

The Copy Desk and the Dilemmas of the Institutionalization of “Modern Journalism” in Brazil

Authors: Afonso de Albuquerque and Juliana Gagliardi

The institutional research of the news media has mainly focused on the American news media and political institutions. By discussing the reform of Diário Carioca newspaper, in the 1950s – usually referred as the birth of modern journalism in Brazil – this article aims to examine the institutionalization of the news media in a different social context. The reform of Diário Carioca newspaper, in the 1950s provides an early example of the influence of the American model of journalism overseas. Its purpose was to replace the French-inspired model of journalism, literary and politically engaged by an informative, fact-centered model of journalism. However, Brazilian journalists did not adopt the American model in a passive manner. They reinterpreted it, in order to make it fit the characteristics of the local society. In order to put the new model into practice the Diário Carioca reformers adopted authoritarian modernization methods: They downplayed reporting in comparison to news writing, endowed the copy desk with a core ideological and normative role in the newsrooms, and significantly reduced the autonomy of the journalists at work. By doing so, they fostered a “professionalization without professionalism” model, and hampered the institutionalization of the new rules introduced by the Diário Carioca.

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According to an influential view, during the 1980s and the 1990s the American media model went global. This was said to be the result of a number of factors: the deregulation of the media in many countries; a commercialization of the news; the decline of party politics and party-based social cleavages; and the growing influence of American professional education and academic research. Some authors argue that “Americanization” has worked as a homogenizing force on a worldwide scale (e.g., Hallin and Mancini, 2004). But does the American influence apply the same way everywhere? Are American models passively imported and reproduced by the other countries’ media? Or, alternatively, are they “filtered”, reinterpreted and adapted in order to fit the social and cultural characteristics of the societies that absorb them?

We consider these questions in the context of the institutionalization of “modern journalism” in Brazil beginning in the 1950s. The Brazilian case provides an early example of the U.S. model’s global influence. The story begins with the reformation of the Rio de Janeiro newspaper *Diário Carioca*, which in the 1950s began to defy the old, literary and politically engaged model of journalism, by promoting not only new “American” values such as objectivity, but also a new writing style: a more technical, fact-centered language, based on American formulae like the use of the lead and of the inverted pyramid (Albuquerque, 2005). In the following decades, the *Diário Carioca* model gained greater influence, and eventually became the dominant style in Brazilian journalism. Even today, many journalists refer to the reform of the *Diário Carioca* as the birth of a professional, modern journalism in the country.

However, though the modern style of Brazilian journalism looks very similar to its American counterpart, significant differences exist. In particular, the ethos of objectivity has provided Brazilian journalists with much less professional autonomy than is enjoyed by

American journalists. Scholars of American journalism often argue that practices like objectivity are fairly stable across time and space, and that they exist as unspoken rules of behavior, which reporters learn mostly indirectly and implicitly as part of their socialization into newsrooms (e.g., Cook, 1998; Sparrow, 1999). This has not been true in the Brazilian case. Instead, objectivity has been imposed from above, as part of an effort to control journalistic behavior. In short, far from being unspoken and implicit, the rules of objectivity have been rendered explicitly, with the specific intention of constraining journalists.

We explain these differences as a consequence of the different institutional pathways taken by Brazilian and American journalism. In the United States, the ethos of objectivity was institutionalized during the Progressive era, a time when professionalism was promoted in connection with a defense of technique as the basis of good government (Schudson, 1978; 1982; Nerone and Banhurst, 2001). This pathway to institutionalization provided a certain degree of autonomy to journalists (Soloski, 1989). In contrast, the new norms and parameters of behavior were *imposed* on Brazilian journalists by the organizations they worked for, under the argument they were a *sine qua non* requisite for a “modern”, “civilized” journalism. The copy desk played a central role in this process. Far from being limited to reviewing and editing tasks as in the American newspapers, the copy desk served as a core ideological and disciplinary institution in Brazil, having been described by some journalists as the very heart of the newspaper. Pompeu de Sousa, for instance, who is often pictured as primarily responsible for the reform of *Diário Carioca*, described the newspaper’s copy desk as a vivarium for an entire new generation of journalists. Here, we argue that this authoritarian pathway to modernity has hampered the process of the institutionalization of Brazilian journalism.

