

Care, virtue and moral dilemmas in the practices of non-journalists¹

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/1809-5844202011>

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Abstract

The article aims at discussing the ethical values which guide some decisions taken by non-journalists before moral dilemmas in editorial situations. In order to investigate the issue, members of the Brazilian collective Mídia Independente Coletiva (MIC) were interviewed. This collective is marked by covering political manifestations. The results point to a predisposition towards cultivating care as a fundamental virtue on everyday practices, whether in covering socially vulnerable groups, or in the relationship to information sources. The results also display certain tensions between non-journalists and professional deontology, sometimes in accordance to their values, others diverging from standard practices in professional codes.

Keywords: Journalism Ethics. Journalism Deontology. Care Ethics. Decision-Making. Non-Journalists.

We can say that, for at least a last decade now, journalism is a social practice which has not been restricted to just professionals (RUELLAN; ADGHIRNI, 2009; DOMINGO; LE CAM, 2015). Journalism is also defined by its constitution processes, regardless of who engages in them (FIDALGO, 2008; WARD, 2015). Acts of journalism, however, are not necessarily subject to the moral values that guide professional journalists (PAUL, 2017).

Based on this, we support the hypothesis that non-journalists have specific values that guide their practices, sometimes in line with and sometimes in conflict with the deontological canons of journalism. These are particular general moral values, but they are applied to professions and codified in normative documents. Non-journalists can identify with and follow these values, but they are not morally required to do so, as professional groups are. In other words, there seems to be margin for maneuver regarding the values that

1 The text is an expanded and updated version of communication presented at the 41st Brazilian Congress of Communication Sciences (Intercom), in Joinville - Santa Catarina, in 2018.

non-journalists enjoy in editorial decision-making processes, which is of particular interest to us in this article.

Building integrated ethics

The issue of amateurs incorporating, or not incorporating, the deontological values of journalism has led many authors to apply a number of approaches to try and integrate the practices of journalists and non-journalists, and do so with the idea of a shared morality, one that converges with the ethics of virtues. According to Couldry (2010, 2013), this philosophical current is able to support basic values common to both social groups, assuming that the media is a matter of central importance to all citizens, whether they are producers, consumers, or hybrids, like *prosumers*. Ess (2016) agrees that the ethics of virtues handle the shift to a relational perspective of individuality with greater success – an individuality that used to be subject to Cartesian and individual-centered rationality for building journalism, but now involves multiple actors. There is a sharing of agencies and moral responsibilities here. However, even though producers and consumers become “part of the same *continuum*” that “experiences” the media (COULDRY, 2010, p. 69), it would be misleading to assume that both have the same responsibilities, since it is only the former group which operates within an institutional context of a media organization.

The ethics of virtues focuses on the development of moral judgment (ESS, 2009), placing less emphasis on the individual and more on the *telos*² - the purpose that guides an action for living with another. In arguing that the neo-Aristotelian approach³ provides the ethical parameters for any subject who conducts journalistic practices, Couldry (2010, 2013) places deontology in the background, considering that the question of must-be (i.e., the concern over whether something is correct or not) is secondary to the key question of the doctrine of virtues, which inquires about what a good life is. Therefore, journalists and non-journalists who adhere to Kantian-based ethics of deontology is viewed with skepticism as it systematizes moral rules in order to conduct media practices. The tradition of Aristotelian teleological ethics on the other hand is representative of general principles which are more open to a variety of actors.

From this perspective, Couldry (2010, 2013) points out possible ways to think of moral values that are inclusive to both journalists and non-journalists. His central argument is that the media is a concern for all of us, so ethical discussions held around it cannot be confined to just the professionals who work in it. Less concerned with valuing behaviors as right or wrong, Couldry seeks to understand which dispositions, or virtues, need to be

2 Aristotelian ethics understands that actions are oriented towards a specific end (*telos*). In his Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle explains that the ultimate purpose of the moral agent is human flourishing (*eudaimonia*), achieved through dispositions known as virtues. According to Appiah (2012), flourishing is synonymous with living well, being an act that is not reduced to happiness.

