fame, police did not know his whereabouts, which gave tremendous journalistic value to the interview, considered a true "scoop"—proof of the journalist's courage and individual drive⁴ (Ribeiro, 1977).

We also need to highlight the peculiar way the journalist recounted his story to interviewers. Suspecting that the newspapers had no clue where the criminal was, Pena Branca first went looking for him at the Juramento favela, which he nicknamed "Rough Mountain," since, given its geography, it hid many criminals. Questioned on the favela's receptivity to strangers, Pena Branca revealed the tactic he used in order to be welcomed there:

You have to befriend the people at the foot of the mountain, or else you'll get killed up there. The conversation begins with the kids in rags—they are the criminals' eyes. A good policy is to hand out candy, soda, kites, marbles, cards, or money bills to the kids. Once you get over this first hurdle—they no longer warn against filth in the favela—you go toward the next obstacle: the small tents. You have to be generous with the regulars, paying for booze to the freeloaders, beers to the mundane. The suspicious world interrogates the visitor until it is sure of its origin: police, bum or sucker. If the analysis is positive, the person gets a free pass to the alleys. If the residents have doubts, the visitor has to escape swiftly, or else he might suffer an unpleasant betrayal. (RIBEIRO, 1977, p. 18).

Thrilled by the reporter's style of speaking and writing, the cartoonist Jaguar declared that Pena Branca/Octávio Ribeiro was, for many years, a victim of the "copy desk technocrats" who "mercilessly cropped adjectives, ellipsis and exclamations" in order to adapt Brazilian journalism to the "Yankee phlegmatic journalism" style. Objective journalism was synonymous with leaving "a steak under the running faucet until all the flavor and seasoning leached out". Pena Branca—seen by his peers as a practitioner of genuine reporting, "that which the masses truly enjoy" like "those stories of violence, manhunts, men and animals"—also acted as a sort of teacher when he worked as police editor for *O Jornal*. He was responsible for training investigative journalists like Tim Lopes⁵, whose brutal murder inspired the creation of the Brazilian Investigative Journalism Association in 2002.

Studying Pena Branca helps us discern three aspects of the police matrix. The first one has to do with the context in which this

type of reporting began to define Rio de Janeiro's "popular" journalism. Pena Branca began his career at *Última Hora*, founded in 1951, the same year as *O Dia* and some years before *Luta Democrática* (1954). These three papers were successful enterprises because they focused on the triad of crime, sex and trade unions, and also because they brought their readers closer to crime news, converting them into loyal readers and also into voters sensitive to the political platforms sponsored by the papers' owners (Siqueira, 2002). Thus, Amado Ribeiro—whom Israel Pinheiro, chief of reporting at *Última Hora* during the 1960's, described as one of the most important reporters he ever knew due to his coverage of the Death Squad (Dias, 1992)—was Pena Branca's inspiration.

The second aspect has to do with the correlation between this universe and television. The 1960s saw the appearance of a series of programs that had come from radio and were inspired by police news stories and the dog-eat-dog world⁶ that was characteristic of the first period of Brazilian television. This reached a new magnitude in the following decades with the emergence of new television networks over the spoils of the former ones. The Brazilian Television System, SBT, stood out among them with its show *O Povo na TV* (People on TV), which spawned live audience programs combined with on-the-street reporting focused on crime news (Mira, 1995). This led to the creation in 1991 of the newscast *Aqui Agora* that employed an agile, dynamic and raw format, with minimally-edited news reports done in long sequence shots that allowed journalists to narrate the facts and participate actively. This kind of program focused on on-the-street crime stories made journalists like Gil Gomes (Roxo, 2010), Marcelo Rezende, José Luiz Datena, and Wágner Montes (Sacramento & Roxo, 2013) famous.

