

Mexican Journalism and Democratic Transition:
Clientelism in the Mexican media system

Mónica Alejandra Peña Corona Rodríguez

Thesis submitted for the title of Doctor of Philosophy at the

University of Sheffield

Department of Journalism

October 2009

Abstract

The defeat of the longstanding PRI party in the presidential elections of year 2000 has been acknowledged as a milestone in the democratisation of Mexico. Nevertheless, for over 40 years, many authors have suggested that Mexico has been undergoing a democratic transition. These repeated assertions highlight just how difficult it is to define a democratic transition or when or how such a process begins or ends. Media theorists have been intrigued as to what changes a media system goes through when experiencing a democratic transition, as new political arrangements have an impact on the dynamics of journalism and newsmaking.

This study aimed to examine to what extent the close relationship that the media and the government traditionally held during the PRI regime had changed as a product of political transformations. This research adopted the concept of political clientelism of a media system as a theoretical framework, in order to identify aspects in which the Mexican media system had altered from how it occurred in the past. The study relied on the use of two types of qualitative research methodologies, interviews with Mexican journalists, as well as content analysis of newspaper articles.

Through the examination of the ways in which Mexican journalists carry out their work as well as their role perceptions in regards to democracy on the one hand, and on the other through the evaluation of how coverage has differed over time, this thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of the way in which media systems in transition are studied. It argues that changes in media systems should be studied in relation to more routine journalistic practices, rather than on the assumption that changes in politics or on the apparent finance of the media unequivocally transform journalistic culture towards democratisation.

Acknowledgements

This research was done thanks to the financial support of the Consejo Nacional para la Ciencia y la Tecnología, CONACYT. Many thanks to all the other people and organisations that facilitated and assisted me through this study, those at the University of Leicester, the University of Sheffield, SEP, SEGOB, ITESM, UNAM and all the journalists who shared with me their opinions and experiences.

I am particularly grateful to my supervisor, Prof. Ralph Negrine, who has been constantly helpful, patient and encouraging, and who has provided extensive feedback at every stage of the process of writing this thesis. I was so lucky to have such an experienced, friendly and understanding mentor, whose advice and guidance has gone beyond the realms of this PhD.

The comments of Dr. Tristram Hooley, Dr. Kevin Byron and Dr. Uriel Caballero, who took the time to read earlier versions of this thesis, are also kindly appreciated. I also appreciate the constant and thorough support of Dr. Joan Smith, who has been a great influence through the final stages of this journey.

My endless gratitude goes to my parents, Marco Antonio and Carmen, for all their unconditional love and support. To my brother Marco Antonio and my sister Veronica, as to the rest of the family, my aunts, uncles and cousins. To Vero, Alevu and Marquito. And my dear friend Nancy. I love and miss you all every day.

Thanks as well to Mary, Alan, Kate, Sarah, Matt, Joni, Sophie and Phoebe for welcoming me into their family.

To my husband, Mark, for sharing this journey with me, and putting up with it all.

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Introduction

“Journalism and, more generally, media structures do not grow in a vacuum”
(Mancini, 2000)

“...it is still risky to say that journalism has adopted an international, for some the Anglo-American model, or a model of objective, straightforward informative reporting and culture in terms of its practices and its professionalism” (Papathanassopoulos, 2001)

“The PRI, the longest standing political party in power in the World, bluntly lost yesterday the rule of the government it held for 71 years.” With these words, Reforma newspaper observed on 3rd July 2000, one day after the presidential elections, how Partido Accion Nacional party (PAN [National Action Party]) candidate Vicente Fox had “overthrown” the party that had ruled Mexico since the 1920s, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI [Institutional Revolutionary Party]). The article was joyful and enthusiastic; it talked about how the era of electoral fraud was long gone and how hundreds of thousands of people had gone to the streets to celebrate Fox’s victory. The editorial of Reforma’s rival La Jornada was equally animated. It claimed that with the PRI party’s defeat “the country has settled its outstanding tasks in regards to democratic procedures and formalities, and should congratulate itself for it”. La Jornada was congratulatory of the PAN party while at the same time celebrated the Partido de la Revolucion Democratica (PRD [Democratic Revolution Party] party’s victory in the capital. “We are living historic times” said journalist Sergio Sarmiento in another piece in the same edition of Reforma. Indeed the PAN party victory was historic, never before had an opposition party won a presidential election, and never before had a newspaper had the chance to rejoice on a major PRI party defeat.

In the past, chances of beating the PRI were so slim, and the opposition so underdeveloped, that in 1976 PRI party’s Jose Lopez Portillo was the only candidate running for the presidential elections. Not that it stopped him going from town to town in campaign, offering favours in exchange for votes, a traditional and widespread practice of the PRI party. When in the presidential elections of 1988 former PRI party member, and son of a PRI party president, Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, running for the National Democratic Front, proved a menacing opposition to the PRI party, the

computer system used for counting the votes suddenly 'crashed'. Victory was attributed to PRI party candidate Carlos Salinas de Gortari amidst strong suggestions of electoral fraud. This led to a long media campaign and favours given through the 'Solidaridad' programme to gain support for the new president.

In its heyday, the PRI party not only held the presidency, the control of the capital - Mexico City-, the majority in both chambers of Congress and the government of every one of the 31 states in Mexico, it also had the support of workers and peasant unions - who were affiliated to the party-, whilst also enjoying the backing of the army, the private sector and the media. In one way or another, all these groups benefited from their linkage to the PRI party, as the regime was profligate in providing favours in exchange for political support. It is not clear from the literature at what point things began to dwindle for the PRI party. Indeed claims of Mexico undergoing a democratic transition have been articulated since the 1960s (see Williams, 2002, 160). Struggles, divisions and generational changeovers within the PRI party have been noted as some of the causes, as well as a growing influence of democratic ideas in society, an increasing importance of opposition parties and the opening up of the media.

Nevertheless, with such precedents, it is understandable why the victory of Vicente Fox has been considered a milestone in the history of Mexican politics, and as evidence of a process of democratic transition. Many scholars have suggested that the media was paramount to the permanence of the PRI party in power, and many of them believe that the media were just as important to its eventual defeat. Since the media is noted to be the channel through which citizens gather the information they require to make political decisions, it is therefore important to understand how journalism operates in systems in transition, as this can shed light into the broader processes a nation goes through while experiencing democratisation. But more than that, how can we evaluate if the media and those who make news have indeed changed their ways? Would it be possible that different political arrangements do not challenge traditional journalistic practices? Studies into media systems in transition have suggested this is a likely outcome. Papatheodorou and Machin (2003) argue that changes brought about by political

democratisation in Greece and Spain have been ‘asynchronic’ and that the ‘umbilical cord’ linking the government and the media was never cut, as paternalism¹ plays an important role in shaping the media systems of both countries.

