

Tensions between the profession's imaginary and the representations made by workers in advertising agencies from Belo Horizonte-MG

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Abstract

This paper aims to ascertain how the points suggested by Everardo Rocha (1985) are present as social legitimizers of the advertising profession in the reports of workers from Belo Horizonte at the list *Como é trabalhar aí?*¹, an online file that circulated with descriptions of the routines of agencies. Conceptually, the elements that constitute the profession's imaginary are presented and a discussion is made about the common practices of this occupation. Methodologically, the contents of the list are analysed to identify the representations that advertisers make of their occupation within the scope of praxis. The results, when compared, show a negative scenario of abuse and exploration far from what is socially represented to legitimize the profession and that, although different, both dimensions contribute to the construction of meanings of belonging to the same working class.

Keywords

Representation; Job; Profession; Advertiser; Advertising agencies.

¹ In this article we chose to keep the original name of the list, in order to facilitate its access in search engines. English translation: How is it to work there?

Introduction

This article starts with the idea that, still today, the work is a structural element of our society (Marx, 1996) and, therefore, to study the social representations that emerge from this category, is to reveal significant communicational matters. In this paper, we observe the counterpoints between the socially constructed imaginary of the profession and the meanings shared among advertisers from their similar work experiences.

Recently, the exercise of work takes place in a context in which new elements, such as neoliberal thinking, the discourse of flexibility and job insecurity, provoke new work experiences. Not unlike other segments, the advertising also went through transformations, especially after the second half of the 20th century, becoming increasingly cognitive (Lazzarato & Negri, 2001). That is, the old way of doing ads, related to the selling of products, has changed, and is now focused on the intangibility of the attributes of political and cultural brand positioning.

In order to accompany this so-called new advertising, the communication conglomerates, which manage most advertising agencies¹ around the world, were forced to change their business formats and, consequently, their production methods, to adapt to two major phenomena: one of an economic and cultural character - the globalization; and another of technological scope - the advent of digital media.

These changes also had reverberations in the world of advertising work, with the introduction of alternative forms of hiring such as home-office, freelancer², temporary work, outsourcing, trainee programs and internships. All of these are precarious ways concerning traditional employment modalities since they are usually opportunities to hire cheaper labour (Carrascoza, 2011).

The purpose of this article is to analyse the representations that advertisers in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil, make of their profession by responding anonymously to an online participation list called *Como é trabalhar aí?*. The objective is to map the meanings used in professional representation, tensioning them with the five characteristics that make up the imaginary that advertisers have in relation to their profession, identified by Everardo Rocha (1985) in the book *Magia e Capitalismo*. It is assumed that the meanings emerging from the list are different from those identified by Rocha (1985) both for the sake of temporality and because they are destined for different social purposes.

Therefore, this article is structured into four parts. At first, addresses the collective imagination that legitimizes the advertising profession, adding a discussion of common practices in the daily life of the agencies. The second part presents the list *Como é trabalhar aí?* and the methodological procedure to analyse it, within the proposed framework. The third part turns to the qualitative inferences about the tensions between the ideally built profession and the effective labour exercise. Finally, the fourth part presents the final considerations and points out new research possibilities.

Discussions about the advertising profession

In the classic *Magia e Capitalismo: um estudo antropológico da publicidade*, considered one of the pioneering works on the advertising activity in Brazil, the researcher Everardo Rocha (1985) identifies and presents the social imaginary of the advertising profession. That is the set of symbolic constructions that characterize the social actors belonging to this technical group and, consequently, help to understand their identity as workers.

¹ It is a fact that there is a discussion about the differences between the terms publicity and advertising. However, it will not be discussed further in this article. And, for the sake of fluidity of the text, both will be used as synonyms, as has happened in a significant part of the specialized Brazilian literature.

² Freelancer or *freela*, as it is more commonly called in popular Portuguese language. This person is a self-employed professional who provides services to companies for a fixed period without maintaining any employment relationship with them.