The third aspect is that Pena Branca inspired the creation of the character Waldomiro Pena/Waldomiro Feather, also a police reporter, for the TV show *Plantão de Polícia* (Police Shift), a success during the 1980s, produced and televised by Rede Globo. Its creator, Aguinaldo Silva, had moved from crime reporting to telenovelas. Silva received awards while writing about the corrupt side of Rio's police and became known in the alternative press for dealing with outcasts such as prostitutes and cross-dressers. What is important here is the fact that Silva created the TV show, and with it, police stories, in the midst of a process of modernization of journalism in which Waldomiro Pena represented a professional ethos whose main

reference was the street and the ways of life of its social types, such as thieves, prostitutes, slum dwellers and others, and the moral values, mischief and quick fixes used by these agents as important survival tools (Roxo, 2014). This pattern reveals itself in later news shows like the ones done by Caco Barcellos⁷, who makes clear his reverence for Pena Branca and his knowledge of these kinds of places (alleys, favelas, favelas' backstreets, etc.) in the book *Rota 66* (Route 66, 1992). This differs from current stories centered on data mining, transparency and the battle against corruption whose tone seems to oppose values that represent the singularity of Brazilian culture.

It can be said that Pena Branca represents a type of journalist who has popular roots, is mostly self-taught and is not discouraged by the risks involved in his professional activities. The coming change in the profile of the agents that practiced journalism went beyond the changes to the industry and the news market, however; it was also related to the Brazilian context of professional regulation, beginning in the 1930s, and consecrated by law in 1969 requiring those wanting to belong to the community of journalist to acquire a specific undergraduate diploma. Within the context of “regulated citizenship”—according to which “citizens are all those members of the community that are located in any of the professional occupations **recognized and defined** by law” (Santos, 1979, p. 75, author’s emphasis)—one might understand why the Brazilian working class institutions, such as the Brazilian Press Association (ABI) and the National Journalists Federation (FENAJ), worked with the state to regulate and organize the profession. In addition to establishing themselves as citizens, however, professional regulation was also a way to achieve political integration. “The professions’ education process and the imposition of legal criteria represented a way to gain access to the state and the political sphere at large that was at the heart of this whole process” (Petrarca, 2010, p. 83).

The idea that this new type of reporter had an awareness of the “social role of journalism” (Beraba, 2007, flap) has become a kind of discourse in defense of today’s investigative journalism. It aims to justify *Abraji*’s attempts to systematize the practice as well as maintain its importance as a model of accountability⁸ within the current political dynamic. This is what we will explore next.

3 The Political Matrix

In a book published in 2000 by Columbia University Press, the Argentinian Silvio Waisbord (re)constructs a panoramic view of unprecedented range of South American investigative journalism, or, as he prefers to call it, “watchdog journalism”. This work—which focused on investigative stories published after the end of the military dictatorships in Argentina, Colombia, Brazil and Peru—outlines some important characteristics of this watchdog journalism (more frequently identified as such since the 1990s) namely: (1) the existence and predominance of the practice in mainstream journalistic enterprises (i.e., no longer limited to the alternative press); and (2) the predominance of coverage of politicians and government agents involved in corruption and human rights violations. Thus, with the development of investigative reporting in South America, “Despite dissimilar editorial positions and journalistic styles, news organizations typically put the spotlight on government malfeasance” (Waisbord, 2000, p. 52).

We chose to begin the analysis of this matrix, which we generally named the “political matrix”, by referring to Waisbord since it shows up explicitly and systematically in this author’s work. From him we can identify correlations between these ideas and Brazilian journalistic and institutional discourses and practices. For example, Fortes – who established his career in Brasilia as a reporter/correspondent for the newspapers *Correio Braziliense* (DF), *O Estado de S.Paulo* (SP), *Zero Hora* (RS), *Jornal do Brasil* (RJ) and *O Globo* (RJ), and the magazines *Época* and *Carta Capital*, and also as a content producer for the Workers Party (In Portuguese, Partido dos Trabalhadores – PT) digital agency⁹ – contends in his book (2012) that there was no investigative reporting in Brazil during the dictatorship due to censorship and repression, also adding that “It can be said that [Fernando] Collor’s impeachment was the ground zero for Brazilian investigative journalism”¹⁰ (Fortes, 2012, p. 10).

Though no consensus exists as to the ground zero of Brazilian investigative reporting (Melo, 2015; Nascimento, 2010), it remains important to point out these attempts at establishing inaugural milestones since they indicate a reworking of experiences. Since the 2000s, discourses about investigative journalism emphasize the practice’s relationship with democracy, backed up by the argument that it is within this type of political structure that one can achieve

the necessary autonomy for the professional practice of investigative journalism¹¹. So, by this logic, stories that receive the investigative stamp are usually works that are published after a country's redemocratization.