This research will therefore try to elucidate whether or not the celebrated changes in Mexican politics have resulted in core transformations in the Mexican media system, by looking at how press coverage and the role perceptions of journalists have altered throughout time. It will do so by taking the concept of political clientelism and related notions, as put forward by Hallin and Mancini (2004) as a theoretical framework from which we can observe the characteristics of the Mexican media system and how they have changed or not as a product of government transition. In this way, political clientelism is understood as a form of social relationship in which access to resources is controlled by political patrons who distribute these to clients in exchange of political deference and support. Therefore, this study will look at how the clientelistic practices that characterised Mexican journalism during the PRI party rule have been modified in the recent past. This will provide new insights into how widespread democratisation has been throughout Mexican culture and institutions, as Fox (1994) argues that transitions from paternalism towards democracy follow a path from clientelism, semi-clientelism and citizenry. However, these stages do not necessarily follow one another, as they can exist simultaneously, thus suggesting that democratisation could be a façade that conceals deeply embedded clientelistic or semi-clientelistic processes. Therefore, through the study of journalism, this research will also shed light into how profoundly a democratic culture is being embraced in Mexican institutions. This will contribute to our understanding of the effect of democratic transitions in other media systems undergoing such a process.

¹ The authors understand paternalism as the overarching influence of the State in the political culture of both countries. In such a context, the State was not only “the driving force of economic development, but also (...) the guardian of vital social interests and the distributor of resources, mainly through networks of political patronage” (Papatheodorou and Machin, 2003, 34)

Most of the scholarship on media systems gravitates towards the Anglo-American model, which, as Mancini (2000, 64) points out, has been labelled in many ways: “the liberal or social responsibility model” (Siebert et. al. 1963, Curran 1991), “Anglo-American model” (Chalaby, 1996), [and] “professional model” (Tunstall 1977)”. This model of media systems envisages a type of journalism that allows for almost direct communication between the citizenry and the government, where the voices of the former are articulated in an objective manner, free of advocacy and bias, and where the media serve as a check on the state. Not only has this model been considered ideal, it has also been suggested that there is a trend of convergence of media systems partly due to globalisation and the adoption of free market principles and the widespread influence of Western values (see Papathanassopoulos, 2001, 506).

As countries previously ruled by authoritarian regimes adopt democratic values, it has been suggested their media systems embrace the principles promoted in the liberal model. Nevertheless, it is debatable to what extent media systems that have developed under different political and social circumstances to those of the established democracies of the West can develop a type of journalism that is coherent with the values of the Anglo-American model. Some of the recent scholarship on media systems in transition indeed focuses on such a quandary (see Papatheodorou and Machin, 2003; Papathanassopoulos, 2001; Mancini, 2000; Sandbrook, 1996).

The Mexican media system has traditionally been understood as an example of an authoritarian model, since for most of the 20th century it was led by the ‘velvet dictatorship’ of the PRI party. During the PRI regime, media-state relations in Mexico were characterised by both control and manipulation of the media by the government, but also by clientelism, submission and co-optation. In year 2000, however, the PAN party won the Presidential elections, presumably transforming the whole dynamic of Mexican politics, including the relationship between the government and the media. Recent scholarship on the Mexican media system has been quick to voice profound changes, arguing that despite some exceptions and differences between the capital and

the regions, Mexican journalism has evolved from passive to active, from submissive to assertive, from colluded to watchdog.

This research, however, will take a different approach on the subject by enquiring not just the present, but also looking at the past. It will adopt the concept of political clientelism of a media system and related notions, as expressed by Hallin and Mancini (2004) as a theoretical framework, as this research will argue, a move away from clientelism would provide indications of a switch towards a democratic culture in Mexican journalism.

The dynamics of the Mexican media system will be analysed in this thesis in terms of how the relationship between journalists and politicians has changed over the past three decades. Also an evaluation as to what extent coverage has been transformed from the days of the PRI regime to the first PAN administration will be presented. This research will achieve the latter through two methodological approaches. The first of these is interviews with Mexican journalists with an experience of covering political beats. The second approach is through content analysis of two samples of newspaper coverage of civic movements. One of these occurred during the administration of PRI party president Gustavo Diaz Ordaz (1964-1970) and the other one from the first PAN party administration, led by Vicente Fox (2000-2006). The purpose of this research is to evaluate to what degree the Mexican press is adopting the role of a watchdog, or remaining as an ally of the government as a consequence of political leadership transition. Furthermore, this research also aims to discuss whether the current arrangements are adequate for building a democratic political media system.

The thesis begins with a literature review that explores the role of journalism in established democracies and looks at how the scholarship on the Mexican media system has evolved throughout time. The chapter will argue that an adherence to classic models of the media is not sufficient to gauge the nuances of democratic transition in journalism. Subsequently, the chapter will propose the use of political clientelism as a theoretical frame for a new look into the dynamics in which Mexican journalism

currently operates. This is followed with an overview of the context of Mexican politics, which is the focus of Chapter two. The Chapter will argue that the Mexican case is one of political clientelism, and that indeed this type of social arrangement has been prevalent in Mexican politics since the 19th Century. The chapter will describe the overall workings of the PRI party dominance through most of the 20th Century, and will discuss the internal problems that led to the PRI party defeat in 2000, as well as the growing presence of opposition parties in the Mexican political context. Chapter two will then introduce the topic of the Mexican media system. It will depict its historical development prior, during, and after the PRI regime. This information will assist in the understanding of the relationship between journalism and politics, and how they have shaped each other over the years. Furthermore, they present the backdrop as to why political clientelism is an adequate concept for the understanding of media systems in transition.

This study proposes two methodological approaches towards the understanding of the transformations of the Mexican media system as a consequence of government change. Chapters three to six focus on the findings of 35 interviews conducted with Mexican journalists. The interviews sought to gather information in relation to five main topics about journalists and their work routines that were identified as relevant issues in the literature review. These were: a) journalists' career background, b) journalists' experience of editorial constraints, c) general information about working conditions, d) how journalists relate to politicians, and e) journalists' perceptions in regards to democracy. The first of the three chapters that focuses on the interviews of Mexican journalists, Chapter three, delineates the methodology of the interview process and the findings of the first part of the interview, which looks at the first three topics outlined above, is presented in Chapter four. The other two topics covered in the interview are explored in Chapter five, while Chapter six features the findings of the whole interview process and compares them with the existing literature on the Mexican media system.

As well as interviews, this study relies on content analysis of newspaper coverage of two samples of civic movements. Samples were taken from two moments in history, one

from the PRI era, and another one from the first PAN administration. A description of both civic movements, and the results of the content analysis of the first sample, which looks at the student movement of 1968 during the administration of President Gustavo Diaz Ordaz (1964-1970), will be presented in chapter seven. The analysis of the second sample, about the 'Mega-demonstration' against insecurity occurred in 2004, during the administration of PAN party President Vicente Fox (2000-2006), is presented in chapter eight. This chapter will also compare and discuss both samples. Finally, chapter nine discusses the main conclusions of this study and how they fit in the broader scholarship on media systems. This chapter also evaluates the limitations of this study and suggests areas for future research.