3 This doctrine has recently been taken up by philosophers Alasdair MacIntyre, Philippa Foot and Michael Slote.

achieved in order to have a good life. Thus, Couldry (2010) questions what the best kind of person we can become is, and how media and journalism can help this to come about.

One can go into details about what constitutes a “good life” or how much journalistic practices are defined by the Aristotelian perspective. Because of these gaps in definition, we believe that a virtuous approach to journalism would be complementary to deontology rather than contradictory to it (CRISTOFOLETTI, 2012). Basing a *telos* on the ethics of virtues is not in contradiction to the proposition of norms, as these norms can be applied to professional journalists, whose commitment to the deontological values of journalism substantiates their credibility with audiences.

Ward (2015) shares this line of thinking in his proposal of a radical media ethic, a concept that refers to changes in the philosophical assumptions of contemporary journalistic ethics. This opening in the discussions of morals in journalism (WARD; WASSERMAN, 2010, 2014) seeks to accept new practices and incorporate non-journalists both as interlocutors and as agents who disseminate information. Along these lines, Ward (2015) goes further and looks into questions left by Couldry (2010, 2013): although Ward is a contractualist⁴, his summary of the ultimate goal of journalism (*telos*) is loosely based on Aristotelian ethics in that it promotes *eudaimonia*, or human flourishing, through “primary goods”⁵ achieved by journalistic practice.

In order to distance himself from any kind of relativism, Ward (2015) uses dialogical democracy as a criterion for validating, or not, different forms of journalism in an integrated ethic. This search for a “unity in difference” is based on holism, an approach that learns the plurality of values for the individual parts in order to understand the whole. Thus, concepts such as objectivity are understood as being multidimensional, which allows different levels of interpretation among those who hold a holistic view.

Care as a virtue in journalistic practices

An integrated ethics between journalists and non-journalists, as proposed by Ward (2015) and Couldry (2010, 2013), uses pluralism as a metaethical system. This perspective, situated between the relative and the absolute⁶, assumes the existence of universally valid values, norms and practices, regardless of time or space, but is open to different interpretations and applications of moral principles, all with a single goal: the good of the community.

4 Ward (2015, p. 211) defines his position as a mixture of perspectives: “journalistic ethics is neither libertarian nor communitarian; it is both. It seeks to support the good in the right and the right in the good. It should help societies deal with the precarious and difficult task of finding ways to balance these ethical ideals. In this view, justice is a sort of freedom, or it is a condition of freedom. This dual task defines the contemporary meaning of a ‘free and responsible press’”.

5 Ward (2015) designs a specific program on how journalism can contribute to the end of human flourishing, citing the promotion of four goods related to human dignity: individual, social, political and ethical. Each type can be applied to journalism (PAUL, 2017).

6 Absolute metaethics understands that there are universally valid norms, good for all people and all ages. An ethical current grounded in monism is deontology, especially through Kant and his Categorical Imperative. Relativism does not believe that norms and practices are universally valid for all cultures. Ess’s critique (2009) points out that relativists are incoherent, since they propagate the universality of a value (cultural tolerance) by assuming that all beliefs are always justified by their context.

For Ess (2009, p. 192), ethics based on pluralism help towards understanding cultural differences since “each practice simply represents a distinct interpretation of the norm; the diverse contexts of these communities require each to interpret and apply the norm differently”. Some lines of thinking include feminist care ethics, Confucianism, and the African *ubuntu* philosophy. These philosophies are similar to the Aristotelian doctrine of virtues in that they emphasize the individual less and the community more, with a *telos* toward human flourishing.