Another place we may look for this reworking of experiences is in the examples of investigative reporting mentioned by the journalists themselves. For instance, Fortes (2012) while discussing the means used to acquire information, quotes a news reporting book he wrote, *Cayman: o dossiê do mundo (Cayman: a world dossier)*¹² and a story published on February 12, 2003, by ISTOÉ, in which he denounced a scheme set up by the Brazilian politician Antônio Carlos Magalhães¹³ of the Bahia Public Safety Department to monitor his rivals' phone calls. Similarly, other authors (Sequeira, 2005; Lopes & Proença, 2003), though they might defend a wider definition of investigative journalism that may include a variety of themes, do not seem to notice the prevalence of corruption cases in the examples of investigative stories they choose to study.

This understanding of investigative reporting as synonymous with political reporting is more evident in Nascimento's research (2010). When selecting filters for his analytical corpus (to enable him to differentiate investigative reporting from "reporting about investigations") the researcher selected as a timeframe all of the election years after the redemocratization and then applied criteria such as place of production, desk, presence of exclusive information and denouncements. On the matter of place, the author explains that he only selected "stories produced by branches of magazines located in Brasilia. The distinction was made because the stories that deal with *authority irregularities* are, in their majority, done by Brasilia-based branches of the magazines" (Nascimento, 2010, digital version, our italics).

A noteworthy event that coincided with the strengthening of this discursive matrix is related to the agents and institutions in the journalistic field. In September 2002, after a congress called "Investigative Journalism: Ethics, Technique and Dangers" that took place in Rio de Janeiro in the aftermath of Tim Lopes' death, journalist Marcelo Beraba—who worked for *O Globo*, *Jornal do Brasil*, *Folha de S.Paulo* and *Jornal da Globo* (TV)—sent out an email to 44 professional journalists, inviting them to form the Brazilian Investigative Journalism Association (*Abraji*). It is possible to access a passage of the email on the institution's website:

During the seminar, many of us, once again, asked ourselves why we still don't have in Brazil an independent institution formed and run by journalists aimed at exchanging information for professional

education, consolidation of knowledge and use of tools in the area of investigative journalism, structuring of a literature and database, promotion of seminars, congresses and workshops for professional improvement (“Sobre a *Abraji*”, n.d., para. 1).

The passage, selected by *Abraji* to begin its introduction, highlights education, training and professional growth. Likewise, in its bylaws, the association establishes as its goals “journalists’ professional improvement and the dissemination of the concepts and techniques of investigative reporting”. It is important to point out the emphasis on professional training in the context of *Abraji*’s creation, since there exists a link between growing professionalization and the strengthening of discourses of the political matrix in journalism.

This link becomes more evident when the institution specifies its activities. Beyond the promotion and organization of courses and seminars, exchange of information, stimulation of investigative journalism and incentive to use computing resources¹⁴, there is also the defense of “democracy, the free practice of investigative journalism and freedom of speech. Among its priorities are the defense of transparency in government affairs and the guarantee of free access to governmental agencies’ information” (Abraji, 2016, p. 01).

We can safely say that “government affairs” has been a recurring theme since *Abraji* was established from a quick look at the online courses offered since 2015: Data Journalism, Educational Markers, Corruption Investigation, Freedom of Information Act, Business Investigation and Assets Investigation¹⁵. The vast majority of these courses offer expertise for investigation using public data banks, which may indicate a path for the investigation, especially of public policies and contracts. The emphasis also appears in the program of the latest event, the 12th International Investigative Journalism Congress, organized in 2017 by *Abraji*¹⁶, where we found a very specific thematic line, “Corruption and Juridical Affairs,” among other broader topics, such as Access to Information; Good Stories, Good Reporting; Courses; Journalistic Practice; etc. Even if only three panels had been categorized this way—“Inside the Lava Jato operation: Interview with a federal police officer”, “Tips and techniques for business investigation”, and “Special session: Challenges of the fight against corruption: The Lava Jato operation”, with the presence of the then Brazilian General Attorney, Rodrigo Janot—mentions of political scandals and investigation of government data, budgets and finances show up in seventeen seminars’ titles (of a total of eighty five). The closing panel, “Democracy dies in darkness: the relevance of investigative journalism

in strange times”, given by the Washington Post’s editor-in-chief, Martin Baron, and mediated by Rosental Alves, deserves special mention.