Rocha (1985) explains that, when aiming for social prestige, workers of a certain profession seek to legitimize their activity, creating a representation that is favourable to them. For the author, the concept of representation is apparently aligned to Goffman's perspective that the representation is a way in which the individual presents himself to others, trying to regulate their impressions about him (Goffman, 2011). For advertisers, the author lists five items that traditionally support this prestigious image: high salary and standard of life, responsibility and socio-economic function of the advertising, the history of the profession, high education, and according to Rocha, the most important: the knowledge required for the performance of the function.

According to Rocha (1985), in the communication colleges, it is common for advertisers to be seen by students as the profession with the highest money return among other courses in the same practice area. This fact contributes to the maintenance of expectations regarding the occupation, constituting a myth of sophistication, glamour, and benefits, reinforced mainly by the speeches of the exponents of the area and their stories of success and enrichment.

The second point that Rocha (1985) presents is the defence of the profession as an important activity for society, the environment and economy. This approach is based on the perspective of advertising as something that benefits citizens, once it has the potential to teach them important matters like hygiene, or sustainability, for example. It is the enhancement of the human character of advertising, grounded in the ideology of effort to make a better world, fleeing the mercantilist idea generally associated with this profession.

The third characteristic described by Rocha (1985), although not mandatory for the exercise of the profession, is the valorisation of university education. The author highlights a certain ambiguity on this point since he found that professionals criticize the divergences between the content taught in the academy and what is actually practised in the market. However, according to Rocha (1985), one of the greatest gains for the profession was its introduction into the scenario of higher education studies through a university course. This brought it social legitimation. Although the professionals question the quality of the Communication Schools, they seem to know its importance, since they recommend them and still place the diploma as a competitive differential in the job selections.

The fourth point that socially legitimizes the profession is the memory accumulated during the history of the activity. For Rocha (1985), an occupation becomes historic not because it is necessarily old, but because it builds an identity, a gallery of legendary events, myths, founders, and pioneers that mark their space of validation before society.

Finally, the fifth point identified by the researcher as a social legitimacy mechanism of the profession is the dramatization made by advertisers on the costs of their work, associating it with an extremely complex activity, according to Rocha (1985), to impress and generate prestige. The author reports that for example, when interviewing a visual graphic designer, this explained that few people are qualified to perform the techniques and tools he knows. This, according to the interviewee, makes the tasks he performs seem difficult for those who are not in the area and saw him working.

Still, the knowledge of advertising professionals is commonly associated with science and art. The approximation of these two areas is a consequence of the division of tasks in the agency. On the one hand, there is the artistic part represented by the art directors, for example. On the other, the media and planning professionals who deal with calculations, research, and statistics. The demand for the articulation of this knowledge, at first antagonistic, is a fundamental support to give prestige to the profession and is articulated with the other mechanisms already presented in the composition of the professional representation of the advertiser (Rocha, 1985).

After presented the imagery of advertising activity from the point of view of professionals, it fits to bring other features in a sense of complementarity, this time, more connected to the daily lives of agencies. That is, elements that go beyond the type of occupation portrayed by Rocha (1985) and,

therefore, also indicate elements that are characteristic of the advertising exercise, after all the agencies are privileged places for the exercise of this profession.

Carrascoza (2011) points out that the advertising agencies represent the main place of performance for advertising professionals. Therefore, the academic training courses in Advertising and Propaganda are structured to meet the agency's way of working: service, planning, creation, media and production. As the forms of work in the agencies change, the courses seek to adapt to the new technologies, structures and languages of the market.

The current national curriculum guidelines in Brazil, approved by the CNE/CES 492/2001 for the Social Communication course - qualification in Advertising and Propaganda, points to a professional with numerous capacities, from planning to personal sale.

The profile of the graduate in Advertising and Propaganda is characterized by the planning, creation, production, dissemination and management of advertising communication, promotional and incentive actions, events and sponsorship, marketing activities, personal sales, packaging design and corporate identity, and advertising information advisory (Concelho, 2001).

There is an effort in the guidelines to highlight the training of a qualified advertising professional to execute various demands throughout his career. Although Fígaro (2010) shows that younger advertisers are less resistant to versatility, it is understood that the enhancement of training in various tasks points to a scenario of exploitation, as well as to increasing pressure on the advertiser who needs to prepare to develop numerous skills at the agency.