The main objective of this research is to find out whether or not media-state relations in Mexico have changed as a consequence of the change of government from the PRI regime to the PAN government. Put differently, the aim is to find out if clientelism is still the dominant characteristic in the Mexican media system. The principal findings are that despite the fact that many traits that were characteristic of Mexican journalism in the past, and that were understood as distinctive of a media system controlled or co-opted by the government, have changed, they are not signifiers of core transformations in the Mexican media system.

Chapter 1

Review of the literature of the Mexican media system

From the end of the Mexican revolution until the year 2000, Mexico was ruled by the PRI party. The PRI regime lasted for over 70 years in what Peruvian author Mario Vargas Llosa described as “The Perfect Dictatorship”, as power was held by an elite and maintained through both authoritarian and clientelistic practices. According to Fromson, a key issue in the long survival in power of the PRI party lies in the fact that the mass media was managed by the government, and he also believes that a free media is a key component in the completion of a transition to democracy in Mexico (1996, 116).

The defeat of the one-state party in 2000 has been regarded the ultimate sign in the Mexican transition to democracy. From a media theory perspective, scholars have since aimed to understand the Mexican media system under the new political arrangements of Mexico as an example of a transformation from authoritarianism to a liberal and democratic system. Nevertheless, theorists who have analysed systems in transition have argued that democracy is not easily achieved, and, in the case of media systems, other factors must be taken into account, such as the interactions between politics and the media with their underlying economic and social contexts. For this reason, this study aims to understand to what extent there has been a transformation in the Mexican media system as a result of changes in government, but it intends to do so by taking into consideration longer trends in the political and social context of Mexico. Put in other words, traditional media theory suggests that in a democratic system, understood as one in which elections are conducted regularly and there is no official control of the press, the media adhere to a ‘liberal’ model. This notion has led the scholarly debate surrounding the study of the Mexican case both during and after the PRI regime, initially by suggesting Mexico was a case of authoritarianism, and most recently, by portraying its media as an example of a “fourth estate”. Nevertheless, these views fail to acknowledge longer trends in the conduct and practice of both politics and journalism, which become evident when a historical perspective is added to the analysis, as well as a ground-up approach to the study of particular issues, such as journalists’ role perceptions. A recent approach in media

system theory adopts the notion of political clientelism, traditionally used in anthropology, to highlight the complex relationships that link politics and journalism with wider historical, economic and societal factors. As such, political clientelism contributes to the study of media systems by addressing the vacuums left open by normative models such as those suggested by Siebert et. al. Similarly, political clientelism highlights the instances in which apparently similar media systems differ from one another, and at the same time, it aids in the understanding of how practices pertaining to a democratic system, such as autonomy or professionalisation, are exercised in a particular media system.

When aiming to study the Mexican media system, we have to initially address the latter issues with the theory, and analyse how they have had an impact on the literature and the conclusions derived from these. This chapter will therefore engage in wider discussions of media theory as a prelude to discussing the scholarship on the Mexican media system. The latter will be done by presenting the literature in an almost chronological order, where themes in the approaches reviewed will be presented in separate subheadings. The chapter will then examine how the concept of political clientelism has been utilised in media systems research, and propose its use as a theoretical framework for the understanding of the changes and continuities in Mexican journalism following the change of government in year 2000. The chapter will conclude with a close examination of how clientelism has been manifest in the Mexican media.

Media in democratic systems

The literature is vast in regards to the role of the media in a democratic system. Because of its normative nature, the work of Siebert, et. al. (1967) remains influential, the flaws and shortcomings of media systems are measured in terms of how closely or not they adhere to the values put forward by the liberal and social responsibility models although there is a lot of the debate that centres on whether these theories accurately describe media systems in established democracies. Probably the first challenge media theorists face when trying to understand the role of the media in a democratic system, lies in the mere definition of what constitutes a democracy (see Held, 1996). Axford and Huggins (2001, 64) note that democracy is something

complicated and multidimensional both as a concept and as a phenomenon. Similarly, Street (2001: 252) notes that there are “as many definitions of democracy as there are democratic theorists”.

According to Dahl (1979; 1985; 1989), a fully democratic system would have to meet the following criteria: 1) effective participation (adequate and equal opportunities for citizenry to form preferences, question public agenda and express opinions), 2) enlightened understanding of choices on a certain matter that would serve them best, 3) equality in the weight of each citizens vote, 4) control of the agenda by the citizens, 5) inclusiveness of all citizens. (in Held, 1996: 310-311). A key issue in this conception of democracy is that of “Open availability of information to help ensure informed decisions in public affairs” (Held, 1996: 324).

In other words, in a democracy it is necessary that there is communication between the government and the citizenry. This ensures that the former respond to the needs of the latter, but also it is because the electorate requires information regarding the choices and forms in which it is to be governed in order to make decisions about it (Watts, 1997: 1). Since nowadays it is not likely that the link between the government and citizens would be a direct one, the mass media fulfil the role of intermediary of political communication between the two (*idem*).

In terms of what the role of the media should be in a democracy, it has been noted that the media has different aims: to act as a political forum that 1) enables citizens to “choose between those who wish to stand for office” (Street, 2000: 253), 2) to judge those who are currently in office and 3) “to provide a platform for interest groups to publicize their concerns and claims” (*ibid*). Or as Curran (2000: 121) puts it, the “principal democratic role of the media (...) is to act as a check on the state. The media should monitor the full range of state activity, and fearlessly expose abuses of official authority”. All these characteristics of the media are understood as the social responsibility of the media in a developed democracy. These aims constitute the notion of a ‘free press’ (*ibid*), which means that media content is not biased or controlled. This is also regarded as the ‘watchdog’ role of the media. Yet, as Curran (2000: 121) notes, this notion anchors the media to the free market. However when talking about media systems in established democracies such as the UK or the USA,

Curran observes that “While the watchdog role of the media is important, it is perhaps quixotic to argue that it should be paramount.” (2000: 122). He argues that the watchdog notion of the mass media is no longer valid for media systems in the twenty first century, as they are now largely dedicated to entertainment (ibid). “In effect, the liberal orthodoxy defines the main democratic purpose and organizational principle of the media in terms of what they do not do most of the time” (Curran, 2000: 122).

The work of Siebert et. al. (1967) on theories of the press is often criticised for its East versus West discourse, as well as its normative rather than descriptive approach; and despite repeated calls for transcending the four theories devised there, they remain the starting point when describing a media system (see Negrine, 1989, 29; Curran, 1991, 82; Chalaby, 1996; Hallin and Mancini, 2004)). As noted above, many authors assert the importance of journalism as a key factor in the functioning of democracy. Understandably, therefore, there has been a growing concern about the role of the media in systems that have undergone, or are said to be undergoing, a transition to democracy, as in the cases of countries in Mediterranean Europe, Latin America and Africa. The assumption being that the media systems of countries experiencing a political democratic transition have to go through a redefinition in their roles in order to promote democracy and to break free from the practices that in the past had linked them to political power in order to adhere to the liberal ideal of a watchdog.