Pertaining to journalism performed by non-journalists, Ure and Parselis (2010) consider that this type of journalism tends to emphasize an ethic of care, as they base their moral values on a more general rule of coexistence and connection with others. Unlike subjects who collaborate with vehicles and are subject to the parameters of journalistic ethics, citizens who disseminate information autonomously are ruled by moral principles of a general nature. Deontological values of journalism, particular to the profession, may not make sense to these groups, and may even be understood as a restriction on the subjects’ freedom of expression (PAUL; CRISTOFOLETTI, 2019).

To understand the decision-making of non-journalists, Ure and Parselis (2010) suggest, as does Couldry (2010, 2013), an approach they call “ethics of precepts”, which escapes the must-be and moves to the should-be, a term they refer to as the “ethics of motivation”. Such a change occurs more in the idea of the norms than in the content because the subject ceases to use moral rules as an imposition and questions which values motivate his or her decision, how he or she justifies it, and what benefits are implied – self-regulation at the individual level.

When speaking on a non-journalist approach to the ethics of care, the researchers understand that

(...) the ethical horizon of the citizen producer and news distributor is to approach the other with the interest of those who are willing to get involved with their situation. Faced with the other, I can understand it in its entirety. I fail to objectify and classify it to reach its humanity (URE; PARSELIS, 2010, p. 27).

These same authors also point out that amateurs, when producing and circulating information, are more interested in humanizing society than democratizing it. It does not seem to us that the two perspectives are mutually exclusive, but as they are individual acts or small organized groups that do not belong to any institution, they tend to seek solutions to hyperlocal conflicts. These bias values the connection with people and does not counteract a desire to democratize society.

Originally, the ethics of care is about explaining moral judgments in social relations, referring to the study⁷ of philosopher and psychologist Carol Gilligan in 1982. In her book

⁷ Gilligan’s work is a feminist critique of developmental psychology by Lawrence Kohlberg, based on Piaget. Kohlberg’s theory conceives of three stages for “moral development”: pre-conventional, conventional, and postconventional morality, the latter referring

“In a different voice”, Gilligan presents ethical dilemmas to women and notes that they resolve these dilemmas by taking responsibility for themselves and each other. Moral values, therefore, have a greater emphasis on the relational process, and not on the general principles that guides the subjects’ lives. As Christians writes (2014, p. 20), “by giving primacy to the relationship between each other rather than individual actors, feminist ethics has given a central place to the concept of caring, which is considered the most powerful way of describing our moral duties to each other”.

Gilligan’s research also draws attention to the role that emotions play in moral judgments, not in opposition to reason, but in contrast to it, as a complement. Ess (2009) also points out that studies in neurobiology have determined that brain damage can inhibit human emotion, which makes it difficult to make ethical decisions - the “calculation” of a judgment (how good a choice would be, for example) is not only rationalized, but felt.

For journalism, the ethics of care helps to reflect on three interconnected dimensions, as Christians (2014) identifies: core values, the relationship with audiences, and the purpose of journalistic practice.

The values have a more teleological rather than deontological orientation, and place emphasis on a “compassionate journalism” that not only reports facts but “wants public life to go well” (CHRISTIANS, 2014, p. 20). Even still, this position does not negate the rationalism of objectivity, but rather reinforces it by placing importance on journalists’ commitment to the truth, and with that commitment, a respect for the public, sources, professionals, and journalism, as Camponez (2014, p. 120) argues:

This dimension of service in journalism is nothing more than the transposition into the media domain of the universalist value of subject vulnerability, proposed by feminist ethics, and requires professionals who are concerned with the world around them (care about), competent professionals who deal with public issues (care giving) and professionals who are concerned with their profession and are actively engaged in self-regulation, protected by social institutions and the law (care receiving).