It is also interesting to look at the professional path of Abrají’s current board of directors (2016 – 2017). Based on the short bios available on the institution’s web site, of the ten board members, six¹⁷, including the Chairman, Thiago Herdy, and the Vice-Chair, Vladimir Neto, highlight their jobs in political coverage. Another member’s bio, Fábio Oliva, mentions the curious fact that, besides being a journalist and lawyer, he also calls himself “an activist in the fight against anti-corruption”.

Beyond Abrají agents’ social trajectories and discourses, we believe that an important key to understanding the rise of this political matrix is the American influence over the professionalization of investigative journalism in Brazil. This can be better explained, for instance, by examining the relations between the association and the journalist Rosental Calmon Alves. According to a profile produced by Abrají, on the occasion of the 6th International Investigative Journalism Congress (2011), during which he was the honored, Rosental became the chair of the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas in 2002 after receiving US\$ 2 million dollar funding from the Knight Foundation. The Knight Foundation’s objective is to promote excellence in journalism and the success of the communities in which it works. In Abrají’s material there is the following information on the institution headed by Rosental:

One of the center’s main activities is an innovative distance education program with courses taught in English, Spanish and Portuguese. The center has helped create a new generation of independent and self-sufficient news organizations in Latin America. In Brazil, Knight Center’s backing resulted in *Abrají*’s creation. (Abrají, 2011, p. 01).

Besides *Abrají*, foundations such as Fopea (Argentinean Journalism Forum) and Fopep (Forum of Paraguayan Journalists) also received the institution’s backing.

We hope to have called attention to three noteworthy aspects of what we call the “political matrix”, namely: the proximity with discourses on the defense or promotion of democracy; the link with professionalization or “modernization” proposals and movements; and the emphasis on the investigation of governmental administration as the main professional agenda. We believe it is necessary to emphasize these aspects since not only do they serve as the foundation for this matrix template, but they are often naturalized in the understanding of modern journalism and are heirs to American influence.

We can affirm that, at least since the 1950s, the close relationship between journalism and corruption investigation gained strength in

Brazil with the modernization of Rio de Janeiro's press (Ribeiro, 2007). The foundation for the "political matrix" can even be found in Beltrão's (1992) definition of journalism, first published in 1960, according to which "journalism is current facts, properly interpreted and periodically broadcast to society, with the goal of spreading knowledge and guiding public opinion, in the sense of promoting the common good". (Beltrão, 1992, p. 67). However, just as political news can serve the purpose of orienting public opinion, so can traditional crime stories. What we want to show is the increase of relevance given to political reporting—especially that whose agenda is aimed at investigating corruption—takes place at the detriment of investigative reporting interested in "social reality" or in the coverage of other popular topics.

Tumber & Waisbord (2004) note that the study of political scandals is often overlaid by the study of the motives of corruption; for example, that the intense coverage of scandals is a consequence of the rise of the litigious practice itself (some talk of a "global crime economy"), since "scandals are 'corruption revealed'" (Lowi as cited in Tumber & Waisbord, 2004, p. 1032)¹⁸.

Our choice is to start from another line of analysis, one interested in investigating why scandals are made public in the first place, that is, one that questions how scandals come about, beyond the naturalized notion that they are the mere result of embezzlement. To our mind, one of the keys to this search is to be found in the rising professionalization of investigative journalism.

In a recent article analyzing the Brazilian situation after the 2016¹⁹ coup, Albuquerque (2017) indicates the need for a postcolonial approach to the relation between the press and politics in Brazil. According to the author, the Western model of the Fourth Estate—according to which freedom of the press naturally acts in favor of accountability, protecting citizens' common interest from corrupt governments—cannot be taken as a universal rule. His analysis indicates that there is a reinterpretation of Western values in postcolonial societies, carried out by elites who believe themselves charged with the mission of civilizing the population, including the mainstream press itself, which, coincidentally, is most rewarded for investigative stories (Melo, 2015).

Without breaking from our goal of reconstituting the discursive matrices, the reference to Albuquerque's work is consequential in that it indicates the possibility of thinking more deeply about the international forces behind the rise of the "political matrix" in Brazilian investigative journalism, which, as we previously

saw, was once more connected to the police desk and practiced by journalists with different cultural capital.