Another striking feature in advertising work is related to the extensive activity days. Regarding workers in companies in the Communication sector, according to data presented by Dal Rosso (2017), 21% work over forty-four hours a week. The author explains that the numbers in the Communication sector are associated with the fact that the activities do not respect the limits of conventional working time, that is, for this line of business, "non-working times are working hours all day" (Dal Rosso, 2017, p. 203). This position is reinforced by Carrascoza (2011) when stating that

The most perverse is not this type of extension of the workday. Perverse is the other modality, from which advertisers cannot escape, because it is their own activity: even if they leave their hours on time, outside the workplace - in traffic, at home, anywhere else - they keep thinking about the jobs that are on their desks (Carrascoza, 2011, p. 12).

Communication companies are known to operate every day of the year. This practice is justified in the idea that the advertiser needs to stimulate consumption incessantly. To cope with this uninterrupted demand, employers make the distribution of hours more flexible and, consequently, pay less for labour, in addition to frequently resorting to interns, young apprentices, freelancers and trainees. These alternative forms of hiring are recurrent in so-called creative organizations such as advertising agencies (Senett, 1999).

Carrascoza (2011) explains that it is almost a tradition that advertisers collude their working hours, some of them exceeding twelve hours a day. The researcher adds that many do it without demanding the corresponding remuneration. This can be noted in the confessions of David Ogilvy (2011), one of the pioneers of the advertising business, founder of one of the most traditional advertising agencies on the world and regarded by professionals as the father of advertising. In his autobiography, Ogilvy (2011) states that his agency's staff appears to have different energy on exceptional occasions. He reports, for example, that in situations of customer crisis it is noticeable the rise in employee morale for weeks because they have spent whole nights working to try to resolve it.

Apparently, the long working hours is a custom of the profession already institutionalized and accepted by the advertising community since entering the market. Overwork is constituted as one more

element of social craft construction, as an attempt to assert themselves and gain status through a logic in which the success of the career is linked to the number of hours dedicated to it.

The theoretical panorama made so far presents characteristic elements of the profession's imaginary both from advertisers and from the customs that permeate its practice in advertising agencies. The tension resulting from these two dimensions, we propose the following analytical issues: the five points sets by Rocha (1985) are called for when line *belorizontinos*³ describe their professions? And yet, what other characteristics can be identified in reports of professionals who share a similar work experience?

Como é trabalhar aí?

In an attempt to answer the questions raised, a qualitative approach will be made on the contents of the list: *Como é trabalhar aí?* – an online shared spreadsheet, created by advertiser Isabel Lopes on May 3rd, 2018. The file has four columns: Date and time of publication, the agency that works, city and comment. The information contained therein was fed by advertisers from all over the country, resulting in more than two thousand and four hundred anonymous participations revealing the working conditions of the agencies in which they perform (Lista, 2018).

In addition to the significant amount of reports from the work environments, other characteristics mark this empirical object, such as the anonymity of the respondents and the collaborative and independent form of their construction and circulation. It is assumed that these conditions contribute to participation that tends to be more spontaneous, since they happen in a space where the public shares similar experiences. Despite this, the participations are also crossed by biases such as the desire for acceptance by the group and the consequent excess of criticism instead of praise, since this is apparently the proposal of the list.

The framework will be limited to the city of Belo Horizonte. First, a filter was used to collect only the comments related to the agencies established in the capital of Minas Gerais, totalling seventy-seven participations. The five theoretical-conceptual points proposed by Rocha (1985) to typify the social imaginary of the profession, were used as thematic axes in the elaboration of a priori categories, aiming to organize the empirical object.

For that, the information collected in the comment's column was submitted to the content analysis proposed by Bardin (2010). The categories are understood as “drawers or significant rubrics so that from them it is possible to classify the elements of meaning that constitute the message” (Bardin, 2010, p. 39). According to the same author, this approach allows an organization of ideas from an apparent disorder in the materials analysed data. The following table shows the categorization criteria used to organize the corpus:

Table 1 - Description of content analysis categories

Category	Description
Payment and Benefits	Comments that represent the exercise of the profession relating it to paid remuneration or advantages for working in the area.
An Important activity for society	Comments that represent the exercise of the profession relating it to the solution of social, environmental or political issues.
University education	Comments that represent the exercise of the profession relating it to the importance of academic training.

