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## A study on Brazilian web journalists' professional careers

### *Un estudio sobre las carreras profesionales de los periodistas digitales brasileños*

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper seeks to analyze the journalists' professional careers that work at online newsrooms in Brazil. It aims to understand the socialization processes of these journalists, from the analysis of its trajectory, by applying the concept of professional careers. In order to accomplish it, semi-directive interviews were made with 10 Brazilian journalists. This analysis shows a relative stability in the professional world. The introduction of new technical tools had not deeply change the learning and socialization processes in newsrooms. The results seem to point to an incorporation of online journalism practices in the traditional ways of access and mobility in the journalism profession.

**RESUMEN:** Este artículo pretende analizar las salidas de los periodistas que trabajan en las redacciones en línea en Brasil. El objetivo es comprender los procesos de

*socialización de los periodistas digitales a partir del análisis de sus trayectorias, aplicando el concepto de carreras profesionales (professional careers). Para eso, fueron realizadas entrevistas semi-estructuradas con 10 periodistas brasileños. El análisis muestra una relativa estabilidad en el mundo profesional. La introducción de nuevas herramientas técnicas no han alterado profundamente las formas de aprendizaje y socialización en las redacciones. Los resultados parecen apuntar a una incorporación de las prácticas del periodismo en línea a los mecanismos tradicionales de acceso y movilidad en la profesión.*

**Keywords:** Professional careers, online journalism, journalist, socialization, professional identity, interviews.

*Palabras clave:* carreras profesionales, periodismo en línea, periodista, socialización, identidad profesional, entrevistas.

## 1. Introduction

More than fifteen years after the advent of online journalism in Brazil, there are still visible gaps in the understanding of the professional web journalist identity. Actually, in the first five years, investigations of the profile of those producing news items in the internet proliferated, especially into the aspect of how they incorporated the web's characteristics into the practical exercise of their profession<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, as a piece of research conducted by Sousa<sup>2</sup> has shown, at a later moment Brazilian researchers became more interested in contents carried by the news sites or in the relations between journalists and the public, strongly boosted by the possibilities offered by the newly introduced technological devices.

In that setting some researchers with a particular interest in the sociology of newsmaking limited themselves to questioning the nature of some of the specific emerging professional profiles like those of the j-bloggers<sup>3</sup> and the multimedia journalist<sup>4</sup>. Their reflections however were rarely based on empirical studies conducted in the ambit of the online editorial desks or directly with the web journalists themselves<sup>5</sup>, with the exception two recent ethnographic studies presented by Maia and Agnez<sup>6</sup> and Aguiar and Barsotti<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> ADGHIRNI, Zélia Leal, "Informação on-line: jornalista ou produtor de conteúdo?", *Proceedings of the 10th Encontro da Compós*, Brasília, 2001, 1 CD-ROM; ADGHIRNI, Zélia Leal, "Valores-notícia e credibilidade no jornalismo on-line", *Proceedings of the 2nd Encontro da Associação Brasileira de Pesquisadores em Jornalismo - SBPJor*, Salvador, 2004, 1 CD-ROM; DEUZE, Mark, "On-line journalism: Modelling the First Generation of News Media on World Wide Web", *First Monday*, vol. 6, n. 10, 2001, accessed on December 16, 2012, at <http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/893/802>; MIELNICZUK, Luciana, PALACIOS, Marcos, BARBOSA, Suzana, RIBAS, Beatriz, NARITA, Sandra, "Um mapeamento de características e tendências no jornalismo online brasileiro". *Comunicarte*, vol. 1, nº 2, 2002, pp. 159-170, accessed on December 16, 2012, at <http://www2.ca.ua.pt/comunicarte/artigos/r02a16.pdf>; PEREIRA, Fábio Henrique, "O 'Jornalista Sentado' e a produção da notícia on-line no Correioweb", *Em Questão*, vol. 10, 2004, pp. 95-108; RUELLAN, Denis, "En ligne: un journaliste comme les autres?", *Les Cahiers du Journalisme*, n.5, Lille: Centre de Recherche de l'Ecole Supérieure de Journalisme de Lille, 1998, pp. 82-84, accessed on December 16, 2012, at [http://www.cahiersdujournalisme.net/cdj/pdf/05/06\\_Ruellan.pdf](http://www.cahiersdujournalisme.net/cdj/pdf/05/06_Ruellan.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> SOUSA, Janara, "Periodismo e Internet: un análisis de los procedimientos metodológicos utilizados por los investigadores brasileños", *Book of abstracts of the 1st Congreso Internacional sobre Estudios de Periodismo: Identidad, Cambios y Desafíos de la Profesión en el Siglo XXI*, Santiago, 27 a 29 de junio, 2012, p. 105, accessed on December 16, 2012, at [http://periodismochile2012.cl/assets/AbstractProceedings\\_LibrodeAbstracts.pdf](http://periodismochile2012.cl/assets/AbstractProceedings_LibrodeAbstracts.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> ADGHIRNI, Zélia Leal, "Blogs: a invasão dos profanos do mundo digital na esfera sagrada do jornalismo", *Proceedings of the 6th Encontro da Associação Brasileira de Pesquisadores em Jornalismo - SBPJor*, São Bernardo do Campo, 2008, 1 CD-ROM; CHRISTOFOLETTI, Rogério, "Credibilidade jornalística e reputação na blogosfera: mudanças entre dois mundos", *Proceedings of the 5th Encontro da Associação Brasileira de Pesquisadores em Jornalismo - SBPJor*, Aracaju, 2007, 1 CD-ROM; ESCOBAR, Juliana L, "Blogs jornalísticos: propondo parâmetros para uma definição mínima", *Proceedings of the 5th Encontro da Associação Brasileira de Pesquisadores em Jornalismo - SBPJor*, Aracaju, 2007, 1 CD-ROM.

<sup>4</sup> DEUZE, Mark, "What is Multimedia Journalism?", *Journalism Studies*, vol. 5, 2004, pp. 139-152, accessed on December 16, 2012, at <http://jou.sagepub.com/content/6/4/442.full.pdf>; JORGE, Thaís de Mendonça, PEREIRA, Fábio Henrique, "Jornalismo on-line no Brasil: reflexões sobre o perfil do profissional multimídia", *Revista FAMECOS*, vol. 1, 2010, pp. 57-62.

<sup>5</sup> Sousa, Janara, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> MAIA, Kênia Beatriz Ferreira, AGNEZ, Luciane Fassarella, "A convergência digital na produção da notícia: Dois modelos de integração entre meio impresso e digital", *Proceedings of the 1st Colóquio*

That relative lack of interest is apparently the result of a kind of naturalization of the web journalists' status whereby they have come to be seen as being "a journalist, just like any other"<sup>8</sup> and as performing a social role very similar to that performed by their colleagues working in other media outlets<sup>9</sup>. However, while it may not make sense to endorse the discourse proposing the appearance of a new professional profile, other issues associated to the web journalists' identity seem to be emerging. It is necessary to understand how the expectations and representations regarding the impacts of the internet on the production of news are interiorized by the web journalists. How, for example, are the relations among web journalists structured in the ambit of an online editorial room? What is the configuration of the modes of entry and ascension in such labor spaces, and what are the skills and qualifications that are needed for producing material in the Internet environment?