Thus, taking into account the entangled relations between institutions—like the previously mentioned Knight Foundation, and also the Open Society Foundation, Ford Foundation, Porticus, Oak Foundation (financial backers of investigative journalism initiatives in Brazil such as *Agência Pública* and *Escola de Dados*), or even Google News Lab and Facebook Journalism Project (sponsors of the latest Abraji congress)—we believe there is a way of analyzing the transition from one discursive matrix to another that involves an examination of these agents' participation. To understand this transition, it is necessary to understand what kind of democracy we are trying to defend and promote—something that appears in most of these institution's mission statements—and how journalistic courses, classes and training might have contributed to a discursive U-turn that went from an exaltation of the journalist's courage and “nose” to an correlation of expertise with data and source analysis.

4 Final Thoughts

Abraji has published two anthologies — *10 Reportagens que abalaram a ditadura/10 Stories that Shook the Dictatorship* (2005) and *50 anos de crimes/50 Years of Crimes* (2007) — organized by the journalist Fernando Molica, seeking “to tell some of our history and the evolution of journalism”. These publications helped consecrate our two matrices, since they centered on political and police news stories, and, in a way, confirm Abraji as an important space for articulating the various meanings connected to the expression “investigative journalism” in Brazil. What is interesting is that no moral dichotomy is identified between the role of the “neutral observer of reality,” oriented by the objectivity paradigm, and the “watchdog”, who expresses the defense of moral values, as is the case with American journalism.

Though we may not be dealing with clear-cut dichotomies, we tried to show in this paper that we may at least notice significant differences between the two matrices. The themes favored by each of them—news about crime such as murders, trafficking, sexual violence, police brutality and the appeal to the legend of the “street” as a privileged place for practicing reporting as was the case with the police matrix, and news about governmental corruption in the political matrix case—are symptomatic of a deeper structural

change in journalists' profile, i.e., the professionalization of Brazilian journalism. The most obvious change in this profile manifests in the possession or lack of a journalism undergraduate degree, but, later, we also try to show the evolution of journalists' social origins.

We emphasize that the understanding of journalism as a profession goes beyond the degree-granting institution; it also involves narratives and practices that support journalistic authority. Thus, we understand Abraji's operation as a systematization of investigative journalism know-how that promotes narratives (freedom of speech, democracy defense, the fight against corruption) and practices that reaffirm Brazilian journalism's authority.

Still, the idea of a "journalism evolution" points toward the relevance of a type of agenda which associates Brazilian journalism with a "moral crusade", as during the period before the civil-military coup of 1964 (Goldstein, 2017). What draws our attention today is the orientation of investigative journalism's agenda toward the notion of transparency, which results in much attention being given to public spending. This focus does not represent a problem per se, nonetheless, we argue that it is necessary to question if this orientation is not masking a political agenda centered on the consecration of popular sovereignty, on a certain demonization of values that elevate Brazilian cultural singularity, and on the reduction of social inequities as a way of affirming full citizenship to all individuals and, if this is true, what the consequences would be to our democracy.

NOTES

- 1 David was one of the most famous reporters working in the country in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Between 1943 and 1974, he worked at *O Cruzeiro* magazine, the flagship of Assis Chateaubriand, one of the leading businessmen in the Brazilian journalistic field and printing magnate. See: Carvalho (2001).
- 2 Edmar Morel was the author of important articles and many books, one of them published in 1959 about the Chibata Revolt. He started working at a young age in a commercial publishing house. After that, he worked for the papers *O Ceará* and *A Rua*, as an advertising broker, assistant editor, and assistant reporter. He moved to Rio de Janeiro in 1932, where he worked for *Jornal do Brasil* at the obituary desk. He worked at the newspapers *O Globo*, *A Tarde*, *Diário da Noite*, and from 1938 to 1947 at the *O Cruzeiro* magazine (Carvalho, 2001).