Research on the Mexican media system

There are difficulties in trying to categorise media systems in already developed democracies (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). And the challenges are even greater in systems in transition, where the change from authoritarianism and clientelism towards an independent type of media is not often linear, as attitudes and culture -not just amongst the population, but also from those who make the news and who make politics- are also being transformed. Nevertheless, scholarship about media systems in non-established democracies also builds on the Anglo-American model, which is the case for the literature on the Mexican media. However, given the political context of the PRI party rule, which extended from 1929 until the year 2000, and it’s near monopolistic exercise of political power, the debate about the Mexican media system

has usually revolved around the concepts of press control and press freedom, or the transition from the former to the latter.

The PRI party and the Mexican political system

The PRI party was created by political leader Plutarco Elias Calles in 1929 in order to amalgamate all struggling political forces spread throughout the nation after the Mexican Revolution, and to organise the sharing and transfer of power through an institutionalised political system that revolved around the one-state party. Up until 1988 the PRI party had never lost any local or federal election and hence all state governors were from that party, meaning that the PRI party had a monopoly of political power by amalgamating not only all government offices, but also by having the official or otherwise support of the army, the unions, the peasantry and the mass media. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the PRI regime was labelled as “The Perfect Dictatorship”. Lawson (2002, 14) notes three aspects that made the Mexican regime “perfect”:

“First, its façade of liberal-democratic institutions and its elaborate network of state-corporatist associations helped fragment and isolate opposition groups. Second, its concentration of authority in one institution, the presidency, provided a mechanism for the definitive resolution of conflict between members of the ruling elite. Third, its institutionalized mechanisms for power transfers –no reelection plus the *dedazo*¹- solved the succession problem that has historically plagued authoritarian regimes.”

In this way, the PRI party was more than a political party; it was a political system by its own right. Nevertheless, it was not a monolithic system, as under its umbrella were covered a wide range of political views and criticism from within the elite was allowed, so long as it steered clear of its core, undemocratic, characteristics (i.e. electoral fraud and ‘*dedazo*’). The Mexican political system will be further discussed in the following chapter.

Given the nature of the Mexican political system, most of the literature on media-state relations in Mexico has therefore focused on how the PRI-government managed to

¹ ‘Dedazo’ means ‘the big finger’ or ‘the pointing finger’, it refers to the way in which the Mexican president could designate his successor. This will be explained further in the next chapter.

keep the media under control either through coercion or co-optation, while the works that have sought out signs of press-freedom have tended to do so also in relation to the media's liaison with the PRI party. While most works on the Mexican media system focus on press control, they tend to do so in five different trends, that sometimes overlap: 1) the study of control mechanisms per se, 2) the study of press freedom within the context of press control, 3) control of the press through violence, 4) control of the press as a result of collusion, and 5) diminishing control mechanisms and the transition to democracy. Each body of literature is a product of its time, with the angles and subjectivities of the period, and these have played a role in fundamentally shaping the scholarship. Therefore, the next section will present a chronological survey of the literature on the Mexican media in order to show how the discourses progress.

Understanding the Mexican media system: Press control

The main trend in the study of Mexican media-state relations focuses on matters of press control. Writing in regards of the development of Mexican politics, De Mora (1975) and Carpizo (2000 –first edition 1978-), notice that some of the impediments that prevent Mexico from being more democratic lie in the extensive, sometimes even meta-constitutional, power of the president. In his tellingly entitled book “By the grace of Mr. President”, De Mora (1975) notes that even the limitations on the Mexican press stem from the pervasive presidential control. Carpizo (2000) has a similar argument, and gives the following example: “the editor of a newspaper receives a phone call ‘on behalf of the President’, where he is told that it would be good if he published (or not published) certain information, for instance, about the national convention of the PRI party, or suggests that little space be given to a PAN party declaration, etc.”. De Mora (1975) believes that despite the fact that freedom of expression is guaranteed in the Mexican Constitution, it is in reality so greatly subjected to restrictions that it does not actually exist.

De Mora (1975) points out that the most controlled media is actually the press. De Mora (ibid) also notes that the only space in which freedom of expression was more or less existent was in the editorials, while news items were more carefully controlled; however, the reason editorials were more free is because they did not attract the interest of the readers (only an average of 11.4% read the editorials of the most read

newspaper of the time). Yet this, he argues, was used as a smoke-screen to demonstrate to the international community that there was freedom of expression in Mexico. Following the discussion of press control, Cole (1975) discusses the Mexican media system in terms of growth, control and ownership, and does so through interviews with media owners, journalists, academics and government officials, as well as the observation of documentary sources. Cole's main argument is that historical developments in Mexico have limited journalism, as press freedom was impeded by three centuries of Spanish domination and a further 100 years of domestic struggles (1975, 65). He notes three types of media control in Mexico: societal, governmental and institutional, with a focus on the latter two. Not unlike De Mora and Carpizo, Cole (1975) notes that a source of press control comes from the president, but also from the state-owned newsprint provider PIPSA, which existed more on the insistence of media owners than that of political figures (Cole, 1975, 69), and the fact that the government regularly purchased "gacetillas". These were paid-for inserts presented in the form of "a bona fide newspaper article" (Lawson, 2002, 31). All these constitute what Cole (1975) calls governmental controls. In regards of institutional controls, these are intrinsically related to the governmental controls: the use of gacetillas results in journalism that lacks in quality, while journalists are poorly trained, the press is prominently political and non-objective, and reporters and editors regularly receive bribes: "payoffs are common throughout the system as an accepted, and often expected, fact of life".

Furthermore, Cole (1975) believes that media ownership is concentrated in just a few hands, while those in charge are usually linked to the groups with political power, and pursue the same interests. Hence, Cole's focus is in understanding the Mexican media as one example of an authoritarian model, while he makes no suggestions as to the paths towards press freedom.

Understanding the Mexican media system: Press freedom

Montgomery (1984) offers an alternative perspective, to that of Cole (1975), as she aims to study the Mexican case precisely in terms of press freedom. Montgomery (1984) uses Siebert's stress-freedom proposition for the analysis of press criticism of government officials in Mexico in an attempt to elucidate the Mexican press' role as a

watchdog². Contrary to the trends postulated in Siebert's hypothesis, where press freedom diminishes in moments of high stress on the government, Montgomery's findings reveal that press criticism in Mexico in fact increases the more stress is placed on the government. This, she argues, constitutes a high level of press freedom in the Mexican case: "this content analysis of a cross section of the Mexican newspapers fails to indicate that the editors were cowed by the government (...) the pattern of increasing criticism is unmistakable. The data push Mexico much further into a free press category than has been suggested by previous studies" (Montgomery, 1984, 172).