Based on those questions this article seeks to analyze the professional careers of journalists that work in online newsrooms. The aim is to gain an understanding of the modalities of the socialization processes of such professionals<sup>10</sup> by analyzing their trajectories in the light of the concepts of professional careers. To that end, in 2011 and 2012, semi-structured biographic interviews were conducted with ten internet journalists.

The text is divided into four parts. First we will make a brief theoretical overview of the professional career concept and its applicability to identity studies in the field of journalism. Then online journalism in Brazil will be contextualized, followed by a presentation of the methodology adopted for the research and the criteria used for selecting the journalists to be interviewed. The last section of the paper will be an analysis and discussion of the results and will be structured as follows: the ways in which such journalists are socialized in the online newsrooms, modes of access to the profession and mobility, and the processes of managing journalistic careers. The section will conclude with a discussion of the relation between those careers and the construction of the journalists' professional identity.

## 2. Journalism and Professional Careers

In general terms a career can be defined as a typical sequence of statuses, roles and remunerations by which a profession is chronologically defined. They would be in the words of Becker "movements from one position to another within an occupation system

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*Internacional Mudanças Estruturais no Jornalismo – Mejor*, Brasília, 2011, accessed on December 16, 2012, at <http://www.mejor.com.br/index.php/mejor2011/MEJOR/paper/view/73>.

<sup>7</sup> AGUIAR, Leonel, BARSOTTI, Adriana, "Transformações contemporâneas no jornalismo: a prática profissional do jornalista como um mobilizador de audiência da internet", *Proceedings of the 1st Colóquio Internacional Mudanças Estruturais no Jornalismo – Mejor*, Brasília, 2011, accessed on December 16, 2012, at <http://www.mejor.com.br/index.php/mejor2011/MEJOR/paper/view/45>

<sup>8</sup> Ruellan, D, 1998, *op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> CASSIDY, William P., "Variations on a theme: The professional role conceptions of print and online newspaper journalists", *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82(2), 2005, pp. 264-280.

<sup>10</sup> LE CAM, Florence, CHARBONNEAUX, Juliette. "Pratiques managériales et socialisation des journalistes en ligne", in DANG NGUYEN, G., CREACH, P. (eds.), *Le numérique en sociétés*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2012, pp. 131-156.

undergone by any given individual inside the a system<sup>11</sup>". Careers establish behavioral patterns that develop in an orderly manner in the course of time.

Obviously a career can be attributed an individual dimension. It describes the progress that an actor makes towards achieving a more prestigious position in the labor market<sup>12</sup>. The choice of a given career may be based on the attraction of material and symbolic benefits associated to the profession such as stability and the possibility of ascension<sup>13</sup>. On the other hand, other reasons may be involved in the choice associated to the individual's living experience such as family pressures, the quest for a better standard of living, personal affinity with the profession, a sense of vocation and so on. In an analysis of individual trajectories this process of interpreting past experience shows out in the way people reconstruct their careers themselves, attributing meaning to former situations, actions and events<sup>14</sup>.

At the same time, however, professional careers are collective and structuring phenomena. When they orientate their careers, anticipating the mechanisms of ascension that the career offers, individuals interact with colleagues and competitors, with the ideologies and conventions that compose a given activity. "Each single career is interwoven in the greater network of careers. That must be seen as a stimulus to ambition but also as a capital prognostic instrument for organizing the company and the individual interests towards greater collective efforts and success<sup>15</sup>".

At the limit, the study of careers contemplates gaining an understanding of the processes of defining norms and concepts<sup>16</sup> unfolded by the professional group responsible for organizing the labor space in question<sup>17</sup> and by other sectors of society that in one way or another intervene in the definition of a given professional practice, such as legislators, companies, teaching institutions etc. Professional careers are also delimited by even more general factors such as economic growth forecasts or the technical progress of a given society<sup>18</sup>.

That dual individual and collective connection makes it possible to envisage careers studies as being something more than a mere description of trajectories<sup>19</sup>. Based on analyses of individuals' experiences it is possible to understand how social actors negotiate status and norms and define the feasible forms of collaboration in a social world.

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<sup>11</sup> In the original: "movimentos de uma posição para outra num sistema ocupacional, realizadas por qualquer indivíduo que trabalhe dentro desse sistema". BECKER, Howard Saul, *Outsiders. Estudos de Sociologia do Desvio*, Zahar, Rio de Janeiro, 2009, p. 35.

<sup>12</sup> HUGHES, Everett, "The Professions in Society", *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science / Revue Canadienne d'Economie et de Science Politique*, vol 26, n° 1, 1960, pp. 56-61.

<sup>13</sup> TREANTON, Jean-René, "Le concept de carrière", *Revue Française de Sociologie*, 1-1, 1960, pp. 73-80.

<sup>14</sup> BECKER, Howard Saul, 2009, *op. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> In the original: "Chaque carrière s'imbrique dans le réseau entier des carrières. Il faut voire là un stimulant pour l'ambition mais aussi un instrument capital de prévision d'organisation de l'entreprise et d'intérêt individuel à l'effort et au succès collectifs". TREANTON, Jean-René, *op. cit.*, p.78.

<sup>16</sup> BECKER, Howard Saul, 2009, *op. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> HUGHES, Everett, 1960, *op. cit.*

<sup>18</sup> TREANTON, Jean-René, 1960, *op. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> DARMON, Muriel, "La notion de carrière: un instrument interactionniste d'objectivation", *Politix*, vol. 21, n° 82, 2008, pp. 149-167.

## 2.1. Professional careers in journalism: a studies review

A review of the journalistic studies published in Portuguese, French, English and Spanish language academic journals reveals a certain scarcity of empirical studies of the issue. Generally speaking, the question of the career is handled as a cross-cutting theme in research work designed to define specific aspects of journalists' profiles<sup>20</sup> including, in this case studies specifically addressing: gender<sup>21</sup>, race<sup>22</sup> and the erosion of professional status<sup>23</sup>; qualification and access to the professional market<sup>24</sup>; the skills and attributes needed to exercise the profession<sup>25</sup>; social attitudes and roles<sup>26</sup>; and analyses of degrees of satisfaction with the profession<sup>27</sup>. Other investigations concentrate on analyzing specific (not to say untypical) careers in the ambit of the professional universe such as studies on the journalist elites<sup>28</sup>, on intellectual-journalists<sup>29</sup> and on journalist militants<sup>30</sup>. On the whole this set of studies tends to underscore the difficulty inherent to trying to gain an understanding of journalism on the strength of a single trajectory, given the diversity of occupations gathered under the heading of "journalist"<sup>31</sup>. "In no case (...), is there a routinized and organized career route. This is

<sup>20</sup> WEAVER, D. H., WILHOIT, C. G., "Financial Insecurity: While salaries have gone up in the past 30 years, journalists buying power has not keep pace", *The Quill*, 85.2, March 1997, pp. 23+.; WEAVER, D. H., BEAM, R. A., BROWNLEE, B. J., VOAKES, P.S., WILHOIT, C. G., *The American Journalist in the 21st Century. US people at the dawn of a new millennium*, Taylor & Francis, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> ROCHA, Paula. M., "A profissionalização no jornalismo e o mercado de trabalho para mulheres no estado de São Paulo", *Revista jurídica eletrônica Unic*, nº 2, p. 10, 2005, accessed on April 28 2013, at [www.revistajuridicaunicoc.com/midia/arquivos/ArquivoID\\_51.pdf](http://www.revistajuridicaunicoc.com/midia/arquivos/ArquivoID_51.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> CHAPELLE, Tony, "Careers in journalism", *Black Collegian*, vol. 23, Issue 2, 1992. pp. 152-156.