³ *Belhorizontinos* it is how is called the people who born or live on Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil.

Profession memory	Comments that represent the exercise of the profession relating it to the awards and important personalities in the area.
Activity complexity	Comments that represent the exercise of the profession relating it to a complex activity practised by trained people.
Others	Comments that do not fit into any of the previous categories

Font: Prepared by the author

To assist in mining the content of the corpus Voyant Tools⁴ was used, an open-source internet platform, led by professors Stéfan Sinclair (McGill University) and Geoffrey Rockwell (University of Alberta), which enables analysis of the set of texts submitted it through features such as word count, the creation of semantic clouds and detection of sense trends. The graphics generated by the tool helped map the frequency of terms used by the list of participants and pointing associative most common patterns among them, which contributed to identifying subcategories within those presented.

To understand the articulation of meanings around the professional representation that advertisers in Belo Horizonte make about themselves, the concept of *front* was rescued in Goffman (2011). For the author, individuals are actors, representing roles that are favourable to them according to different situations (stages). The representation is more visible on the actor's *front*, that is, in the appearance he builds for himself and is shared by those who interact with him.

Goffman's concern (2011) is in the daily strategies to regulate the impressions caused during the interactions, which for him conforms to a true staging game accepted by those involved through a tacit agreement between them. In short, the representation is "(...) a kind of image, generally worthy of credit, that the individual on the stage and as a character effectively tries to induce others to have about him" (Goffman, 2013, p. 271).

It is understood, therefore, that the representations of themselves shared by *belorizontinos* advertisers are attempts to create an appearance to reveal identity aspects of their professions. In this sense, the concept of *front* (Goffman, 2011) is called as an analytical axis as it relates to the representations that members of a particular profession do collectively.

In this way, when an individual assumes an established professional role, he calls for himself a certain socially constructed *front* to characterize him. References for this role are concentrated in the social imaginary of the profession. In this way, the imaginary, at the same time, affects and is affected by the *fronts* performed by advertisers, revealing its character of constant transformation.

Based on these assumptions, we can see in the categories of Rocha (1985) the consolidation of *fronts* constituted in a situation different from that apprehended in the list. In Rocha, advertisers seek to establish the profession aiming at social legitimation, while in the list the representations are constituted in a situation of peer relations, people with similar work experiences.

Thus, the list is understood as a loosening of the front, a situation that, according to Goffman (2011), happens when the actors are in a relationship of trust and closeness. Based on this idea of the author, it is believed that when the fronts are loosened, distinct characteristics emerge from those of Rocha (1985), since these were contextualized in aspects of social legitimation of the profession and not of reports of the work environment. This distinction between the different situations of building fronts triggers tensions between the idealization of the profession and its effective exercise through a job.

Tensions between profession and job

⁴ Retrieved from: <https://voyant-tools.org/>

The Compensation and Benefits category contains comments that generally challenge the profession's imaginary. In the analysed corpus, salary is often referred to as low or reduced and benefits are understood as ways to make a good impression and mask reality. "The company calls itself 'different', with candies, happy hour, human, but, in the end, it is just another exploiter". "The place is beautiful, but unfortunately it doesn't mean anything. As they have already said: overworked employees doing more than one job". The testimonials represent the advertiser's work environment as an apparently well-equipped, relaxed, aesthetically beautiful space, and even with the right to goodies. However, the salary does not correspond to what is expected by the professional or, in some cases, labour rights are not fulfilled by employers: "the company does not pay employees' FGTS⁵ and to receive it, one has to go to court."

Deleuze (1992) supports the comprehension of this situation by stating that the factory was replaced by the company and the logic that runs through the latter is more playful and abstract than that of the factory environment. In other words, the company sets up a regime that promotes flexibility and collaboration, enabling forms of apparent autonomy for workers and incentives through individual performance rewards, in the case of agencies, with sweets, beers, happy hours, game rooms and other supposed privileges. "In an area where creativity is central, it is necessary, in order to obtain talented labour, to seduce you with super advantages, whether they are real or not" (Carrascoza, 2011, p. 10).