- 3 Joel Silveira became famous for his acuity and for his coverage of events that marked the country's political life. His first standout article was published in 1943 in *Diretrizes* magazine owned by Samuel Wainer. Afterward, he worked alongside Assis Chateaubriand in the *Diários Associados*, where he acted as correspondent in Italy during World War II (Silveira, Joel, 1998).
- 4 See the foreword written by Mino Carta in Ribeiro (1977).
- 5 Tim Lopes (Arcanjo Antonino Lopes do Nascimento) was a Brazilian investigative journalist and producer who worked for the Brazilian television network Rede Globo. He was killed in 2002 while working undercover on a story in one of Rio's favelas. (Percival de Souza, 2002).
- 6 Among them *002 Contra o Crime e Polícia às suas Ordens* (*Excelsior*, 1965/1966); *Patrulha da Cidade* (*Tupi*, 1965); *Plantão Policial Canal 13* (*TV Rio*, 1965/1966); and *A Cidade Contra o Crime*, *Longras 004*, and *O Homem do Sapato Branco* (*TV Globo*, 1966/67/68) gave support to this program (Wanderley, 1995, p. 82).
- 7 A reporter and writer, Caco Barcellos has worked for the television network Globo since 1982. Over a 40+ year career, he became known for his investigative reporting, like the pieces he did for Globo Repórter on the people who went missing during Brazilian military dictatorship. Barcellos is also famous for hosting and directing since 2006 the television show *Profissão Repórter* (Profession: Reporter) that explores the behind-the-scenes of news making.
- 8 "The question of accountability is fundamental to the functioning of modern democracy", advocates Rousiley Maia (2006, p. 2), dictating, to a great extent, what is discussed in terms of mediatic visibility and its implications on the proper functioning of democracy. According to the author, the principle of accountability (Arato, 2002) reinforces democratic rule and, in this context, refers to the democratic imperative that representatives must consider the desires and needs of the citizens when conducting public affairs (Maia, 2006, p. 5).
- 9 Retrieved from: www.portaldosjornalistas.com.br/jornalista/leandro-fortes/.
- 10 Fortes compares the impeachment of the Brazilian president Collor with the famous American Watergate scandal, which ended with president Nixon's resignation. Collor was accused of financial fraud and involvement with an international money laundering scheme run by his campaign treasurer, Paulo César (PC) Farias.

The parallel drawn between the Brazilian and American scandals is due to the removal of both presidents after the reports.

- 11 In the Brazilian Investigative Journalism Association bylaws there is, among its activities, the defense of democracy, free investigative journalism practice and freedom of speech.
- 12 According to *Folha de S.Paulo*, the “Cayman dossier is a group of papers of unverified authenticity that attest to the existence of a company supposedly owned by members of the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB) in fiscal paradises [...] Copies of this supposed dossier were spread and sold to opposition candidates during the 1998 elections” (Folha Online, 2003, online).
- 13 Antônio Carlos Magalhães was a member of the National Democratic Union (UDN), Nacional Renewal Alliance (ARENA), Social Democratic Party (PDS), and, finally, Liberal Front Party/Democrats (PFL/DEM), his last association. He was Governor of Bahia for three mandates (twice nominated by the Brazilian Military Regime), besides having presided the senate from 1997 to 2001.
- 14 We believe that Abraji referred to what was known in 2002 as Computer-Assisted Reporting (CAR), but that, since WikiLeaks, is most commonly known as Data Journalism (Gray, Bounegro & Chambers, 2012).
- 15 Retrieved from cursos.abraji.org.br/course/index.php.
- 16 Sadly, we cannot trace a comparative overview of the program of the 12 International Investigative Journalism Congresses promoted by *Abraji* until 2017 since the majority of this information is no longer available online.
- 17 Namely: Thiago Herdy, Vladimir Neto, Fábio Oliva, Alana Rizzo, Daniel Bramatti, and Maiá Menezes.
- 18 Lowi, T. (1988). Foreword. In A. S. Markovits & M. Silverstein (Eds.), *The politics of scandal: Power and process in liberal democracies* (pp. vii-xii). New York: Holmes & Meier.
- 19 On August 31, 2016, the Brazilian senate approved by a 61 to 20 vote the impeachment of elected president Dilma Rousseff for an alleged crime of fiscal irresponsibility. In Brazilian political science, the episode is called a “parliamentary coup,” during which “political institutions maintain a guise of normality while constitutional breaches are used in order to overthrow representatives elected by the popular vote” (Albuquerque & Paula, 2017).

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