<sup>23</sup> DEVILLARD, Valérie, "Les trajectoires des journalistes détenteurs de la carte de presse entre 1990-1998. La montée de la précarité", *Communication et langages*, nº 133, 2002, pp. 21-32; MARCHETTI, Dominique, RUELLAN, Denis, *Devenir journalistes. Sociologie de l'entrée sur le marché du travail*, La Documentation Française, Paris, 2001; NAIT-BOUDA, F., "Le pigisme en apprentissage: les collectives de pigistes comme lieux d'apprentissage d'une identité para-journalistique", *Les cahiers du journalisme*, no. 21, Autonome, 2010, pp. 72-85.

<sup>24</sup> BEAL, Brian, "The making of a modern nose: careers in journalism", *Career Development International*, 815, 2003, pp. 247-252; FONDEVILA GASCÓN, Joan Francesc, DEL OLMO ARRIAGA, Josep Lluís, "Factores de elección de carreras de Ciencias de la Comunicación en España: el peso de la ética", *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*, vol. 19, 2013, pp. 735-744, accessed on September 8, 2013, at [http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/rev\\_ESMP.2013.v19.42156](http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/rev_ESMP.2013.v19.42156); MARCHETTI, Dominique, RUELLAN, Denis, 2001, *op. cit.*; WEAVER *et al.*, 2009, *op. cit.*

<sup>25</sup> COOPER, R., TANG, T., "The attributes of career success in Mass Communication Industries. A comparison of current and aspiring professionals", *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, 2010, pp. 40-55; FRITH, Simon and MEECH, Peter, "Becoming a journalist. Journalist education and journalism culture", *Journalism*, vol. 8, 2007, pp. 137-163; HUANG, E., DAVISON, K., SHREVE, S., DAVIS, T., BETTENDORF, E., NAIR, A., "Facing the Challenges of Convergence: Media Professionals' Concerns of Working Across Media Platforms", *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, vol. 12, 2006, pp. 83-98.

<sup>26</sup> CASSIDY, William P., 2005, *op. cit.*; WEAVER *et al.*, 2009, *op. cit.*

<sup>27</sup> OLSON, L. P., "Job Satisfaction of Journalists and RP Personnel", *Public Relations Review*, Vol. XV, No. 04, Winter 1989, pp. 37-45; DEVILLARD, Valérie, 2002, *op. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> RIEFFEL, Rémy, *L'élite des journalistes*, PUF, Paris, 1984; SANTOS-SANIZ, Maria, *L'élite journalistique et son pouvoir*, Apogée, Paris, 2006.

<sup>29</sup> PEREIRA, Fábio Henrique, *Jornalistas-intelectuais no Brasil*, Summus, São Paulo, 2011.

<sup>30</sup> PETRARCA, Fernanda Rio, "Carreira militante, inserção profissional e exercício do jornalismo no Rio Grande do Sul", *Política e sociedade*, nº 13, 2008, pp. 311-329, accessed on December 16, 2012, at <http://www.periodicos.ufsc.br/index.php/politica/article/view/9322/8606>

<sup>31</sup> BEAL, Brian, 2003, *op. cit.*; RUELLAN, Denis, *Le Professionnalisme du Flou*, PUG, Grenoble, 1993.

true in the sense that a variety of career goals are possible<sup>32</sup>. A journalist may, for example, work in an editorial room, in reporting or editing, or in opinionative genres or even administrative functions. The journalist can also work as an entrepreneur or as a freelancer. Other possibilities are positions in corporate communication and press advisory functions or work in a university as a journalism teacher.

Authors like Weaver *et al.*<sup>33</sup> identify the variety of circumstances that may surround and explain a person's entering the field of journalism which may be planned or occur by chance. While it is true that there has been a noticeable increase in the number of journalism courses in various countries<sup>34</sup>, authors tend to minimize the role of formal education as a means to ascension in journalism<sup>35</sup>. There is thought to be a relatively stable professional culture on the one hand, based on a discourse that portrays the journalist as a *self-made man*<sup>36</sup>. In that light journalists would be seen as starting at the bottom and constructing their careers and achieving prestigious positions through the recognition of their talents and competence<sup>37</sup>. "Professional experience is what counts most in enhancing their professional value along with specialization and other complementary aspects, rather than their academic qualification in journalism"<sup>38</sup>.

That calls into question the role of formal education (including internship and trainee periods) as an attribute that ensures success in the profession. Other factors like the so-called soft skills, the construction of a network of relationships, personality and a sense of vocation must also be taken into account in trying to understand the journalist career<sup>39</sup>. On the other hand, the university has proved itself to be an important space for the socialization of future journalists and the negotiation of their professional culture<sup>40</sup> and, in that regard, it is actually a stage that is common to the careers of a considerable proportion of all journalists.

### 3. Online journalism in Brazil

<sup>32</sup> ELLIOTT, P., "Media Organizations and Occupations: an overview", in CURRAN, J; GUREVITCH, M. e WOOLLACOTT, J. (eds.), *Mass Communication and Society*, Edward Arnold, Londres, 1977, p. 144.

<sup>33</sup> WEAVER *et al.*, 2009, *op. cit.*

<sup>34</sup> FRITH, Simon and MEECH, Peter, 2007, *op. cit.*; MICK, Jacques, "A expansão do ensino de jornalismo no Brasil e a reconfiguração da categoria profissional (2000-2010)", *Book of abstracts of the 1st Congreso Internacional sobre Estudios de Periodismo: Identidad, Cambios y Desafíos de la Profesión en el Siglo XXI*, Santiago, 27 a 29 de junio, 2012, accessed on December 16, 2012, at <http://perfildejournalista.ufsc.br/dados/resultados>; PEREIRA, Fábio Henrique, MOURA, Dione Oliveira, LIMA, Ana Paula, PIRES, Karoline Marques, "Journalism students profile and their perceptions of journalism education in Brazil: a comparative analysis" *3rd World Journalism Congress (WJEC-3)*, Mechelen, Papers WJEC, 2013, p. 33, accessed on September 8, 2013, at <http://wjec.be/wp/wp-content/uploads/Pereira-F.-Moura-D.-Lima-A.-Pires-K.pdf>; WEAVER *et al.*, 2009, *op. cit.*

<sup>35</sup> COOPER, R., TANG, T., 2010, *op. cit.*

<sup>36</sup> FRITH, Simon and MEECH, Peter, 2007, *op. cit.*

<sup>37</sup> ELLIOTT, P., 1977, *op. cit.*

<sup>38</sup> In the original: "Na valorização profissional pesa mais sua experiência profissional, especialização e outros complementos do que sua formação acadêmica em jornalismo". ROCHA, Paula. M., *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>39</sup> COOPER, R., TANG, T., 2010, *op. cit.*

<sup>40</sup> PEREIRA, Fábio Henrique, "Possibilidades de aplicação do conceito de carreiras profissionais nos estudos sobre jornalismo", in PEREIRA, Fábio Henrique, MOURA, Dione Oliveira, ADGHIRNI, Zélia Leal (eds.), *Jornalismo e Sociedade. Teorias e Metodologias*, Insular, Florianópolis, 2012, pp. 81-98.