Not unlike many professions today, the advertiser's pay is lagging. According to the job portal *Catho*, one of the largest on the subject in Brazil, the average salary for advertised vacancies is R\$ 1,375.22. The comments list attests a profession with low incomes, but also recognize certain characteristics advantages of the profession.

Still regarding this category, the advertiser is represented as someone who works hard and performs several tasks. The most frequent associations between the terms hours and schedules are: high, reduced, hour bank, overtime, hiring, *freelas* and turnover. The relations suggest a job characterized by flexible working time, a contemporary form of management that reduces the official workload to reduce wages and intensify productivity, while also encouraging compliance with overtime, not always paid, to achieve results expected (Dal Rosso, 2017). In connexion to this, one participant on the list describes his work as a place where there are "functions with reduced working hours and wages, but not reduced workload". The reported situation favours the practice of hiring workers through precarious ways such as *freelas*, temporary workers or project workers.

The advantages and the benefits promised by the flexibility arguments do not materialize in fact. The term is nothing more than a variation on the old exploratory practices of employers (Sennett, 1999). The discourse that is established to justify flexibility attacks the rigid forms of bureaucracy and boring routine, also posing itself as a solution to increase vacancies. On the other hand, it requires extreme agility of workers, open to short-term changes, coping constantly risks and becoming less dependent on norms and formal⁶ procedures.

At the other end, there are workers with extended working hours and excessive tasks. "They pay badly, they don't value employees and they want a person to have 10 jobs". "Mega dissatisfied and overworked employees. They promise the customer what they don't have the manpower to do. They put a banana price just to fill the customer portfolio, but they pay extremely low salaries to employees". "They

⁵ The Time-of-Service Guarantee Fund (FGTS - Fundo de Garantia do Tempo de Serviço) is an employee right in Brazil, that was created to protect the dismissed worker, by opening an account linked to the employment contract, in which the employee can access if needed. (Retrieved from <http://www.fgts.gov.br/Pages/sou-trabalhador/o-que.aspx>)

⁶ In fact, it is a difficult task to define the parameters that support a work activity as flexible. This is because the definition is polysemic and is subject to factors extrinsic to its alternative regime, that is, it varies historically and geographically according to the current normative standard. In this way, a flexible form of work is generally considered to be anything that is different or opposite to what is established by the rules of a country or its labour tradition, in the case of Brazil, 44 hours a week.

get more bills than they can deliver jobs, the team gets overwhelmed." Here, again, remuneration is a recurring complaint, with the aggravation of being accompanied by the devaluation and exploitation of the worker. The employer is represented as someone greedy and inconsequential, who closes deals with several clients, but does not have enough staff to serve them, a way to maximize profits and reduce costs, which is basically the central objective of capitalist organizations. Meanwhile, the advertiser is represented as a wronged professional and burdened by the volume of demands.

In this respect, the representation made by workers is different from that which legitimizes the social privilege of the profession. In the comments on the list, being an advertiser means working hard and earning little. It means having an environment with emotional stimuli that masks the real working condition and being exploited by the bosses. Finally, different meanings from the collective imagination of the activity.

Another aspect of the distinction between the representations of the profession made by publicists in Belo Horizonte and those identified by Rocha (1985) is related to the legitimation of advertising as a complex activity that involves specific knowledge of science and art. The comments on the list suggest that, in practice, the domain of specific knowledge is not a quality of agency owners. The analysis of the content shows associations such as: *douchebag owner*, *omitted owner*, *amateurs*, *boss with no idea*, "owner thinks he understands" and "owner thinks he knows". In the reports, employers in the sector are often associated with people who present themselves as efficient, but are, in fact, unprepared. "Chauvinists males and without a clue what they do. They sell digital, but they don't even know what it is about". "Sexist and prejudiced bosses and teams, owners that are clueless, rude and uneducated. They promise a thousand things about the digital environment, but they don't even know what they're doing". "Amateur. Owners know nothing about advertising".