Montgomery, however, fails to point to the source of criticisms in the press: did they come from the editors, other members of the political elite, from opposition parties, the public? Furthermore, she does not discuss the role of journalists in the day to day production of news, their news values, or what is considered newsworthy. She argues simplistically that criticism is a sign of press freedom, but does not define criticism nor question the nature of such criticisms. In fact, Montgomery takes little notice of the fact that the political system at the time was dominated by one single party. In other words, a seemingly very undemocratic country appeared to have a level of press-freedom that did not occur in the established democracies from which the author drew up her theoretical framework, yet this did not lead her to question why that should be the case. Adler (1993) approaches the same question of press criticism from a different angle, as he looks at manifestations of press criticism in the press and the actual function that those criticisms play in the Mexican political system. Adler (1993) conducted content analysis of the press, as well as interviews with journalists and government officials from an important government institution (whose identity remained confidential). His inside knowledge of that institution, the author suggests, proved most valuable to his findings. Indeed such an inside day-to-day knowledge remains incomparable in the scholarship of media-state relations in Mexico, as even

² Siebert (1952) studies the evolution of press freedom in England from 1476 until 1776, and presents two propositions in his study: 1) "The extent of government control depends on the nature of the relationship of the government to those subject to the government" and 2) "The areas of freedom contracts and the enforcement of restraints increases as the stresses on the stability of the government and of the structure of society increase." (Swindler, 1952). Montgomery's study of the Mexican press is based on Siebert's second proposition.

one-off interviews with government officials are difficult to obtain, much less wider access to people and documents in the way in which Adler had in his capacity as a consultant of that government institution.

Adler (1993) begins his piece by stressing some of the mechanisms by which the press was controlled or co-opted, such as subsidised paper provision, government advertisement and gacetillas, as well as bribes to journalists. His findings are that favourable coverage of the government is predominant (95% of sample), with no direct criticisms of the president. A certain, yet low level amount of criticism was present, but for the most, items are usually made up of quotes with no signs of investigative journalism to produce them. Similar to Cole (1975), Adler (1993) found the practice of pay-offs very commonplace and openly carried out, while favourable coverage is ensured through economic rewards or punishments. Adler (1993) also notes that the whole editorial establishment stimulate the practice through paying low wages and by receiving a share of the handouts journalists get. Journalists are strongly controlled and have to play by the rules of not criticising the government, even if they decline bribes -a practice usually unacceptable to media organisations as it constitutes "loss of revenue" (Adler, 1993, 8-9).

Unlike Montgomery (1984), Adler notes "criticism by the press is not by itself a sign that one is observing a more responsible media outlet" (1993, 9). Furthermore, the author notes that criticism can in fact be the product of government initiation, and it serves several functions: means for a media to get more government financing, a way in which a faction can exert pressure on a competing one, or a vehicle for the promotion of a political figure as "criticism –or the lack of it– is a political measure of success in Mexico" (Adler, 1993, 12). Politicians who do not succeed in gaining favourable coverage are considered weak in the political sub-culture, Adler notes, quite evidently writing at a time in which the PRI-party "dedazo" practice was still used for choosing potential candidates. Adler (1993, 14) also notes that the press revolves and is read by "the public that matters", whereas the political community "agree" to use the press as an arena for the diffusion of their ideas and messages". Adler (1993) also found that criticism in the press is not easily decoded, as it is aimed at such a specific group, that the ability to interpret it is a political skill developed over time by a few.

Adler's conclusion is that "criticism of the government by the press does not necessarily add up to press freedom, nor does government control over paper supply and advertising revenues necessarily mean that the press cannot exercise freedom of expression within broadly defined boundaries" (Adler, 1993). In other words, the observations from foreign theorists with a Westernised perspective on freedom of the press miss the point when looking at criticisms of the government in the Mexican press. Furthermore, Adler's research highlights the need to understand the workings and the psyche of politicians when studying the Mexican media system. Nevertheless, his study is a product of its time and very much reflects the political context of the era: one in which the struggles of figures of political power were fought not with members of the opposition, but against those from within their own party, and where the capability to control praise and criticism were key to career advancements, rather than the ability to persuade voters. In this respect, Adler's study stands out from that of other scholars: while others focus on press freedom as criticism of the government, Adler instead tries to find why there is criticism at all and what it means; and he finds that it is indeed another political tool that made the whole PRI party machinery. Other authors who have analysed the Mexican media in terms of media control have been Torres (1993), Fernandez (1982), and Brewster (2002); the latter approached the subject with a focus on press freedom.

Understanding the Mexican media system: control through violence

Another trend in the literature of the Mexican media system sees matters of control of the press from the perspective of violence against journalists (Article 19, 1989; Conger, 1997; Solomon, 1997). That is the concern of David La France (1993), who notes that the problems of the Mexican media-state relations have been characterised by official control through a mix of repression and co-optation since the early 19th Century. Yet he points out that controls are so subtle that some observers rather use the word "guidance" than "control". Nevertheless, La France (1993, 216) argues that despite the scholarly notion of the "carrot and stick" that characterises the Mexican media system, violence plays a very prominent "role in keeping journalists in line". He illustrates his observation with figures of aggression towards journalists: 70 killed between 1970 and 1990, 21 of them in the two most recent years of that period, while the number of those attacked is near to 400 for those two decades. Although La

France is cautious in laying all the blame on the government, he notes that in the context of a near monopolistic PRI regime, it does shoulder some responsibility (1993, 216), a point which is also made by Solomon: “By maintaining silence, the government has created an atmosphere in which it seems acceptable for journalists to be beaten up” (1997, 128). La France (1993) points to a pervasive system of co-optation between the media and the government and wonders why in such a case the ‘stick’ has become more and not less prevalent in the Mexican media system: a so-called sophistication of the control mechanisms of the press, loss of political power by political bosses, the rise of opposition parties and a growth in drug traffic are tentative explanations, but he calls for a deeper analysis and further explanations rather than descriptions in future research in order to understand changes in the Mexican media system.

Understanding the Mexican media system: collusion

While the previous works focus on matters of press control in itself, manifestations of press freedom and the meaning of criticisms in the press in Mexico, as well as violence against journalists; there is another trend in the literature that attempts to understand press control in terms of collusion between the media and the government, such as the works by Sanchez³ (1988), Servin (2004), Rodriguez (1993), Fromson (1996) and Riva Palacio (1997). While Fromson (1996) and Riva Palacio (1997) depart from similar observations, they end up with conclusions at odds with each other. Similar to Cole (1975), Fromson (1996) believes that limitations in Mexican journalism can be traced back to the Spanish colonisation of Mexico, and sees the limitations to modern Mexican journalism as anchored in the colluded relationship between media entrepreneurs and the PRI-Government, with its pervasive system of bribes to journalists. Riva Palacio (1997) makes similar observations and highlights issues that have been pointed out by previous studies in regards to the Mexican media system, such as the use of gacetillas and, in the same way as Adler (1993), notes that foreign observers tend to mistake the lack of evidence of direct governmental control of the press as signs of press freedom, when in fact there is a complex network of mutual benefits that link the government and the media in Mexico. Riva Palacio

³ Sanchez (1988) offers a thorough discussion of the complex relationship between the media and political power in the light of the historical economic development of Mexico, and the prominence of Mexico City in such process.