We make this argument in four parts. The first part provides some historical contextualization for the reform of Brazilian journalism. The second section describes the *Diário Carioca*'s reform process. The leading agents of reform are identified, and their main purposes and methods are discussed. The third section discusses the modernization of Brazilian journalism initiated by the reform of the *Diário Carioca* as an example of an authoritarian modernization project, in which new rules and patterns of behavior were imposed from above rather than shared by journalists in a relatively autonomous way. In particular, we analyze the ideological and disciplinary role played by the copy desk during this process. The fourth part discusses the consequences of the *Diário Carioca*'s authoritarian modernization model for the institutionalization of Brazilian journalism.

Overall, we argue that, by downplaying the role of reporters, and emphasizing the role of the copy desk, an authoritarian modernization logic prevented Brazilian journalism from becoming fully institutionalized as an autonomous field. While this authoritarian logic reaffirmed the importance of the normative role of the copy desk, it left no place for “unspoken procedures, routines and assumptions” (Cook, 1998) among Brazilian journalists.

A Time of Change: Modernizing Brazil in the 1950s

In order to better understand the modernization of Brazilian journalism in the 1950s, it is necessary to take into account the broader economic and political changes that were occurring in Brazil at that time. In foreign affairs, Brazil had gradually become closer to the United States since the 1940s. This relationship was established during the first Getúlio Vargas government (1930-1945), which sought American financial support to build a modern economic infrastructure. As a consequence of this financial arrangement, Brazilian troops joined the Allied forces in World War II. Paradoxically, Brazilian alignment with

the Allies helped to undermine Vargas' Estado Novo authoritarian regime, and resulted in a democratic period that lasted until 1964. New democratic political parties, such as the Social Democratic Party (PSD), the National Democratic Union (UDN), and the Brazilian Labor Party (PTB), were organized. While the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) was also legalized, it was allowed to exist for only a short time. Fear of the political radicalization of the working classes led Eurico Dutra's government (1946-1951) to suspend the Communist Party registration again in May 1947.

Even more importantly, in the period following the Estado Novo, the working classes emerged as significant political actors, especially in larger urban centers. These circumstances provided a fertile ground for a new type of political leader, one who leveraged an ability to communicate with popular sectors of society into political success. Both presidents elected in the 1950s, Getúlio Vargas (1951-1954) and Juscelino Kubitschek (1956-1960), fit this profile. The upper and middle classes resisted this new style of politics. They blamed "populism," as they called it, for denigrating political life, and called for a moral regeneration of politics (Benevides, 1991, Dulci, 1986; Owensby, 1999; McCann, 2003). Carlos Lacerda, a UDN congressman – and later Governor of the State of Guanabara – played a distinguished role as a moral crusader at that time. On different occasions, he appealed to the Armed Forces to intervene in politics to "fix" the democratic process. In 1950, for example, he declared that "Mr. Getúlio Vargas [...] should not be a candidate for Presidency. If a candidate, he shouldn't be elected. If elected, he shouldn't be sworn in. If he was sworn in, we must call for revolution to prevent him from governing." [citation??] Lacerda also strongly opposed Juscelino Kubitschek's inauguration. The two governments had different fates. After an unsuccessful attempt to kill Lacerda, led by one of Vargas' assistants, Getúlio Vargas' government ended when the president committed

suicide. In comparison, Juscelino Kubitschek's term (1956-1960) was relatively quiet, often hailed as a "Golden Age" and as the "birth of a new civilization in the tropics" (Mello and Novais, 1998, p. 560).