In addition to the core values of traditional journalism, there are also new possibilities for relationships with audiences. Steiner and Okrush (2006) infer that care means understanding and listening to public demands. But it is not a matter of reporting just any story: care also has a political meaning and is mostly focused on the concerns of

to maximum autonomy, in Kantian terms, as a responsibility governed by principles like the Categorical Imperative. Kohlberg interviewed men to observe their arguments about ethical dilemmas and concluded that the transition from one moral stage to another is accomplished by the critical use of reason, understood as synonymous with general principles, social rules and individual rights. Gilligan, in turn, interviews only women in her work *in a different voice*, and notes that they also use reason to resolve conflicts, recognizing general ethical principles. But beyond that, the interviewees expressed a concern in solving dilemmas from a perspective that privileges personal relationships and responsibility with each other. Some criticisms of Gilligan accuse her of incurring essentialism, for understanding that women carry with them an innate characteristic of care (ESS, 2009).

socially vulnerable and marginalized groups, on deciding which sources to use and stories to write. According to Steiner and Okrush (2006), the key point is: care alone is not foreign to journalists – while studying they are taught to respect deontological values. The question “is not whether journalists may or should care, but about what or whom journalists should care” (STEINER; OKRUSH, 2006, p. 104). Thus, it is necessary to relate care to content, so it does not become an abstract idea.

This brings us to the third dimension of ethics of care in journalism; the purpose. For Christians (2014, p. 21), the role of inspector of journalistic practices changes to “facilitator of civil life”, in the sense that “public life, which is beyond governments and business, requires special attention”. The ethics of care privileges personal relationships, this can be both advantageous (because it listens to the demands of specific social actors) and critical (the emotional bonds created with the other happen only in small groups), which could lead to a particular ethic (CAMPONEZ, 2014), and possibly falling into “provincialism” (ESS, 2009) that could hardly be applied at macro levels (URE; PARSELIS, 2010).

One possible way out is to treat the ethics of care based on virtues, granting it a *telos* and admitting that this approach alone is not sufficient enough to be applied to all dilemmas - it needs to be complemented. Steiner and Okrush (2006) start from this perspective because they understand that, when it occurs at the level of personal relationships, care is not a moral value. As the authors write, this virtue does not replace other duties and rights of journalists. The bigger reason for adopting this perspective is to shed light on the misconception that journalists are disconnected from and audiences. In this regard, ethics seeks to validate and even encourage professionals to act the way they would like to act as citizens; “taking care” of the other and treating him or her as less of a source and more of a human being.

For Camponez (2014, p. 114), it is necessary that the concept of care and vulnerability is central to “living together, in contrast to the notion of autonomy”. Understanding the ethics of care in a broader context implies listening to the reader, listening to criticism, selecting relevant guidelines for marginalized and “voiceless” social groups, and reinforcing the commitment of journalism as a public service.

In his communitarian orientation for the ethics of care, Camponez (2014) encourages us to also think of it as a virtue, as per Steiner and Okrush (2006). This perspective gives us a purpose, a *telos*, which originates from an ethic of principles such as deontology. We can then say that the ethics of care are ‘analogous’ to the ethics of virtues in that they coexist with one another⁸.

Care in Journalism

In order to observe care as a journalistic virtue and reflect on the moral values that guide non-journalist decisions in ethical dilemmas, we conducted in-depth interviews with

⁸ Virtues are understood here as general dispositions that any human agent can cultivate.

collectives from Rio de Janeiro and members of the *Mídia Independente Coletiva* (Independent Collective Media)⁹. We selected the amateur journalism collectives based on three criteria: 1) Non-journalists' own initiatives (i.e., subjects who do not collaborate with other media, but who have their own platforms for performing their journalistic activities; we assume this to be a privileged place in which to observe clashes between the moral values of “traditional” journalism and the journalism performed by non-professionals); 2) organization in collectives (i.e., subjects who do not accidentally “encounter” an event and report on it, but who already have a prior organization, in groups, with the intention of practicing journalism); 3) personal and updated content (many of the collectives repeat information or that information is not updated frequently – perhaps once a month).