(1997) points out that there is prevalent self-censorship in the Mexican media, that the government is the largest advertiser and that there is a lack of readership and very low circulation figures of the press in Mexico. Fromson makes an ever stronger point in regards of the abundance of newspapers in Mexico: “No real justification exists for having nearly three dozen daily newspapers in a metropolis that, for the most part, lacks sufficient readership and suffers from widespread functional illiteracy” (1996, 130). Riva Palacio (1997) lays some of the blame on journalists, as he believes that journalists fight for the richest beats, as they are the source of their income. On the other hand, Fromson (1996) believes that media owners tend to have other commercial concerns and little interest in journalism, but thinks that there have been some changes in that respect as media owners like Alejandro Junco with his newspapers *El Norte* and *Reforma* had tried to achieve financial independence. But Riva Palacio (1997, 30) argues that a free market would be the end to many newspapers and magazines, as they would not be able to sustain themselves, and a generalised financial independence of the press is something he “cannot see (...) happening in the near future”.

Mexico had been going through a period of political turmoil when Fromson’s and Riva Palacio’s pieces were written: 1994 was a year marked by the political assassinations of PRI party’s general secretary Jose F. Ruiz Massieu and presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio, as well as the rebel “Zapatista” uprising in the southern state of Chiapas and a severe economic crisis. Furthermore, the Salinas administration (1988-1994) adopted neo-liberal policies and signed the North America Free Trade Agreement with the USA and Canada, and during that period, Riva Palacio notes, satellite television opened information channels previously unavailable to the people. All these changes, both authors argue, had the potential to drive journalism into novel routes to break from the practices of old, yet journalism was ill prepared to produce an accurate portrayal of the events, coverage was not critical or independent, no analysis was done, and speculation rather than investigation made for the content of news items. Overall, Fromson (1996) holds an optimistic view of the future of journalism in Mexico, as he perceives some positive changes going on, such as the professionalisation of journalism, and financial independence of media organisations, which he believes could have an impact on democratisation:

“if any single institution helped to perpetuate the power of the velvet dictatorship over more than six decades, it was the government-managed mass media. And if any single institution can help to propel Mexico toward a more open society, it is a free mass media.” (Fromson, 1996, 116)

But unlike Fromson, Riva Palacio’s view of the future of Mexican journalism is indeed a very negative one. He thinks journalists wasted an opportunity to carry out a better type of reporting, that a free market is not foreseeable, and that the press would not play a part in the process of democratisation, in fact, rather the opposite: “the press will be the last institution in Mexico to undergo the process of democratisation” (1997, 30).

Benavides (2000) also discusses press control in Mexico, yet his focus is on the impact this has had on journalistic practices. Under the term *gacetilla* he encompasses all press control mechanisms identified previously: the purchase of news space, paying a commission to journalists on advertisement purchased by their sources, bribes to journalists, paper provision through PIPSA, and so on. Benavides (2000, 97) stresses that in Mexico the word “fuente” is used to denominate both the beat and the source, and journalists are therefore “encouraged to think of those government agencies [the journalists’ beats] as their only source of information”. Even though Benavides (2000) paper relies on secondary sources, he offers insights into journalistic practices and the impact upon them derived from government control that had been largely overlooked by other studies. He notes that a by-product of *gacetillas* is a type of journalism that is characterised by self-censorship as sources have a lot of influence on what is reported and journalists behave as advertising agents, hence investigative reporting is discouraged. Furthermore, Benavides notes of journalists that the more stories they write, the more income they get, which explains the routine of regurgitating press releases or single source declarations: “the system rewards those reporters who do not do real reporting”. The author also notes that the influence of the *gacetilla* system is pervasive even in news organisations that do not sell advertising space posed as news (which is the typical definition of *gacetilla*), an observation that was also made by Lozano (1993) in his study of newspaper *El Norte*. The latter newspaper, along with its sister publication *Reforma*, is regularly referred by other authors as an example of a media outlet that carries out independent journalism. However, the analyses of both Lozano and Benavides point out that

despite the apparent financial independence of El Norte and Reforma, and their organisational policy of rejection of chayotes, journalism in these newspapers is practiced in the same way as it occurs in other media organisations that had been identified as colluding with the government. In other words, journalistic practices are no different between news organisations regarded as “independent” and those labelled as “co-opted” with the government; hence stories are gathered and presented in a similar way.

Benavides’ generalised use of the term gacetilla for the description of several practices of collusion in the Mexican media system is confusing at times, as it becomes unclear what conceptualisation of ‘gacetilla’ he is referring to when highlighting specific examples. He gives little attention to the role of opposition politicians or indeed any other group in society in discouraging or perpetrating what he calls the gacetilla system. Just as he makes no distinctions in the different uses of the term gacetilla, he does not specify what he means when he talks of the government: by the time his piece was written the PRI party’s political monopoly was waning and opposition parties had achieved government posts. So the question is, does he mean PRI party government, or does he suggest that opposition parties who by then had achieved governmental posts were also benefiting from the gacetilla system? That is a question well worth asking, as there is a final trend in the literature that focuses on media opening and democratisation that makes a strong point of the weakening of the PRI party and the growing importance of the opposition and how these transformations in politics affect or are being affected by changes in journalism.

Understanding the Mexican media system: transition to democracy

Writing after the PRI party defeat in the presidential elections of 2000, Lawson (2002) and Hughes (2003; 2006) consider Mexico an established democracy, with a mass media that functions as a watchdog and a fourth estate. Lawson does not explain in detail the behaviour of journalists or newsgathering activities carried out by them in the contemporary context of Mexican politics. Nonetheless, he argues that an increased professionalisation of journalists and editors contributed to the opening up of the Mexican media system, illustrating his arguments with the experiences of leading journalists turned editors or media owners, as were the cases of Alejandro Junco de la Vega (newspapers El Norte and Reforma) and Julio Scherer (newspaper

Excelsior and magazine Proceso). But central to his argument is that, while acknowledging that political liberalisation contributed to the transformation of the Mexican press, more relevant was the role of commercial competition. Furthermore, he notes that the media can transform politics just as much as politics can influence media and journalism. The political system suffered de-legitimisation as media organisations opened up to include opposition voices, not just from opposition parties, but also from civil society. Thus the media opening up and democratisation interact as “mutually reinforcing processes”.

Hughes argues that the Mexican media has been transformed from within the newsroom, as journalists have adhered to more ‘civic’ ways of performing their jobs. This civic journalism, she argues, is characterised by “autonomy, diversity in the perspectives they present to the public, and assertiveness in newsgathering (2006, 4). She calls this type of journalism ‘civic’, as she notes, it has the “potential to enhance civic participation and government accountability to citizens” (ibid, 5), and thus plays an active role in the establishment of democracy.

Hallin (2000, 97) discusses how the structural crisis of the PRI party since the late 1980s has had an impact in the Mexican media, which he notes, during the PRI hegemony used to be “fully integrated into the structure of power”. Hallin (2000) argues that recent changes in the media respond not just to an increasing commercial competition⁴, but also to government pressure, thus suggesting that both media and politics have influenced each other in the democratic transition process. In a more recent piece, Hallin, alongside Papathanassopoulos, put forward the notion that Mexico is an example of a clientelistic media system. In their paper, Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002, 184) discuss how complex a democratic transition process is:

“It is not simply a matter of lifting censorship and holding competitive elections, but involves the transformation of many political institutions – including the mass media- and the relationships among political, social and economic institutions. These transformations are often slow and uneven, and for that reason a knowledge of political history is crucial to understanding current institutions.”