From an economic point of view, the 1950s was a period of accelerated industrialization and urbanization in Brazil. While Vargas' government adopted a nationalistic approach to economic development, based on the primary role of the state in the development of a heavy industry infrastructure, the Kubitschek administration carried out the *Plano de Metas* (Target Plan). This plan centered on market-driven policies, including the use of foreign investment to advance the Brazilian economy "fifty years in five." These government-led attempts to promote economic development helped legitimize the discourse of technique as good politics, and it is this discourse that set a context for the authoritarian modernization of Brazilian journalism.

The Reform of the *Diário Carioca*

The reform of the *Diário Carioca* serves as a critical juncture in the modernization of Brazilian journalism. This reform was led by three men: Pompeu de Sousa, the news writing editor of *Diário Carioca*, Daton Jobim, its editor-in-chief, and chief of reporters Luis Paulistano. Sousa and Jobim worked as journalists in the United States during World War II, with financial support from the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA). The OCIAA was created by the United States in 1940 in order to reinforce its influence in Latin America countries. Sousa and Jobim had also worked as journalism professors at the University of Brazil (nowadays Federal University of Rio de Janeiro), teaching a journalism course that was first instituted in 1948. The reform itself took the form of a three-act play: 1) a proposal for a new set of rules for modern journalism, in a stylebook written by Sousa; 2) the selection of a group of new, "pure" journalists who

would be responsible for carrying out changes mandated by the stylebook; and, 3) the institution of the copy desk as the central site at which the new values and practices would be enforced.

A short, 2,000-word text, Sousa's *Stylebook* seems to be merely a technical handbook. It presents: a) a set of concrete recommendations for graphical presentation of drafts written by journalists. For example, the Stylebook requires that journalists always write drafts on a typewriter. It also requires news stories to be written with an opening lead, and to order information according to decreasing importance; b) modes of addressing the people pictured in the news; and c) grammatical rules referring to the use of capital letters, exclamation marks and quotation marks. In a reflection on the *Stylebook*, Pompeu de Sousa (1990, p. 57) describes the process of creation of the stylebook in a very casual way: "I got some American newspapers' stylebooks, combined their best qualities according to my judgment, adapting them to the mood and the taste of our language, and that's it: the journalistic technique based on the copy desk was implanted in Brazil." However, the significance of the *Diário Carioca*'s stylebook should not be underestimated. It was the first step in a more ambitious plan to replace the old, French-styled Brazilian journalism with a new, American-inspired model.

In an article written for *Journalism Quarterly*, Danton Jobim (1954) took up the argument for the superiority of the American over the French model. "Why don't the French—and the Latin Americans who follow the French model—adopt the clear and practical rules applied by the newspapers in North America?" Jobim asks at the beginning of the article (p. 61). In making the case for the superiority of the American model, Jobim argues that the French model fails to accept that daily journalism is a business, not a priesthood. With its emphasis on politics and literary style, the French model suffers from

a deficit of basic facts: The newspaper, Jobim argues (p. 63) should approach its reader as “a friend who talks to him, sharing his ideas and sentiments.”

Jobim and Sousa refer to the dominant formulae used for opening the news in French and American journalism as a synthesis of the insuperable differences between the two models. They use the term “wax nose” (*nariz de cera*) to name the dominant formula used in Brazil under the influence of the French model. The wax nose was a kind of moral commentary provided at the beginning of news stories before the presentation of basic facts. For example, in the French model, a news piece on the suicide of two young lovers might be introduced by a commentary such as “those two, whom life and cruel fate had separated, were united in death” (Jobim, 1954, p. 65). In contrast, the lead – the modern American formula for opening the news – is presented as a model of clearness and accuracy. For many Brazilian journalists, the opposition between these two formulae played such a central role that many of them came to evaluate “the substitution of the wax nose by the lead” as the main legacy of *Diário Carioca*’s reform.