In this section we will succinctly contextualize the practice of online web journalism in Brazil. We will address the media organizations scenario and the profile of those professionals that work in online editorial rooms.

### 3.1. *The media organizations*

Briefly there are three kinds of media organizations responsible for online journalism production in Brazil: traditional communication entities (printed and audiovisual media) that have set up new operations to enable them to be present in the Internet, sites that only produce online, and real time news agencies focusing on the financial markets. It must be stressed that this rule-of-thumb division is merely to give an overall idea of the Brazilian web journalism scenario and does not contemplate the great diversity of strategies that media entities adopt or the different ways in which such companies are inserted in Brazil's national communication market.

In 1995, three years after the Internet had been given the go ahead for commercial activities in Brazil, the journalistic corporations began their operations in the Network with the creation of the portals *JB online* and the web version of the *Agência Estado* (News Agency). They were followed a year later by the creation of the *Universo Online* (UOL) portal based on a collaborative arrangement involving the daily newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*, the weekly magazine *Veja* and the Portugal Telecom company – currently the majority of the capital is held by the *Folha de São Paulo*. By the end of the 1990s practically all of the large and medium-sized communication entities had launched their own online versions of their news production.

From the outset communication organizations have seen the creation of sites and portals as being an opportunity to enter what they believe to be a “strategic” market<sup>41</sup>, in spite of the poor management of online versions of newspapers that was evident at the beginning. That original perception later evolved to a discourse whereby insertion in the web environment was deemed to be a question of “survival” for communication companies, affected as they were by their institutional aging, the sharp drop in the numbers of readers, and the need for them to keep up with the market in the midst of all the technological changes<sup>42</sup>. Their initial perception of the situation led media groups to try out a series of different management measures in a bid to create a satisfactory model for financing their internet operations that included advertising, charging for (partial or total) access to site contents and so on. It also led to the appearance of different ways in which companies accommodated their internet operations within their organizational

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<sup>41</sup> POSSEBON, Samuel Lamoglia, *Globo e Abril diante de um novo paradigma comunicacional: A Internet*, (Master Thesis), Postgraduate Program in Communication, University of Brasilia, Brasília, 2002, p. 229.

<sup>42</sup> BASILE, Juliano, “Adaptações do Jornalismo em tempo de novas tecnologias”, (Master Thesis), Postgraduate Program in Communication, University of Brasilia, Brasília, 2007, p. 301; MÜLLER, Carlos Alves, “A crise estrutural dos jornais: Uma exploração comparada sobre a situação nos EUA e no Brasil”, *Revista de Estudos e Pesquisas Sobre as Américas*, vol. 5, 2011, pp. 80-109, accessed on December 16, 2012, at <http://seer.bce.unb.br/index.php/repam/article/view/5580/4661>



structures at different levels, either as autonomous services, or integrated to the traditional media news desks and editorial rooms<sup>43</sup>.

In the case of pure players, with the exception of some experimentation with small local or regional sites, the main entities established came to be in the category of portals offering mixed contents, generally operated by telephone companies whose services were privatized in Brazil from 1998 on, that is, at the same time as the first news sites were beginning to appear. That was the case with portals like *Terra* (Telefónica) and *iG* (Brasil Telecom, later Oi). In that kind of portal the contents are seen as being a way to attract consumers to the other services offered by the big telephone corporations that run them (telephone, Internet access, and, more recently, cable TV), precisely those that the groups considered to be the most profitable of its operations.

Finally there is the phenomenon of the real time news agencies which actually preceded the advent of the Internet and stems from a news production model that was first created in the 1970s in the shape of the British news agency Reuters. During that same period some agencies began to direct their efforts to producing informative packages targeting the financial market<sup>44</sup>. In Brazil, the first agency along those lines, Broadcast, (set up in the late 1970s) also pioneered the distribution of online news beginning its Internet operations in 1995, four years after the *Agência Estado* (linked to a traditional media group) took it over. It has come to be the biggest agency of its kind in Brazil and in 2012 could count on 15 thousand subscribers. Other agencies of that type operating in Brazil are the *Agência Leia*, the American agency Bloomberg and Reuters itself.

### 3.2. *The professionals' profile*

We are not aware of the existence of any national study to delineate the profile of Brazilian web journalists. However, on the basis of case studies of online editorial rooms carried out at different times<sup>45</sup> we can infer that internet journalism is produced by small organizational structures usually made up of groups of young trainees, reporters and under-editors headed by more experienced journalists.

From the beginning of the years 2000, the progressive reduction in the number of web journalists being employed, either because of redundancy or resulting from convergence initiatives among the editorial offices, exacerbated a process of increasing debilitation of the online production process, especially in those sites linked to traditional communication entities<sup>46</sup>. Many organizations developed contents-cloning processes,

<sup>43</sup> AUGÉY, Dominique, "Modèles économiques et offre "responsable" de contenus", *Proceedings of the Conference Les journalismes: Réalités plurielles, éthique commune?*, Université d'Ottawa, May 7-9, 2010, p. 9, accessed on December 16, 2012, at <http://www.crej.ca/REJ2010/Augey.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> ADGHIRNI, Zélia Leal, 2001, *op. cit.*

<sup>45</sup> ADGHIRNI, Zélia Leal, 2001, *op. cit.*; PEREIRA, Fábio Henrique, 2012. *op. cit.*; MAIA, Kênia Beatriz Ferreira, AGNEZ, Luciane Fassarela, 2011, *op. cit.*; JORGE, Thaís de Mendonça, *A notícia em mutação. Estudo sobre o relato noticioso no jornalismo digital*, (PhD Dissertation), Postgraduate Program in Communication, Univesity of Brasília, Brasília, 2007, p. 397.

<sup>46</sup> JORGE, Thaís de Mendonça, PEREIRA, Fábio Henrique, ADGHIRNI, Zélia Leal, "Formación y producción periodística en Internet: desafíos y perspectivas en el escenario brasileño", *Palabra Clave*, vol. 15, 2012, pp. 26-53.

multi-platform distribution or the integration of their editorial offices<sup>47</sup>, and that has led to an increase in the proportion of “seated journalists”<sup>48</sup> (who never leave their desks) responsible for feeding the sites.