⁴ In another piece, Hallin (2000b) argues that tabloidisation in television news is contributing to democratisation by exposing political scandals and appealing to wider audiences.

It is the latter points highlighted by Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002, 184) that Lawson (2002) and Hughes (2006) fail to address in their studies of the Mexican media system, and which this research aims to focus on.

Summary

As pointed out by this brief overview on the scholarship of the Mexican media system, theorists have looked at the issue in question with the peculiarities of their time, and with a distinctive position in regards to the PRI party. The theoretical approaches by which the Mexican media system has been studied show the influence of the Anglo-American model. Because the PRI party exercised a monopoly over political power for most of the 20th century, some scholars have tried to understand Mexican journalism as an example of an authoritarian model and have thus focused on issues of press control. Others have tried to evaluate the level of press freedom that was possible in the context of the PRI regime as a sign of journalistic emancipation. Yet other studies tried to examine criticisms of the government in the press as a way of understanding not so much the press, but how the political clique could use the media to their advantage. Other trends in the literature have focused on the control of the press through violence as well as through co-optation. The pervasive power of the one state party was a key component of all these studies; however, the PRI party has suffered internal transformations and divisions, while opposition parties have gained strength. This has led to a more recent trend in the literature which aimed to look at how changes in politics have altered the media in Mexico and how both the media and politics influence each other in the transition to democracy that the country is said to be undergoing.

Political Clientelism in a Media System

The transition to democracy in Mexico is not a finished process, and neither is the transformation of the Mexican media system. Is it possible that Mexican journalism has furthered its position as a Fourth Estate as Lawson argues? Do Mexican journalists in general consider themselves as actors in the development of democracy in Mexico and thus carry out the 'civic' journalism that Hughes portrays? An alternative way of understanding media systems in transition is offered by Hallin and

Papathanassopoulos (2002). These authors compare media systems in southern Europe and Latin America, as in both regions “the conflict between liberal democratic and authoritarian traditions continued through most of the 20th century” (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos, 2002, 175). Central to their argument is the concept of political clientelism, which they note to be most prevalent in Mexico out of all the countries they analyse.

Hallin and Mancini (2004, 58) define clientelism as “a pattern of social organization in which access to social resources is controlled by patrons and delivered to clients in exchange for deference and various forms of support”. Consequently, in clientelistic systems there is a stronger adherence to particular interests over public ones (ibid). Legg (1975) argues that all societies have been clientelistic at some point in their history and that clientelism exists everywhere to some degree (in Hallin and Mancini, 2004, 58). Strong clientelism in a media system means, firstly, low adherence to legal norms, as law is enforced selectively so that politicians are able to pressure media owners, though media or journalists can also pressure politicians by discriminatingly exposing wrongdoing (ibid). Secondly, clientelism is linked to low levels of professionalisation of journalism, as journalists tend to be part of “clientelistic networks, and their ties to parties, owners, or other patrons” (idem). Thirdly, clientelism “is associated with private rather than public communication patterns” as citizens do not need much information on public affairs since their votes are traded for benefits (ibid).

Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002, 176) note that media systems in southern Europe share similar characteristics to those of Latin America. The common characteristics these media systems share are: low levels of newspaper circulation, tradition of advocacy journalism, instrumentalisation of privately owned media, politicisation of public broadcasting and broadcast regulation, and limited development of professionalisation of journalism (ibid, 176-177).

Jonathan Fox (1994, 153) defines clientelism as “a relationship based on political subordination in exchange for material rewards”. He also notes that state-society relations can be classified as a continuum from clientelism to citizenship in three categories: authoritarian clientelism, semiclientelism or plural citizenship, yet there

can also be a combination of the three throughout nations (1994, 157). And regarding the Mexican case, he notes that it shows how “political entrepreneurs can replace rigid, antiquated controls with new, more sophisticated clientelistic arrangements without necessarily moving toward democratic pluralism.” (Fox, 1994, 155). This means that even though Mexico has been undergoing a democratic transition through the development of a more plural and fair electoral system, clientelistic practices prevail.

Clientelism is a form of bargaining, therefore there is a degree of autonomy between the parties involved. However, in the Mexican case, Fox (1994, 153) notes that it was a form of authoritarian clientelism that produced imbalanced bargaining relations and thus required the “enduring political subordination of clients (...) reinforced by the threat of coercion”. The key issue in maintaining the clientelistic network is the cohesion of the elite in power, since this leaves little room for the construction of citizenship. However, when there are legitimacy problems, states have two forms of response, by repression or by the creation of concessions. As for the Mexican case, he argues that the internal conflicts of the PRI party paired with the legitimacy problems generated by the repressive response to the 1968 demonstration led to the pursuit of policies that aimed to create allegiance to the government away from the traditional clientelistic network, and this resulted in more cracks within the party, as traditional political bosses felt excluded and their power diminished (Fox, 1994, 159-168).

Journalism in a Clientelistic System

As for the notion of clientelism in a media system, this implies that journalism “tends to emphasize commentary from a distinct political perspective” (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos, 2002; 177). Even though there can be counter-tendencies fuelled by the influence of the Anglo-American model, in clientelistic societies the trend is that journalism accentuates opinion and commentary, therefore it is a form of advocacy journalism (ibid). Furthermore, newspapers tend to represent distinct political tendencies, though Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002; 177) note this characteristic is not unique to clientelistic media systems of southern Europe or Latin America. According to Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002; 189) clientelism breaks down the autonomy of social institutions, journalism being one of them. So

journalists' logic merges with that of party politics and family privilege and the horizontal solidarity of journalists is also broken. Since political interests are highly emphasised in clientelistic societies, journalism does not perform autonomously so as to serve a public interest beyond other particular interests (politics, parties, businesses, etc) (ibid).

The use of journalism to serve particular interests is understood as the instrumentalisation of the media, by Hallin and Mancini (2004, 34-36). This bears relations with the level of professionalization journalism can attain in a particular media system, in the sense that the more a media organisation is used as a political instrument, the lesser its level of professionalisation will be. And in turn, journalistic professionalisation has three dimensions: autonomy, distinct professional norms and a public service orientation. Bourdieu's notions of differentiation and field inform Hallin and Mancini's discussion on journalistic professionalisation, as they argue "a high degree of professionalization of journalism means that journalism is differentiated as an institution and form of practice from other institutions and forms of practice –including politics" (2004, 38).⁵

In media systems with a low level of professionalisation, media organisations display strong relations with political organisations, therefore politics are 'paralleled' in the media. "Where political parallelism is very high, with media organisations strongly linked to political organizations, and journalists deeply involved in party politics, professionalization is indeed likely to be low" (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, 38). Subsequently, media systems with a high level of political parallelism also score low in terms of journalistic autonomy, distinct professional norms and a tendency to pursue a public service. More on these concepts and how they impact journalists' role perceptions will be discussed in Chapter six.