In the ensuing decades, The *Diário Carioca*’s stylebook provided a new set of rules for the modernization of Brazilian journalism. However, the new rules had to be enforced. Thus, newspaper reformers decided that it was necessary to hire new journalists in order to put the new rules into practice. Who were these journalists, and how were they chosen? The *Diário Carioca* reformers believed that journalists at that time were not up to the various demands required by the new model of journalism to be implemented. According to Sousa (1990b, p. ???), “every journalist in activity represented a vice. This vice was precisely the “wax nose.”” The problems attributed to the old journalists were both technical and ethical. Nilson Lage, one of the first generation of journalists chosen by the *Diário Carioca*, illustrates the first argument (2002, p. 59): “many reporters, some of them with a long

career in journalism and experienced in newsgathering, did not master the journalistic technique that was being introduced, and they never would: they simply had no writing skills.” From a moral point of view, the old journalists were often described as “bohemians and crooks,” people without a clear commitment to public service values, interested in using journalism to obtain personal advantages or pursue a political career, rather than to inform the public.

As they looked to hire a new type of reporter, *Diário Carioca* reformers preferred young people with no previous experience in journalism. When candidates applied for a job at the newspaper, they were given the stylebook, sent home to study, and then were tested a few days later. Once hired, new journalists went through an intense training program. Under the supervision of the newspaper’s reformers, these “zero-kilometer” journalists, as they were sometimes called, became the “golden generation” of Brazilian journalists. Sousa (1990) describes them as bright, dynamic, virtuous, and motivated persons, different in almost every way from those who came before them. Of course, Sousa had a built-in bias toward the new reporters. But his view reflects that of the entire generation of journalists who took part in the reform of the *Diário Carioca*. These journalists succeeded in being recognized as the most important interpretive authorities on Brazilian journalism.

For reform to really take hold, however, the new rules had to be institutionalized. The copy desk came to play this role. The origin of the copy desk in the United States can be traced back to the second half of the nineteenth century, as a consequence of the separation of mechanical from editorial work. The copy desk was the point of contact between the newsroom and the composing room, between the people who wrote the news and those responsible for manufacturing the newspaper (Nerone and Barnhurst, 2001). This separation of mechanical from editorial work played an important role in providing

journalists more autonomy to do their work outside the gaze of editors. Freed from the mechanical work, they could leave the newspaper's offices to actively gather the news (Salcetti, 1995). In contrast to the glamour of reporting, copyediting came to be viewed as a mostly unpleasant and thankless job (Solomon, 1995). For example, Gay Talese referred to it as "the most tedious and unheralded craft in the newsroom" (1969: 61).

In Brazil, the impact of the copy desk was entirely different. On the one hand, by the time of the reform of the *Diário Carioca* there already was an established culture of active reporting in Brazilian journalism. On the other hand, the role that newspaper reformers attributed to the copy desk was not primarily technical, but disciplinary and ideological. Its central purpose was to shape news texts to the requirements of an industrial rhythm of news making, and to disseminate the modern, American-based model of journalism among Brazilian journalists. By doing so, the copy desk worked as an instrument for reducing journalists' autonomy in their daily work.

It is important to recognize that *Diário Carioca* reformers and those who followed them explicitly envisioned the copy desk in these terms. They looked at it as a kind of school of modern journalism. For this reason, they believed that the best journalists should work there. Consequently, journalists who could write well were recruited to the copy desk. Once there, they earned a better salary than most reporters. Some contemporary journalists complained about this situation. Maurício Caminha de Lacerda (1958) and Alberto Dines (1958), for example, argued that the copy desk was responsible for the lack of good reporters in Brazilian journalism. According to Dines (1958), as news writing improved, newsgathering got worse. Despite these criticisms, however, the copy desk remained the backbone of most Brazilian newsrooms until the 1970s.