A prior mapping of collectives allowed us to select those that best fit the three parameters, using the largest possible number of non-journalists in the collectives as our standard. Having established this boundary, members of the *Mídia Independente Coletiva* were contacted and invited to participate in in-depth interviews. The subjects were asked about their involvement with the collective, their motivations, and their understandings about journalistic practices¹⁰.

We will only focus on one part of the results in this paper¹¹. Although all participants signed the Free and Informed Consent Form, agreeing to have their names used, we decided to keep their identities anonymous. For the purpose of this anonymity, we referred to the subjects as S with a corresponding number (for example, S2 = Subject number 2) and to the *Mídia Independente Coletiva* as M. The respondents and their respective professions are: S1M (filmmaker), S2M (studied Business and Theater but did not graduate), S3M (law student), S4M (photographer and publicist). Including participants from the Carranca collective, there were a total of eight subjects interviewed, resulting in about 15 hours and 20 minutes of interview recordings.

Although they had a website at the time on which they posted their stories and reports, one of the *Mídia Independente Coletiva*'s main practices was its live broadcast of protests and demonstrations. This was a specific topic we addressed in our interviews; we asked what moral dilemmas non-journalists have encountered during their time covering stories. All interviewees from the collective stated that the safety of the protesters was their main concern when deciding what to film or not to film. S3M explains that they are first and foremost committed to the protesters, and then to getting a good photo. S1M echoes this statement, and believes that filming a citizen who sets fire to a trash can, and doing so purely

9 At the time the survey was conducted (2017), the collective was active. In early 2019, the *Mídia Independente Coletiva* ceased activities and deleted both their Facebook page and the group's website. Members of the group have recently put up a fanpage on the social network. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/midiaindependentecoletiva/>. Accessed on: Nov. 16, 2019.

10 Both the initial mapping and the basic script for the questions can be found in Paul (2017).

11 In Paul (2017), the answers were grouped into three categories: training context (interviewees' motivations, self-definitions of their practices), production routines (their editorial line, tensions between journalists and non-journalists) and moral dilemmas (concrete cases in broadcasts of protests, e.g.; relationship with sources and mistakes made in investigations). For the purpose of this article, we will focus on moral dilemmas, where the concept of care in the practices of non-journalists will be discussed.

for aesthetic reasons, is prohibited in the collective, especially if that citizen could later be identified by police.

This decision was agreed upon because of the *Mídia Independente Coletiva*'s previous experiences, as evidenced by S1M and S2M. In the beginning, the idea was to film as much as possible: "There is nothing more eye-catching than seeing people react. It really represents the emotions. But the people were pursued by authorities, they were arrested" (S2M, 2017). The interviewee explains that not filming citizens who were not wearing masks, for the purpose of their protection, has become a "code of ethics within media activism".

This decision was not made in the absence of any moral discussion, claims S1M (2017), stressing that there is a dilemma between "filming everything; public resistance must be brought to attention" and avoiding certain practices "if I film [a person who can be identified], I'm being a coward, encouraging more violence to break out". When we asked what the threshold might be between these two positions, considering there are no strict rules that apply to all situations, the interviewee responded:

Nothing is pre-set. I think the idea behind the rule is much more about **ethics, it's about your commitment to what is truly human, what is truly democratic.** That's it. It is truly revolutionary towards occupying and **democratizing the media** (S1M, 2017 – Emphasis added).

In this statement, S1M is reflecting on the *telos* that *Mídia Independente Coletiva* practices are based upon – the discourse on democracy. S1M's position is interesting as it shows how the *Mídia Independente Coletiva* guides its professionals: there are general principles that guide the conduct of its members, such as the safety of protesters, as mentioned above. Participating in these processes also requires values such as courage (cf. S3M), necessary for those who wish to film on the "front line" of protests, near the police.