If the profession in Rocha (1985) is valued for its complex technical knowledge, agency owners are represented as unprepared to deal with the profession's practices and the professionals they lead. Probably, the fact that the profession is marked by social actors who identify themselves as having awfully specific skills makes professionals uncomfortable in being subordinate to people who do not meet these expectations of knowledge in the area. Not being recognized for his skills and still selling his knowledge to seemingly disqualified bosses seems to be a representational characteristic of the *belorizontino* advertising professional.

Besides, the conflicting labour relationship at the agencies reveals personality traits of managers that sound negative. In the comments, bosses are often represented as powerful and sexist men. This reveals that the agencies are spaces directed by a wealthy and mostly male class, a profile historically privileged by their social condition and by the oppression of figures considered by him as submissive, such as women. In an article published by the website *Meio & Mensagem*, data from a survey conducted among the thirty largest agencies in Brazil are presented. In the investigation, it was found that only 20% of the creation of vacancies are occupied by women (Sacchitello & Lemos, 2016). The report points out that, in the agencies, women are employed in tasks considered less cognitive in relation to creation, such as attendance, and end up playing the role of almost secretaries of men. In a way, the predominance of women in these types of activities demonstrates how work reproduces gender inequalities observed also in different areas of society

According to Oliveira-Cruz (2018), the sexual division of labour begins to stand out from the family environment. It is at the domestic level that boys and girls are initiated in distinguishing activities suitable for each gender. In the female universe, there is the playfulness of domestic chores or professions associated with the care of the private space. While the male universe, there is a predominance of connected games to the strength, creativity and courage, which ultimately encouraging them from a young age, to play a leading role in the public space and to demonstrate their domination over the other gender.

Gender inequality is even more serious when it turns into harassment or abuse. The following

comments reveal some cases about this in the agencies: "heavy and male environment"; "Apart from the disruptive HR, the low salary, the owner who makes sexual harassment of the women, the contaminated environment and the silent and locked owners in the room, the rest is ok"; "The owner is the most stupid and scrotum person on this planet because I'm not going into the merits of daily bullying, scouting emails and everything else".

The reports in this category demonstrate how oppressive relationship between boss and employee interferes directly on the ways in which advertising is represented professionally. The power exercised by how agencies permeate the entire dynamic of activity and speaks volumes about the experiences that emerge from there. The worker describes his employer as someone distant from his group of belonging. An enemy, someone who causes suffering. There are no references of admiration, respect, or identification in the analysed statements. They are tormentors, that do not mix and are in constant dispute.

In the corpus, there is only one comment that mentions another point by Rocha (1985): the importance of university education for the consolidation of the profession.

I took all possible courses, I qualified, I gave myself with my soul. There were a lot of phases, maybe 7, I don't know, to choose "the man", as they said in the vacancy. I was nominated, and stuff by trusted people (...) Why did they dismiss me from the process with a cold template email? I asked for feedback from those responsible...no answer. What a pity. It is really broken. (Comment on the list *Como é trabalhar aí?*).

Despite demonstrating the importance of qualification, the worker reveals that it was not enough to guarantee his place in a job selection. The significant number of phases taken by the rapporteur, seven, says about a profession that, as already presented, requires the development of numerous capacities for its exercise. The consequence of the incessant search for being "the man", as was requested in the vacancy, can lead to the indebtedness for workers, since they now need to constantly invest in themselves to remain desirable in the market (Cocco, 2011).

As apparently is the list of goal, the comments analysed have negative perspectives of the profession in many aspects already presented: management, compensation, workload, abuse and low return of the amount invested in his career. However, there is a rare occurrence that clashes this unfavourable scenario:

When I read the comments on this list, I was scared and with the feeling that either our market is totally despicable or is composed of a lot of spoiled and lazy people to lift the butt of the chair and trample to change it. I work at X communication agency and I'm happy. It is not the place that fulfils me completely, because I do not place the responsibility for fulfilling myself there. They hired me, give me the jobs, I deliver my job and at the end of the month, I made my money. That's it! If I wanted it to be different, I would set up my agency. But then, thinking that the people I could hire for my agency are these guys from the list, I get lazy (Comment on the list *Como é trabalhar aí?*).