The scene is a little different in the case of the pure players and the real time news agencies which endeavor to establish their own teams to produce online news. Although no recent studies on these two modalities are available, a preliminary reading of the interviews conducted for the present research suggests that their editorial staff tends to be larger and they are in a position to contract “standing” journalists, that is, journalists that go out to gather news, although the age group profile seems to be very similar to that of the other entities.

#### 4. Methodology

For this research survey we made use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 10 journalists, loosely based on a standardized script. The interviews addressed the following issues: 1) the web journalists' trajectory; 2) the process of “discovering” online journalism, 3) the learning process inside and outside of the editorial offices; 4) the representations of their professional practice; 5) journalists' interactions with their peers, the company, their sources and the public. In this article we will concentrate on items 2 and 3.

Web journalists working in Brasília were interviewed, some working for regional sites and other for local representations of national sites with their head offices in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. The selection of the journalists to be interviewed tried ensure representativeness of the variety of situations using the criteria of: the kind of media entity (national or regional; generalist or specialist, pure player or associated to a traditional media group), the function performed (trainee, reporter, area editor/subeditor, editor), the journalist's sex and the year in which he or she entered the labor market (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Selected web journalists by type of site, post held, gender and age**

Interviewee	Type of site	Outreach	Type of coverage	Post	Sex	Entered Journalism	Age
B1	Linked to a traditional media entity	National	Generalist	Reporter	F	2008	22
B2	Linked to a traditional media entity	Regional	Generalist	Area Editor	M	-	30
B3	Linked to a traditional media entity	National	Generalist	Reporter	F	2010	23

<sup>47</sup> MICÓ, Josep, MASIP, Pere, BARBOSA, Suzana, “Models of business convergence in the information industry. A mapping of cases in Brazil and Spain”, *Brazilian Journalism Research*, 5, 2009, pp. 123-140, accessed on December 16, 2012, from <http://bjr.sbpjor.org.br/bjr/article/view/184/183>

<sup>48</sup> In the original “Journaliste assis” (French) or “Processor” (English). This concept describes the journalism practice more oriented to the treatment of an information gathered by other journalist. In NÉVEU, Eric, *Sociologie du Journalisme*, La Découverte, Paris, 2001, p. 7.

B4	Linked to a traditional media entity	Regional	Generalist	Subeditor	F		27
B5	Linked to a traditional media entity	National	Generalist	Trainee	M	Not applicable	20
B6	Linked to a traditional media entity	National	Specialist	Editor	M	1996	38
B7	Pure Player	National	Generalist	Reporter	F	2008	32
B8	Pure Player	National	Generalist	Reporter	M	2002	24
B9	Pure Player (Real time Agency)	National	Specialist	Reporter	F	1999	35
B10	Pure Player	National	Generalist	Reporter	F	-	30

## 5. Analysis and discussion of the results

### 5.1. Socialization in web journalism

In the process of reconstructing their trajectories, the interviewees seek to establish coherence among their experiences insofar as they try to explain the choices they made in the course of their professional careers. Their narratives are naturally marked by the interaction context of an interview in which the person being interviewed tries to forestall/meet the expectations of the interviewer<sup>49</sup>.

They also reorganize the way they report their journalism learning process which they declare to be a cumulative process of acquiring new skills and knowledge. We have adopted the concept of socialization used by Florence Le Cam<sup>50</sup> which includes qualification and learning, initiation in professional practices as well as the constant adjustments to both identity and practices made in the course of the individual's personal trajectory. Le Cam holds that socialization is a continuous and dialogical process. It is nourished by professional relations, permanent adjustments to production routines, and adaptations to the practice of journalism so in that sense it must be seen as a long-lasting phenomenon. Socialization presupposes a relation between the individual trajectories and the interactions that journalists engage in with a variety of actors. In that light the research investigates the process of negotiating a professional culture and structuring an identity based on relations with a certain set of social actors.

In that regard, the initial socialization that takes place in the online editorial offices is considered to be the result of a longer journalism learning process that begins at university and is related to pre-professional and professional experiences in other journalism entities, relations with colleagues in the same profession, other experiences related to the sphere of private, non professional life etc. The narrative is actually a reconstruction of the professional careers in which certain experiences are retrieved and reassessed as a result of the interaction with the interviewer.

<sup>49</sup> JÄRVINEN, Margaretha, "Negotiating Strangerhood: interviews with homeless immigrants in Copenhagen", *Acta Sociologica*, vol 46, n° 3, 2003, pp. 215-230.

<sup>50</sup> LE CAM, Florence, *Socialisation et dialogisme*, Mimeo, 2013.

That would tend to explain the lack of any discourse classifying their entry into the field of online journalism as being a radical change in their practice or concept of journalism:

B5: I think that in essence it is a profession in which the journalist receives an agenda, investigates it, and should talk to everyone involved, hear what all sides have to say, and translate all that into simple information that can be readily understood by the population at large. I don't really see that there is much difference [between internet journalists and those in other modalities]. I think that in essence he is still just a journalist.

Passing over into online journalism may seem even less of a radical change when the journalist entering the online medium continues to cover the same subjects as in the previous job (B6, B7, B8 and B9) or in other cases where the person continues to be employed by the same company and is merely repositioned to the internet sector (B4 and B6).

In such cases, working as an online journalist means the newcomer needs to learn all about the specificities of the online activity in terms of how it functions, the target audiences, timeframes, and the amount of material to be produced each day. More than anything else, interviewees tended to elect the main web journalism specificities as being the frequency of updating material and the deadline pressures, both much greater than in other communication media.

Technical learning –dominating the techniques and tools used to update online material and the multi-media editing softwares– are only mentioned in passing. In the case of B1, for example, the updating work is all done by editors at the company's head office in São Paulo. The reporter in question only has to acquire the basic techniques of feeding the company's site. There was no frequent mention of having to produce materials in multi-media format and in fact only one media entity (*iG*) was reported by the interviewee as demanding it.

Some of the interviewees (B1, B2, B4 and B8) reported having learned the specificities of their new job from the colleagues they were replacing. A few mentioned training courses offered by the companies (*iG* and *Correio Brasiliense Online*). In the case of *iG*, interviewee B7 reported the existence of a structure designed to provide support at a distance. The journalist explained that the organization offers the support of a “product analyst” who provides orientation as to the ideal format for the news materials, based on market research. According to the interviewee, the explanation for that initiative is because the site is controlled by a telephone company that is anxious to introduce corporate management techniques into the editorial office.

The general lack of specific training is a very different situation from the one in Portugal described by João Canavilhas<sup>51</sup>. There are two possible explanations for that. First, it is quite likely that the companies carried out staff training activities when they began their Internet operations in the late 1990s and early years 2000. Considering that most of the interviewed journalists joined online journalism entities after that period and, accordingly, almost all of them would have had specific classes on the web as part of their university course, the company probably does not feel there is any need for it to provide training in that area. The second explanation would be that the absence of courses offered by the companies would underscore the idea that formal learning

<sup>51</sup> CANAVILHAS, João Manuel Messias, “Do jornalismo online ao webjornalismo: formação para mudança”, *Biblioteca on-line de Ciências da Comunicação*, 2006, p. 7, accessed on December 16, 2012, at <http://www.bocc.ubi.pt/pag/canavilhas-joao-jornalismo-online-webjornalismo.pdf>

processes in journalism are of secondary importance from the standpoint of the professional culture.