Mídia Independente Coletiva practices, despite the latest guideline for not showing individuals who might be able to be identified by authorities, seem to be grounded less in deontology than in a teleological ethic. An example of this can be seen when S1M explains that a specific must-be for every dilemma faced in live coverage is not possible, and so the idea of a moral rule "is much more an ethical idea". Such a position may culminate in a number of personal ethics, but the interviewee draws a line – the commitment to what is human. This purpose is also mentioned at another time:

We went live all day at the General Strike [work stoppage that took place on April 28th] (...) to cover things (...) far beyond the idea of supporters, but rather what was really happening. The aunt who took a bullet while protesting at the airport, that sort of thing. So, this commitment to the human being (...) and this rejection that we have to the corporate, institutional process, **naturally leads us to a humanist commitment.** The proximity to the being, this differs [from other vehicles] (S1M, 2017 – Emphasis added).

Although a “humanist commitment” such as *telos* sometimes sounds vague or even broad, we can gather from the respondent’s interview that this purpose is reflected in the defense of socially vulnerable groups by caring for each other. This aspect is also highlighted in other *Mídia Independente Coletiva* practices, such as the video report “A Train to Austin¹²”, produced by S4M, S1M and S2M, and edited by a member from another collective.

The video report tells the story of a young black man who lives in the neighborhood of Austin, Nova Iguaçu, a metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro. The boy was shot at close range by a military policeman inside a subway car on January 27, 2017. He was on the subway with a friend and his girlfriend, who happened to be in possession of narcotics. For no apparent reason, the three were approached by police officers between the São Cristóvão station and the Central do Brasil station, and had their drugs seized. The train stopped at the next station and the other passengers got off, and the young man and his friend were told to also leave the car. However, the young man did not want to leave the car; he wanted to stay with his girlfriend, who was pregnant. His girlfriend was carried to the end of the car and placed on her back, where she was listening to what was happening. At this point, her boyfriend was assaulted by the police and then shot.

S4M said that he read about the death of the young man in a lawyer’s text – who was later used as one of the sources in the documentary – claiming that the murder would have had a greater impact if it had occurred to a white couple in a subway in the southern zone of Rio de Janeiro. They had no reason for approaching the youths, so the policemen testified in court that the young man and his girlfriend were considered “suspects”¹³ – S4M believed it was an act of racism.

The parents and lawyers of the victim were interviewed, including the victim’s girlfriend. For the final video edit, *Mídia Independente Coletiva* members chose to conceal the fact that one of the lawyers also works in the office of Deputy Wasih Damous (PT-RJ): “we are here to tell the story of the boy’s mother; we are not campaigning for any party” (S4M, 2017). The report identifies the professional only as the youth’s lawyer.

Another video edit was made based on the collective members’ perception of the victim’s mother. During her interview, and when contacted at a later date, S4M claims that she did not see the policemen’s behavior as being racially motivated:

You could see the mother was suffering (...) she somehow blamed the girl [the victim’s girlfriend] for her son’s death. And we have to do a lot of **psychological work** with her. It wasn’t the girl’s fault that the boy was going down a ‘bad road’, you know? (...) I mean, there was a good chance he would die simply because he was black, regardless of whether he was dealing drugs or not (S4M, 2017 - Emphasis added).

12 Available at: <https://bit.ly/2MaltTE>. Accessed on: Jan. 14, 2019.

13 This piece of information was provided by the victim’s lawyer in a video report.

The *Mídia Independente Coletiva* members therefore decided to remove some of the mother's quotes. As they stated, the case had to be handled delicately, it had to be sensitive to the victim's parents so as not to shock them when they did watch the report. The issue of racism was important to point out, albeit mildly: "[the idea was] to show the victim's side, show who he was, so as not to criminalize him. I had to remove his parent's negative comments about his girlfriend because the girlfriend was not the problem" (S4M, 2017).