Authoritarian Modernization

The reform of the *Diário Carioca* can be described as the first step in the authoritarian modernization of Brazilian journalism. The term “authoritarian modernization” has often been used to describe state-sponsored macro-economic and political efforts to modernize countries (e.g., Atabaki and Zücher, 2004; Moore, 1967; Streeck and Yamamura, 2001). The authoritarian-modernization of Brazilian journalism is in some ways similar to its macro-economic counterpart. Like macro-economic authoritarian modernization efforts, the modernization of journalism is often motivated by a perception of inferiority. The reform of the *Diário Carioca* was justified as necessary, based on the argument that the baroque Brazilian journalism textual style was provincial when compared to the one used by American newspapers. Also, a “revolution from above” approach is suggested in order to deal with these perceived problems. In the reform of *Diário Carioca* an entirely new system of journalistic beliefs and practices was created by the editors, a new team of journalists was chosen in order to put it into practice, and the copy desk was granted a normative role in the newsroom, in order to provide ideological and disciplinary support for the changes. For our purposes, however, we use the term “authoritarian modernization” to refer to journalistic professional culture rather than broader economic or cultural processes. This is to say, for us authoritarian modernization is a distinctive form of modernization within journalism consisting of particular set of micro-practices and values.

Moreover, the term “authoritarian modernization” must only be used in specific circumstances, when the authoritarian reform of journalism in a given organization or community is motivated by the perception they are displaced in reference to some ideal standard. For example, notwithstanding the notable influence that the vigorous and

authoritarian style of John Reith exerted on the building of BBC, that alone does not provide a good example of an authoritarian modernization process, given that Reith believed that the role of the BBC should be setting premium patterns for broadcasting, rather than following superior, already established patterns as it happens in the authoritarian modernization discourse (Briggs and Burke, 2002). Additionally, the authoritarian modernization of journalism tends to be more efficient in which journalists do not share a strong professional culture. Ryfe (2009) provides an interesting illustration of this point in a discussion of how a deeply embedded culture of professionalism allowed the reporters of a mid-sized American newspaper to react against, and finally foil the attempts of a new editor to impose new rules on them for gathering and reporting the news.

Defined in this specific way, the authoritarian modernization model sheds new light on the problem of journalistic professionalism. Journalism and political communication scholars have often employed “professionalism” and “professionalization” as equivalent terms. Sometimes the terms are used as loose concepts to denote the adoption of more “efficient” or “rational” practices, either in journalism or in political communication. Used in this sense, the terms are opposed to amateurism (for a critique of such imprecise use of the term professionalism see Lilleker and Negrine, 2002). Other authors propose more rigorous definitions. Journalistic professionalism, in particular, has been associated with the objectivity norm (Schudson, 1978; Tuchman, 1972); the formal education of journalists (de Burgh, 2003; Deuze, 2008); and as a social resource for controlling the journalists’ work (Soloski, 1989; Aldridge and Evetts, 2003). Some authors evaluate journalistic professionalism negatively in comparison to other professions. According to Zelizer (1991, p. 6), for example “unlike classically defined professions such as medicine and law, journalism has not required the trappings of professionalism: many journalists do not

readily read journalist textbooks, attend journalist schools, or enroll in training programs.” Hallin and Mancini relate professionalism to three main characteristics: 1) journalists’ autonomy – understood as the corps of journalists, and not as individuals – relatively to external forces; 2) distinct professional norms that result from a “horizontal” form of organization; and 3) a public service orientation. The authors oppose professionalization to the instrumentalization of the media, meaning their control by outside agents, whose logic is either political or commercial.

Viewed through the prism of authoritarian modernization, however, it becomes clear that the two terms do not mean the same thing. *Professionalization* refers generically to a discourse about the improvement of journalism, either in reference to the past or as a goal for the future. Different agents can appropriate this discourse for different purposes. Using this discourse, for instance, unions may demand that news organizations pay better salaries to the journalists they represent; “professional” journalists may present themselves as having special skills and responsibilities that distinguish them from “amateur” people; news organizations may present themselves as playing a public interest service in order to obtain legal protection, economical advantages or political influence. Professionalism is different from professionalization. The former term has to do with the relative autonomy that journalists enjoy at work vis-à-vis external forces, the distinct professional norms that allow them to exert horizontal forms of control in the profession, and a public service ethic shared by them (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