What define the socialization processes of internet journalists are the type of news entity they work for (local or national, head office or branch, associated to a traditional media organization or pure player), their professional trajectory and the post they hold in the company (reporter or editor, generalist or specialized journalist, sector reporter or editorial office journalist, beginner or experienced). These aspects delimit the conditions in which the journalist negotiates what needs to be learned, how certain knowledge should be acquired, and the degree of autonomy that he or she will have to propose changes and experimentation.

Those reporters that work as part of an editorial office (B2, B4 and B5), those that work for companies with head offices in Brasília (B2, B3, B4 and B5) and those that work in large or medium-sized branch offices (B6) usually place a higher value on the learning process in the work environment and in their live interaction with their colleagues. Sector reporters and correspondents (B1, B7, B8, B9 and B10) have a looser relationship to the entity they work for, in some cases almost amounting to autonomy, and they usually relate more to the colleagues that they work alongside of in their news coverage. Alternatively they may pay careful attention to any interventions made in material they have produced, such as alterations to the text or the editor's decision not to publish it, and in that way they endeavor to foresee and meet the editors' expectations. In both cases there is consensus that such orientation is hardly ever documented or formally transmitted by their superiors.

Entering the field of online journalism is associated to a discourse on "discovering a new medium". While it is true that some of the journalists share the opinion that there is an essence of journalistic practice that does not depend on the entity in which it is carried out (B4 and B5), most of them believe that they need to adapt their practices to some extent, especially when working in real time (B1, B6 and B8). Others believe they are participating in the construction of a new kind of journalism (B7 and B10). That lack of agreement as to what the format of web journalism really is permeates the journalists' daily rounds and their relations with their superiors. As an example of that, there are cases where reporters (B1 and B10) work for more than one editorial office and receive different or even contradictory instructions from the respective editors as to what style the text should be couched in.

## 5.2. *The professional careers*

### 5.2.1. *Entering the online editorial offices*

Reading the interview transcripts reveals two different forms of access and mobility inside the profession. In some companies, some of the job vacancies are filled on the basis of recommendations of candidates made by colleagues and that has historically been identified as the traditional means of access and mobility in journalism<sup>52</sup>. More recently, however, some organizations have begun to establish their own selection

<sup>52</sup> PEREIRA, Fábio Henrique, 2012, *op. cit.*

processes to fill job vacancies and those consist of curriculum analyses, tests, interviews, group dynamics and trainee courses.

Almost all the journalists interviewed had undergone both of those processes at some time. That fact indicates a duality between the efforts made to professionalize the process of entering journalism in the sense of making it more similar to what occurs with other occupations, and the traditional form of choosing staff based on reputation and peer recognition of a candidate's skills and competence. That duality is particularly evident in the statement of B6. He entered the career and progressed in it strictly on the basis of colleagues' indications, but once he became an editor he ran a trainee course for the purpose of selecting new journalists:

The course was a more organized, well thought out filter for determining access. Everyone is on an equal level. A person may have done badly at university in some aspects that he or she was not comfortable with and yet perceive that during the course, during those two or three months of the course, he is going to become aware of certain things that he had not realized before simply because of being in contact with professionals that produce the newspaper every day. We, the editorial office staff, were the teachers in that course [...]. It is also important for you to be able to pass on the newspaper's culture to the candidates.

Another illustrative case appears in the declaration made by B10 who complains about the successive selection processes he was obliged to undergo in almost ten years of professional experience:

When I was younger, I always used to send in my Curriculum, go for interviews, take a test, wait for the outcome and then be called in. I had to go through all those stages in all my first jobs simply because I did not know anyone that could have indicated me (...).

If you are 20 then you do it [selection by taking a test]. When you are 24 you start to get a bit tired of it. At 30 you are inclined to say "Look, why don't you read some of the material I have written. Do you really think it's worth it [the test]? I am going to show you some of the things that I have done here". Nowadays I think networking helps you to...

Entering the market as a professional journalist usually takes place in one of the Federal District's main daily newspapers, the *Correio Braziliense* (B2, B4, B6 and B7) or the *Jornal de Brasília* (B1). As for the theme covered, most of the journalists dedicated themselves to covering politics and economics (B1, B3, B4, B6, B8, B9). The fact of the journalists' having begun their careers in the sphere of local journalism is not necessarily an original revelation from the point of view of studies in this field<sup>53</sup>. The predominance of jobs in political and economic journalism is obviously related to the scenario in which the study was conducted. As Brasilia is the political center of the country it tends to concentrate most of its news reports on local and national governments and economic policy. Such subjects receive more moderate attention from the local news media. On the other hand those national circulation organizations that maintain correspondents in Brasilia or local branch offices tend to concentrate almost all their coverage on those two themes.

<sup>53</sup> FRITH, Simon and MEECH, Peter, 2007, *op. cit.*; BEAL, Brian, 2003, *op. cit.*

Four of the interviewed journalists (B2, B3, B4) actually began their careers in online entities. The others only began to work in web journalism after their second jobs (B8; B9), third job (B1), sixth job (B10) or seventh job (B6) (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Summary of interviewed journalists' professional careers – employment mobility**

Interviewee	Trainee period?	First job	Job 02	Job 03	Job 04	Job 05	+5?	Current status
B1	Yes	Press adviser (public company)	Newspaper (Generalist/ local)					News site (linked to a traditional/ national media organization)
B2	Yes							News site (linked to a traditional/ regional media organization)
B3	Yes	Site (pure player/National)						News site (linked to a traditional/ national media organization)
B4	Yes							News site (linked to a traditional/ regional media organization)
B5	Yes	Not applicable						News site (linked to a traditional/ national media organization)
B6	Yes	Local Newspaper/ Generalist	Local Newspaper/ Specialized	Local Newspaper/ Specialized	National Newspaper/ specialized	Foreign newspaper correspondent (after post-graduate studies overseas); Press adviser (government)	Yes (+1)	News site (linked to a traditional/ national media organization)
B7	Yes	Local Newspaper/ Generalist	Press adviser (university)					News site notícias (pure player/ National)
B8	Yes	TV (National)						News site notícias (pure player/ National)
B9	Yes	Press adviser	Press adviser; Online news agency (government)	News site correspondent (government)	Newspaper correspondent (local); Freelancer for Agency (Online/Real time)	TV (National)		Agency (Online/ Real time)
B10	Yes	TV (National)	Freelancer	Radio (National)	Press adviser	Radio (National)	Yes (+2)	News site (pure player/ National)

		; Press adviser (govern- ment)						
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### 5.2.2. *Mobility inside the career*

Mobility within the sphere of a journalistic career is related to a set of choices made in the course of a journalist's professional trajectory. The process is influenced by the way journalists attribute status to different communication means and companies, by the journalists' individual experiences and their career plans as well as by the immediate interactions that permeate the moment of choosing a new work position. In this last case, the possibilities offered by certain careers and the way they are situated in the wider context of the labor market and the economy are interwoven with the journalists' financial or symbolic interests, and their quests for autonomy or for a given style of life. Another important factor is the representations employer and employee make of the skills needed for the post and the access conditions for certain work posts.