When mentioning that they had to do a lot of "psychological work" with the victim's mother, S4M was referring to post-interview contact with the source. He says: "It's not just about shooting a video and then leaving (...) I had arranged to meet her [on Mother's Day] and I intended to stay and talk a while with her. This is my activism. I will not make any more videos with her for now, that's my decision as a person and a citizen" (S4M, 2017).

The different positions between activist and citizen are mentioned by S4M (2017 – Emphasis added) at another time in the interview, when she said she was unable to take pictures of the protests due to the intense police repression that was going on: "It is a question of ethics, in my opinion: I cannot do photojournalism in situations of violence. It's an evil paparazzi, understand? (...) I'm there with the camera, but **I'm a person**. I shouldn't be there photographing the violence. I should be there preventing it".

S4M's actions, especially regarding the young man's mother, are similar to an ethic of care. The relationship with the source goes beyond the material and creates a bond that is not about capturing the audience's attention, but about caring for others. This ethic also pertains to socially vulnerable groups, such as those in the documentary "A Train for Austin," which uncovers the institutional racism in the military police toward black and underprivileged youths.

One of the criticisms made against this ethical current is the excessive emphasis on personal relationships, which may tend to diminish understanding of moral judgments. In journalism, this can ultimately make us lose sight of the goal of the contradiction principle. We asked respondents about this problem and whether they consider it important to interview official sources – that is, beyond the social groups that are usually their sources.

S1M (2017) said there is no need to interview official sources - when we ask the questions, we cite the police and politicians as sources – "because corporate media is already there to do that". The research participant stated that the *Mídia Independente Coletiva* does not usually link traditional vehicle materials to the collective website, nor are newspaper publications shared on the Facebook page. "The Mariachi collective does this: it shares *O Globo* in order to compete against them - but it still shares. We do not. We are against this process". S3M also could not recall any official source being interviewed, but believed that it would be interesting to consider doing so in order to highlight a contradiction: "maybe it's a self-criticism that we should make (...) and put that in the public's perspective, and in a perspective that the state says it is".

Not checking information with official sources tends to lead to journalistic mistakes, even if it is in line with a certain policy. For members of the *Mídia Independente Coletiva*,

any coverage which is restricted to autonomous groups would justify “not giving a voice” to police officers. Members of the collective were asked if they could remember any major mistake they had already made. S1M mentions the demonstration on February 6, 2014, in downtown Rio de Janeiro, which culminated in the death of cameraman Santiago Andrade, shot by a rocket while covering a Rede Bandeirantes protest. Two protesters were caught on surveillance camera footage in the area, and convicted on three counts of intentional homicide.

At the time, the *Mídia Independente Coletiva* consulted experts and argued against the evidence used to incriminate the two youths in a Facebook post. “It’s gotten to the point where we almost lost our credibility,” says S1M (2017), talking about the negative repercussion of the text on Facebook. Ten days later, the collective issued a note admitting they had made a mistake. We asked S1M (2017) if he attributes this mistake to the fact that the *Mídia Independente Coletiva* does not believe in consulting with official sources:

I never thought about it. Maybe. The fact is that the official versions were so “farcical” (sic) that we didn’t believe the official version could be true. And we sought the support of experts and such, but maybe we should have interviewed someone from inside the field, someone within the police, that sort of thing – which is something we try to have nowadays.

We asked S2M the same question – about a mistake he remembers making – and he recalled one time when he mistakenly posted an old video on the *Mídia Independente Coletiva* page thinking it was a live broadcast. He chose to post the mistake in the comment section and not delete the post. “It’s more interesting to the public. ... You keep your integrity doing that because if you erase, you’re then trying to hide something. And our idea is not to hide” (S2M, 2017). This line of thinking is similar to blogger ethics, which highly values transparency with readers.

Conclusions

To sum up, care as a journalistic virtue is present in the statements and practices of the *Mídia Independente Coletiva* both in its guidelines, which primarily favor socially vulnerable groups, and in the direct intervention with sources, exemplified in S4M’s relationship with the young man’s mother.