In the context of this distinction, the authoritarian modernization of journalism is associated with professionalization, but not with professionalism. This is illustrated by the reform of the *Diário Carioca* in the 1950s. In order to modernize Brazilian journalism and to eliminate the perceived gap relative to American journalism, the newspaper’s reformers

imposed a “revolution from above” and used the copy desk as a resource to significantly restrain the autonomy of journalists. The professionalization discourse fostered by the reform of the *Diário Carioca* emphasized the moral and the technical superiority of the new, professional journalists in comparison to their vicious, amateur antecessors. This moral superiority was defined in terms of common sense standards, rather than a particular professional ethics, and was related to their personal as much to their professional behavior. In contrast with the new professional journalists, prior generations of Brazilian journalists were described as lazy, drunken people who were often involved in illegal activities like gambling and blackmailing. These were people who used journalism as a means for satisfying their personal interests (Lage, 2002). According to this view, one of the main purposes of the copy desk was to work as a disciplinary resource that would provide a moral control over the journalists by reducing their autonomy at work (see Biroli, 2007).

Modernization and the Institution of Journalism

From the story we have told, it is clear that modernization of journalism across countries has not been a uniform or homogeneous process. To promote modernization, Brazilian journalists explicitly adopted the American model. However, they did not passively adopt this model. Rather, they adapted it to fit into their own social reality, and by so doing, they modified it in significant ways (Albuquerque, 2005). In fact, many of the changes promoted by the reform of *Diário Carioca* can be thought of as widening the gap between Brazilian journalism and the American model. For instance, unlike in the American case, the professional journalists fostered by the reform of the *Diário Carioca* came to define their technical superiority over the prior generation of journalists in terms of their textual skills, rather than other abilities. This change can only be fully appreciated in the context of the authoritarian modernization of Brazilian journalism, and in particular in

the context of the copy desk's role in this process. In Brazil, reporting—the key practice of the American information model of news—was already an established practice *before* reform of the *Diário Carioca*. In fact, the reform actively *diminished* the role played by the reporters in the newspaper, limited their autonomy, and even encouraged the most talented among them to work on the copy desk. In so doing, the reform in many respects reaffirmed the definition of journalism as a form of literature, albeit as a different form of literature than what had existed before: a literature of technique rather than of artistic form.

This story of institutionalization in Brazilian journalism has important implications for institutional theories of news. These theories have largely emanated from studies of American news media. In this context, Cook (1998) and Sparrow (1999) argue that journalists learn the “rules” of journalism unselfconsciously via a socialization process that takes place informally in the newsroom. But this is not what happened in Brazil. Instead, reformers of *Diário Carioca* explicitly and strategically set out to change the rules of Brazilian journalism. They did so by promoting a new set of “regulatory rules,” as Ryfe (2006) has called them, for how journalism ought to be practiced. The publishing of the *Diário Carioca* stylebook, the selection of zero-kilometer journalists, and the disciplinary and normative role attributed to the copy desk were all mechanisms for introducing and enforcing these new regulatory rules. The copy desk in particular left no place for unspoken rules of behavior as the basis of journalistic practice. As a consequence, Brazilian journalists came to regard the new rules as being to a large extent formal obligations that they had to accomplish for a disciplinary reason, rather than, as in the American case, as “the right thing to do”.

Perhaps for this reason, the new rules did not spread easily across other news organizations. Writing in 1958, Alberto Dines (1958, p. 51) noted that “when one of our