The career's symbolic dimension reappears in the journalists' accounts of the nature of the hierarchies of prestige established in regard to posts, entities and media forms that are defined and internalized by the group when referring to the "best positions", the "best media entities" and the "the most suitable post for a given moment of the career", and so on. Younger journalists believe that they need to choose jobs that will give them visibility and professional experience; more experienced journalists tend to prefer higher salaries and stability of employment as witness the statements of B1 (age 22) and B7 (age 32):

B1: I went to work for the X newspaper to receive less than I was earning at the time [as a press adviser to a bank]... to earn less and to work a lot harder. However, it was a question of learning and that is still ongoing. Today the salary issue continues to be a drawback but not so much as before.

B7: I want to work properly, to have a job that makes me happy. If tomorrow [I get a chance to work as] a press adviser, then I think that would be it [I would take it]. Because I am fed with working in the editorial office (...) I have long term plans, I want to carry on working at a decent job; one that motivates me.

That division suggests that the objective definition of the sequence of work positions that make up a career is related to a much broader process of knowledge management and distribution (the learning process) as well as to the economic, social and symbolic benefits associated to the profession.

Most of the interviewees recognized the existence of a legitimacy hierarchy among the various different media organizations. Among the national entities, the printed media (newspapers and magazines) are at the top followed by TV, Internet and radio. This kind of classification also takes into account whether the media entity's outreach is national or regional and the nature of the specific post held by the journalist. That enables journalists to justify the choices they have made on the basis of a shared set of what they consider to be "natural" distinctions and valuations. It would be more interesting, for example, to be a reporter for a radio station that broadcasts as part of a



national network than to work for a local printed media organization; on the other hand, working as a sub-editor for a local printed media entity would represent a status similar to that of a reporter for a national site.

To some extent those conventions are mixed up with questions of a more personal nature, but they do help to explain the way in which the organization of a career enables the social actors concerned to orientate their decisions on the basis of the expectations they create in regard to their own futures. The dialectic between individual biographies and the profession's collective dimension provides the key to understanding the fact that the younger journalists classified the experience with web journalism as a form of learning; a transitory experience in the scope of the overall planning of their future careers. Thus, B1 and B5 still wish to work in TV and B2 wants to get back to working in the printed news media. At the other end of the scale, B6 a B9, the two journalists with over ten years of career experience did not express any desire to leave their work in online media –B9 merely commented that he would like to get a higher post in the command of the entity he works for. There were also examples of people dissatisfied with the profession: B10, for example stated that he would like to take a Masters degree; B3 was having doubts as to whether he wanted to carry on in journalism (actually, six months after the interview, he abandoned journalism and took up a Museology course).

The fact that journalists perceive a foreseeable course for their professional careers obviously does not mean that they will not be affected by power relations or generation conflicts or that there are no possibilities for journalists to change the course of their careers. That is to say, even though the world of journalists organizes a set of so-called “normal” or “foreseeable” trajectories, it is always possible to get off the track and construct other ways of achieving professional ascension.

From the personal standpoint, changes in the career depend on the journalists' assessments of their own status, expressing their feelings of achievement, stagnation or decline<sup>54</sup>. In that sense some choices represent a form of subjective perception of the career possibilities shared by the group. The statement of journalist B7 illustrates that kind of situation very well:

I was really tired of the work I was doing for the same section of the newspaper ever since I was first hired, for the rest of my life [...] There I was, it was always the same thing, lots of pressure. My editor is actually a person that I like a lot but she is very complicated and she demands a lot of me emotionally [...] and I started to get tired of it even though people at the newspaper were fond of me. I got a raise which was quite a big one by the newspaper's usual standards, but after that I spent years just stagnating. I realized that nothing was ever going to change very much because the paper's policy of incentives for staff is very difficult.

In the case of journalism, the periods of stagnation are exacerbated by the fact that some organizations do not have any formal career structures planned or internal mechanisms to value and reward their employees financially, whether for merit or for years of service. That is why sticking to a single company all the time may be viewed as a form of accommodation from the career point of view. On the other hand, working with various different media entities may result in financial or symbolic ascension in the profession, especially in the eyes of colleagues and the editorial bosses. The cases of

<sup>54</sup> STRAUSS, Anselm L., *Miroirs et masques: une introduction à l'interactionnisme*, Métailié, Paris, 1992.

journalists B1, B6, and B9 show quite clearly how changing their jobs to work for a different media entity enhanced their reputations and even enabled them to eventually revert to working for their original employer in far better financial and professional conditions.

Finally, such choices are permeated by mobility opportunities that appear in the course of the individual's trajectory. All of the interviewees reported situations in which certain career-related decisions were made because, at a certain moment, they received offers of employment or invitations to work in other organizations. That goes to show that some choices are highly related to the context they are made in<sup>55</sup> and it also complements the idea that the careers only depend on the individual's ability to anticipate and respond to the mobility mechanisms that exist inside the sphere of the profession itself; indeed, not one of the journalists interviewed admitted that entering the area of online journalism was part of their initial expectations or journalism career plans. All of them had got to their present positions either after having been unemployed (B2, B3, B4) or because they received an invitation and considered that the new position being offered constituted a move upwards in the profession (B1, B6, B7, B8, B9 and B10).

### 5.3. *Career and professional identity*

This final section presents a discussion of some of the effects of social and individual dynamics that structure professional careers as well as the identity constructing processes in journalism. Emphasis is placed on the way interviewees manage uncertainties and the way in which producing for the internet is inserted in the logic of change/stability in journalism. Those two dimensions do not embrace all the complexity associated to professional identity, but they do make it possible to identify some of the pathways that can be followed in other research efforts.

The last few years have been notable for the increased mobility within the journalistic career. If the total number of job changes among the interviewed journalists is taken into account (33) it gives an average of 3.3 different jobs per journalist which is an expressive number considering their average age (28.4). Added to that figure there are the trainee and intern experiences and other labor experiences (free lance activities and sporadic collaboration with press advisory services or journalistic media entities). The high level of mobility in the profession is even more apparent in the case of the journalists aged over 30. B2 and B7 happen to have had more stable careers but the others (B6, B9 and B10, all under 40) have all had at least five different jobs in the course of their careers so far.

There are two distinct orders of explanation for that process. The first is more structural and stems from the generalized phenomenon of the increasing erosion of the labor market and fragility of labor relations which has led to an increase in the number of unstable positions<sup>56</sup>. At the same time the structure of careers as such has altered. The former ideas of a career centered on an organization (where the individual would gradually go up the steps of the ladder towards the top) has been substituted by forms of

<sup>55</sup> PEREIRA, Fábio Henrique, 2012, *op. cit.*; STRAUSS, Anselm L., *op. cit.*

<sup>56</sup> DEVILLARD, Valérie, 2002, *op. cit.*

career management centered on the individual's own interests and the notion of self-employment<sup>57</sup>.