S1M, S2M and S3M also expressed, at various times, concern over protesters, regarding their physical safety and the possibility that they might be identified on film, and subsequently prosecuted. They said they remove themselves from their positions as “media activists” and talk to protesters, suggesting they use masks, etc.

The *telos* that guides *Mídia Independente Coletiva* practices are similar to those that Ure and Parselis (2010) characterize as belonging to “citizen journalism”, the purpose of which being to humanize society. General principles, and not necessarily those specific

to any profession, tend to mark the dilemmas of these subjects. One example is S3M's statement that it takes courage to be a media activist and cover protests, being at the front line of demonstrations, close to the police. Courage is not exactly a deontological value of journalism, but rather a virtue recognized and expressed by the collective interviewees – this, in turn, turns into moral values that may coincide with professional deontology. Pulitzer (2009) says that the seasoned journalist develops moral courage when he makes editorial decisions that may contradict public opinion, and also physical courage by “exposing the body without fear of injury and death”, which S3M expressed.

We were also able to identify a high value attributed to independence, an aspect that guides the political and editorial lines adopted in the *Mídia Independente Coletiva*'s coverage of autonomous groups with no political affinities. Due to this specific quality, some of the collective's practices may exclude voices linked to parties or institutions, even though the collective *telos* is for the promotion of democracy. We can see then that the virtue of care is not free of tensions and may contradict the must-be of journalism. By avoiding interviews with police officers, for example, the *Mídia Independente Coletiva* loses sight of its adversary, as well as the possibility of finding out more information. On the other hand, one of the sources interviewed in the report “A Train to Austin” worked in a congressman's office, although this was not explicit in the article. Sometimes party affiliation does not prevent these actors from participating, even if it may go against the political lines of the collective.

One of the possibilities for a greater openness of discussions about ethics for non-journalists concerns efforts in the education sector, as well as a willingness for journalistic vehicles to make their editorial decisions transparent (CHRISTOFOLETTI, 2014). In terms of the education sector, it is interesting to note that non-journalists themselves hold a range of workshops, as S1M reports, on editing, the structural logic of the collective, and critical reading of the media. Other initiatives, such as the international NGO WITNESS, provide materials for activists covering human rights and situations of violence. Including guides on its site¹⁴ for ethical care (how to get consent for images, for example, or how to conduct interviews properly) and techniques (filmmaking tips), opens up a discussion that grows as more people become active in the production of information.

We understand that these debates on building a moral bridge between journalists and non-journalists tend to reach a greater consensus when they revolve around the *telos*. The doctrine of virtues helps recover a community perspective on the social practice of journalism, whether that journalism is performed by amateurs or not. Still, we must bear in mind that a virtuous approach to journalistic ethics cannot be achieved without complements from professional deontology. Minimum standards, when ignored, lead to errors in basic principles, such as the value of contradiction.

We see this tension in the *Mídia Independente Coletiva* discourses on their practices. They perform their jobs under the universal values of humanitarianism, which is evidence

¹⁴ Available at: bit.ly/2CkGiZ4. Accessed on: Jan. 14, 2019.

of the *telos* of human flourishing. Care is not imposed as a must-be here, but as a disposition, a virtue, which has a specific purpose. It is similar to the “ethics of motivation”, cited by Ure and Parselis (2010), in that it is one way to think about common values among non-journalists. On the other hand, when asked about a moral rule for their practices, a journalistic deontology, the group – while recognizing the existence of an internal code for very specific situations, like covering protests – tends to deny the imposition of these values, as they believe that it is a restriction on the freedom of expression. In this regard, ethical discussions from the perspective of virtues and the teleological perspective seem to gain greater acceptance among amateur journalists, which does not inhibit efforts to promote deontological media literacy.

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Received on: 01.23.2019

Accepted on: 12.10.2019

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