There is an attempt at professional representation different from the others by placing the blame for the negative perception not on the owners, but the workers. These are placed in the deposition as spoiled and lazy people. From the concept of class consciousness in Marx (1996), it can be inferred that the testimony brings a conformist tone to the working relationship, since, according to the view of this participant, it could only be changed if the advertiser had his own agency. This shows certain disbelief that there will be some change in the characteristics of the profession. Through a less emotional view of the work, the argument rules out all points of social legitimacy of the activity, making a reading of the profession with less concern for human aspects, both with those of the participant and of the other respondents.

The other points that legitimize the profession's imaginary were not identified in the reports presented in the analysed corpus. The socioeconomic dimension of advertising and the historical narratives of the area were not rescued as arguments for advertisers to represent themselves. Possibly,

because these two aspects are more connected to a social connotation and, therefore, they become overshadowed by the forms of professional representation linked to more personal experiences such as oppression, exploitation, disappointment, and the devaluation of the occupation. This demonstrates that work is not just an objective activity, but a practice that involves feelings and subjectivities, revealing a subjugated social actor as a human resource merely performing tasks, obliterating his dignity, autonomy, agency, and emotions.

Final considerations

The profession, a set of well-defined techniques that characterizes an activity group, is governed by normative, institutional and, mainly, identity issues. In this way, the senses surrounding a working-class are linked to the search for recognition of its relevance for its members and society. The recognition of the latter is an essential item to consolidate the legitimacy of a profession and thus contribute to their appreciation of various aspects: social, financial, and legal. For that, the professionals of a certain occupational group use the management of *fronts* that are favourable to them in different situations.

In the case of advertisers, these *fronts* are supported by arguments related to technique, history, contribution to humanity and the complexity of the application of knowledge. However, when moving from the idealized field of the profession to its praxis, distortions arise from a scenario in which, on the one hand, there is an effort to be socially recognized as a professional and on the other the clashes arising from a social class structure. These contradictions are more easily revealed when the *fronts* are loosened (Goffman, 2011) by situations in which the search for social recognition is not necessary.

In the framework of this research, it was identified that the representations that advertisers make of their profession, when they are in a paired situation, are based on daily conflicts, which lead them to diverge from the collective imagination of the profession since they were also built in a context which encourages the denouncement of negative aspects. This leads one to believe that the points listed by Rocha (1985) were hardly shared by the respondents, after all, they start from different *front* strategies. In the case of the list, the representations were closer to the experiences with the job than to the profession's imaginary, so they are the consequences of situations of suffering, anguish, and submission. Among them, we can list: a professional who receives little and works for many hours performing various functions; who enjoys advantages seen by him as cover-ups from the exploitation of a greedy and sexist employer; that you need to sell your workforce to bosses who know little about the profession; who suffers moral and sexual harassment and, finally, who needs to constantly invest in qualification courses.

It is worth remembering that, however distant the social imaginary of a profession is from its concrete exercise, it should not be neglected, since it is from it that significant elements for the workers' identification processes depart, which helps to recognize traits that distance the practice from the basic principles of the occupation. In the list, collective imagery and *fronts* mix and give their communicational tone, perceived in the participants' attempt to form identity links beyond socially established brands. Thus, the list goes beyond a description of the work environments, it is also an instance of sharing of meanings that help to solidify the idea of belonging to a group not through what consecrates it, but through what it suffers in the day to day. It gives these professionals a voice and creates connections between them, which can help them in possible struggles for dignity and recognition.

In the same way, however much the list brings personal accounts of the work environments, derived from a loosening of the *fronts*, these are not only constituted by subjectivities about the same reality, but they are also ways of finding common meanings between similar work experiences that, when shared, they help to characterize a profession as it is done through the elements of its consolidated social imaginary.

Certainly, this article does not exhaust the object. On the contrary, it raises even more questions

to broaden the debate about the tensions between the arguments that characterize a profession and others that may arise from situations of loosening of the fronts, revealing divergences between the social imaginary and the meanings that peers recognize in each other regions of the country.

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