The other aspect concerns the tension inherent to journalism itself which oscillates between what is a technical and intellectual practice and the journalist who represents himself sometimes as a mere employee and at other times as an autonomous member of a liberal profession<sup>58</sup>. What is involved here, in the view of Salter<sup>59</sup>, is the change that has taken place in the initial concept of journalism as a public service. It has been progressively "colonized" by other institutions so that it has come to appropriate (and become subjected to) other market-orientated practices (ensuring client satisfaction, obtaining high audience ratings). In the course of that process, the journalism career itself has become unstable. On the one hand, the journalist is constantly on the outlook for more stable employment positions or better working conditions, even if that means having to move to a different media company or entity. That would explain why some of the interviewees (B2, B7 and B9) hardly refer to any long term planning of their careers. On the other hand, most communication companies no longer worry about developing careers and salaries policies that would allow the professionals they employ to invest in the organization: the abundant offer on the labor supply side makes it easy for them to substitute journalists that are dismissed or that resign from their jobs. That situation is portrayed in the statements of B6 and B10:

B6: I went to Spain to take a specialization course with the assurance that I could later go back [to my original job]. In the middle of the process, in 2002, there was a serious crisis and all the editorial offices dismissed a lot of staff. I ended up in the same boat. My former work position had been "frozen" and frozen it has remained.

B10: I worked [for a TV channel] for 3 months. Then, as so often happens, there was a change in the board. Every 6 or 8 months they change the directors, change everything [...]. Unfortunately I arrived in the middle of such a process so shortly afterwards I was dismissed along with more than two thirds of the editorial office staff and then, two months later, they called me in again [...]. because they were hiring again and this time I stayed on for three and a half years.

The concept of uncertainty management has been used by Menger<sup>60</sup> to analyze artistic careers in France and it offers a good explanation of the way journalists address uncertainty in journalism. Against the background of an abundant labor offer and a career structure that is dispersed among a considerable number of possible activities, constant mobility has proved to be a strategy that provides a steady accumulation of skills (given that the journalists see their passages through various media modalities as a learning process) and the establishment of a network of relations<sup>61</sup> and, together, they help to minimize the effects of the ever increasing fragility of labor relations and to boost the individuals efforts to find better working conditions.

<sup>57</sup> HOEKSTRA, Hans A., "A career model of career development", *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 78, 2011, pp. 159-173.

<sup>58</sup> RUELLAN, Denis, 1993, *op. cit.*

<sup>59</sup> SALTER, Lee, "Journalism in the academy, a macintyeane account of the institutions and practices of journalism education in England", *IC - Revista Científica de Información y Comunicación*, 9, 2012, pp. 75-102.

<sup>60</sup> MENGER, Pierre-Michel, *Le travail créateur: s'accomplir dans l'incertain*, Gallimard/Seuil, Paris, 2009.

<sup>61</sup> BEAL, Brian, 2003, *op. cit.*

Furthermore, there is the question of the specificity of the professional career in web journalism. To what extent is the web journalist distinct from any other kind of journalist? In the present research we have observed a duality in the interviewees discourse regarding their profession. Generally speaking there is a tendency to reinforce the idea that a journalist is a journalist irrespective of the particular media entity in which he may be working. Several statements mentioned that the journalist's informative function<sup>62</sup> was exactly the same in online production. That stability is also present in the way in which web journalism appears to have become naturalized and integrated to journalistic careers: an individual may pass from a printed media entity or from TV to working in the Internet without the need for any sizeable identity adjustments.

Actually this study reinforces the findings of others in regard to the appropriation of the Internet as journalism's new professional frontier<sup>63</sup>, a process marked by the relative stability of the journalists' world. Indeed, the advent of a new media form and the expansion of the respective labor market have had a very limited impact on the professional culture and it has merely led to what Ruellan calls "conservational innovations" in journalism<sup>64</sup>. In fact, the introduction of technical tools has not led to any profound alterations in the learning and socialization processes that unfold in the editorial offices and the possibility of joining an online editorial office has become incorporated as one of the professional journalists' possible activities without in any way implying a rupture with the structure of their professional careers.

The change may lie chiefly in the introduction of a set of micro-innovations (above all the acceleration of contents product flows, which was remarked on in practically all of the statements) and the incorporation of a discourse legitimizing the Internet as being the future of journalism which was very evident in the statement of B7: *"In the future I imagine that everyone will only use the Internet. Nobody is thinking seriously about that [...]. At home I can see that my 13 year-old son never picks up anything printed to read, he doesn't look at newspapers, or magazines [...]. Nowadays they can find everything in the Internet"*.

## 6. Conclusions

This paper has set out some of the results obtained from a research survey into the professional careers of web journalists in Brasília. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in a bid to gain an understanding of how the relations among individual trajectories, the culture of professional journalism and the specificities of the Internet explain the management processes of those careers.

There are aspects that it has not been possible to address in this paper but they deserve to be approached in subsequent studies. The first such is the way in which their interactions with sources, audiences, companies, IT staff, and so on, affect the construction of the professional career paths of the journalists that were interviewed. The second aspect is the way in which the discourse on the Internet (as a space for the expansion of individual liberties and the decentralization of media production) produces

<sup>62</sup> CASSIDY, William P., 2005, *op. cit.*; WEAVER *et al.*, 2009, *op. cit.*

<sup>63</sup> RUELLAN, Denis, 1998, *op. cit.*; PEREIRA, Fábio Henrique, 2004, *op. cit.*

<sup>64</sup> RUELLAN, Denis, "Corte e costura do jornalismo", *Libero*, ano IX, nº 18, São Paulo, 2006, p. 39.

effects in reality that most certainly influence the practice and structure of journalistic careers; something that was merely suggested at the beginning of this article. Incorporating these latter variables to our analysis at a later moment could very well enrich our understanding of career management processes in journalism in these time of the Internet.

Another problem is the fact that the analysis of mobility in the interviewees' careers only examined the changes from one organization to another without taking into account their movements within a given company. That means that a part of their career evolution, what Hoeckstra<sup>65</sup> refers to as "micro-development" has been neglected. Obviously that was the result of a deliberate decision by the author who has sought to place greater emphasis on the elements of change rather than those of stability or continuity in the career path, and that [decision] is reflected in the statements of the journalists themselves. A subsequent analysis would therefore need to incorporate those internal movements and reflect on them to enhance comprehension of the journalistic careers.

The article has also concentrated on the sociological aspects of the careers; on the way in which choices depend on factors of a collective order such as the labor market conditions, the structure of the media organizations and the journalists' relations with their peers. In that regard it would be important to study the psychological/individual dimension associated to variables such as vocation, skills and preferences. The underlying question here is: to what extent can the quest for personal satisfaction<sup>66</sup> explain the individual's entering journalism and explain the subsequent choices/decisions made in the ambit of profession itself? Again: how much does professional success in journalism depend on other attributes like good interpersonal relations, a pro-active attitude, a good network of relations? Progress in addressing these issues would enable us situate the question of the career in an individual/society dialectic which in turn will enhance our delineation of identity-related processes in journalism.

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<sup>65</sup> HOEKSTRA, Hans A., 2011, *op. cit.*

<sup>66</sup> HOEKSTRA, Hans A., 2011, *op. cit.*

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