newspapers decides to start a 'new phase' it hires the same people that have made a 'new phase' in other newspapers. In fact, we have only about 15 good and modern journalists moving around the revolutionary newspapers and magazines.” In the following decades, the new rules became more widely accepted, and served as the basis for a new style of Brazilian journalism. But this happened as much for political as technical reasons. From the 1950s to the 1970s a considerable number of journalists who were either members or sympathizers of the Brazilian Communist Party came to work in conservative newspapers, and some of them occupied very important editorial positions. The owners of these newspapers were not unaware of their new reporters' political preferences, but they remained unconcerned. According to the owner of the *Gazeta Mercantil*, for example, communist journalists “were the best cadres of the press.” Roberto Marinho, the publisher of *O Globo*, referred to communist journalists working for him as “my communists.” This attitude cannot be explained merely as a consequence of the open-mindedness of the conservative papers regarding their communist employees. Rather, there was a tacit agreement between them: in exchange for being allowed to work at mainstream newspapers, communist journalists were supposed to be loyal and disciplined, which included avoiding a leftist bias in the news. The rhetoric of professional journalism played an important role in this arrangement, given that it furnished a common language for both the conservative publishers and the communist journalists, and made it easier for them to work together. By converting party discipline into journalistic discipline, communist journalists provided a favorable political background for the disciplinary role of the copy desk (Albuquerque and da Silva, 2009).

Moreover, while it is true that the new journalistic rules lasted a long time in Brazil, their persistence was not due to their implicitness. Rather, these rules stuck because they

became part of the official discourse of modern journalism. This discourse can be described as a myth of origin or, as Mircea Eliade (2005) puts it, as an archetypal model. The journalists who belonged to the first generation after the reform of the *Diário Carioca* were described as exceptional journalists, whose example should be imitated, but who could never be significantly challenged by the new journalists. Also, this discourse provided a rationale for the definition of journalism as an intrinsically authoritarian profession (e.g. Abramo, 1993). Indeed, ever since Authoritarian modernization has served as an inspiration for other attempts to reform Brazilian journalism. This is true, for example, of the modernization process initiated by *Folha de S. Paulo* in the 1980s. This process involved a series of disciplinary measures that have been described as “draconian” even by the editor-in-chief of the newspaper, Otávio Frias Filho (2003: 361). According to him, such authoritarian measures were unavoidable in order to create a “professional” journalistic culture: “Professionalism does not emerge as a result of a spontaneous generation. It emerges as a consequence of the extraordinary effort of a little group of persons that forms other people, adopts an exemplary attitude, corrects, demands, criticizes, modifies them” (Quoted in Silva, 1988, p. 96; see also Albuquerque, 2005). As is evident, traces of the authoritarian style adopted by *Diário Carioca* were still strong four decades later.

A main current of thought in the sociology of news argues that behind the hierarchical structure of news media lies a more “democratic” culture among journalists, in the sense that this culture consists of widely shared, unspoken rules (Gans, 1978; Tuchman, 1978). This literature suggests that far from having an “esoteric” professional culture like medicine and law (Schudson, 1978), journalism comes closer to a culture of “common sense” (Campbell, 1991). Institutional approaches to news have adopted this basic

framework in explaining the rise and persistence of news rules. According to this view, to be “institutionalized” news rules must become taken-for-granted assumptions about how news is produced.

Our case study challenges this conventional wisdom. In so doing, it suggests that the particular traits of the American journalism institutionalization process cannot be universalized. Brazilian news media did not merely adopt the American model. Rather they adapted it by making use of authoritarian modernization methods that significantly influenced the way that this model was interpreted in Brazil. Such methods attributed to the copy desk a core ideological and disciplinary role in the newsrooms, reduced the autonomy of journalists, and decreased the importance of reporting in comparison to news writing. By doing so, they fostered a “professionalization without professionalism” model, which valued the technical skills of the journalists instead of their autonomy and their commitment to a specific public service ethics. Also, the authoritarian modernization of Brazilian journalism hampered the process of institutionalization of the new rules introduced by the reform of the *Diário Carioca*: the active ideological role attributed to the copy desk left no place for unspoken rules among journalists. Over time, the new model proved difficult to disseminate. When it finally achieved a broader measure of acceptance, it was due to political rather than technical reasons; the model endured over time, but as a myth of origin referring to the exceptional actions realized by exceptional people in the past, rather than as rules put into effect in everyday practice.

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