⁵ Hallin and Mancini's cautious take and adaptation of Bourdieu's theory suits their overall approach to analyse media systems as part of a larger context, in which history and the dialectic development of society and politics play a big part. An approach which is echoed in this study, as Bourdieu's (1997) discussions on journalism are rather parochial, and specific to the French case. The author is prone to generalisations when discussing journalism. This, added to his lack of empirical data, does not reveal particular traits of journalistic performance or role perceptions which this study aims to elucidate when looking at the Mexican case. For a comprehensive criticism on Bourdieu's views on journalism, see Marliere (1998).

Clientelism in the Mexican Media System

In the case of Mexico during the PRI regime, newspapers depended greatly on state support and owners of both print and broadcast media were associated with the ruling party, this exacerbated the tendency of advocacy journalism as subsidies and concessions were risked should news regarded as damaging to the system be made public. Furthermore, journalists not only had to be partisan; to supplement their income they established clientelistic relationships with government officials who in return for favourable coverage rewarded journalists with bribes known as *chayotes* or *embutes*.⁶ In some cases, they even performed as sales agents in pursuit of *gacetillas* or the plain sale of advertising space, as they would get a share of the income received by the newspaper for its print. Finally, as described by Lawson (2002), there were cases in which journalists initiated a rent-seeking relationship with politicians by giving them negative coverage and then negotiating a more favourable one in exchange for *chayotes*; this is what he describes as ‘punch them journalism’. One of the reasons journalists had to seek the financial support of clientelistic relations was because their income was generally low. This is also a result of lack of professionalisation, and even, a lack of recognition of journalism as a profession (see Torres, 1993).

Hallin (2000, 99) describes Mexican journalism as ‘*oficialista*’, that is “passive and self-censored, with most political coverage based on official press releases, and with many areas of controversy being off limits”. He argues that as there is very limited circulation, the press mainly serves as means of communication between politicians and activists, with the peculiarity that all members of the elite belong to the ruling party. In the words of Hughes (2003; 94) journalists’ values supported the status quo as they considered themselves part of the system, their role was then to send messages

⁶ Bribes to journalists could take all kinds of shapes. Riva Palacio (1992, in Torres, 1997, 94) describes that a former Mexico City General Attorney did not give money out to journalists, instead, twice a month he would help them get a minor offender out of jail; the journalist then would charge the family of the prisoner for the service. In another case, an official of the Ministry of Communications gave a telephone line to a journalist in exchange of a front page eight-column banner in a major newspaper.

within groups of the ruling party and to help factions compete for promotions. Hughes (2003, 94) notes that messages transmitted through the media aimed to:

- Legitimise single-party rule,
- Maintain the image of the omnipotent president
- Create the image of a ruling party presidential candidate capable of curing ills that developed in the previous administration,
- Provide a space for a façade of competitive elections to play out before a nonparticipating public, and
- Label regime critics as outcasts and radicals.'

Clientelistic relationships between the government and the media in Mexico worked as a paradigm of carrot and stick. So, when the media performed in the way the government expected there were rewards such as subsidies, concessions, gacetillas, chayotes, and purchase of advertisement by the government and businesses allied to the government. But when that was not the case, then the 'stick' appeared in the form of withdrawal of the rewards, threats to charge unpaid debts and taxes, and repression. This situation is best described by what became the iconic phrase of media-state relations in Mexico during the PRI regime, when President Jose Lopez Portillo, during the 1978 day of Freedom of the Press expressed that he 'did not pay to be hit'. Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002; 182-183) note that in clientelistic media systems the press is created "more for the purpose of making politics than making money", which explains why the media and journalists sought the patronage of the government in Mexico.

The latter situation meant that journalists who wanted to break free from clientelism risked not only having to survive on their low income; they also suffered from censorship from their superiors. This resulted quite often in self-censorship. However, there is a long account of repression exercised against journalists that goes from firing them from their jobs to threats against their lives; torture and even murder (see Torres, 1997, 114-126). Hughes (2003, 96) observes that even independent journalists had to get involved in compromising relationships in order to obtain information. The fact that media organisations as a whole were clients to the regime made it harder for journalists to pursue liberal journalistic values. This is why some authors believe that

it was through the competitiveness of financial independence that some newspapers, as best exemplified by El Norte-Reforma, managed to recruit university educated journalists and stop them from taking bribes from government officials as their wages were significantly higher than in other papers, and thus could pursue a more independent and critical coverage of news (see Lawson, 2002, Fromson, 1996, 131-132, Hughes, 2003, 98).

Studying Political Clientelism in a Media System

Hallin and Mancini (2004) have studied the developed capitalist democracies of Western Europe and North America. As a result of their study, they have proposed three models of media systems (see Hallin and Mancini, 2004, 67-68). Of these three models, the Polarized Pluralist Model is the one system in which clientelism predominates. The key characteristics of this type of media system are as follows:

- Low newspaper circulation
- Elite politically oriented press
- High political parallelism
- Commentary oriented journalism
- Weaker professionalization
- Instrumentalisation
- Strong state intervention
- Periods of censorship
- Late democratisation
- Strong role of political parties
- Strong involvement of state and parties in economy
- Periods of authoritarianism
- Clientelism

The authors list clientelism as a characteristic of the media system, yet their discussion (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, 89-142) exacerbates how clientelism is paramount in shaping other characteristics in their categorisation. It is due to clientelism that the press aligns itself to political elites, thus showing high levels of political parallelism and emphasising commentary and opinion, in order to please political patrons. Political patronage rather than readership is sought by media organisations, resulting in low circulation figures. Because journalism is therefore constricted to the political allegiances of media organisations, journalists have limited freedom to carry out their work and have to do it within the lines set up by their employers. Therefore, journalism as a profession is not permitted to develop

independently. In the Polarised Pluralist model, clientelism is therefore paramount in shaping media systems and journalistic performance.

As argued by Roudakova (2008, 41), the work of Hallin and Mancini (2004) and Hallin and Papatthanassopoulos (2002), offers an alternative to the traditional approach of adhering to the liberal theory when trying to understand media systems from the Third and former Second world. This tendency to comply with the normativity set out by the liberal model was discussed in the introduction of this thesis, and can be seen earlier in this chapter in the way in which scholars have approached the understanding of the Mexican media system. This approach limits the scope of the conclusions observed in comparative studies of non-liberal media systems, as they are framed by either how closely or not they compare to the traits of the liberal model. The difference between the work of Hallin and colleagues and that of Siebert, et. al., lies in the fact that the former is a product of empirical observations, while the latter is of a normative nature. In other words, the 'liberal' model presented in Hallin and Mancini and Hallin and Papatthanassopoulos work is different to the 'liberal' model in Siebert et. al. in that the former acknowledge differences even within countries that fall under the same model, because due to societal, political and historical reasons, media systems and journalistic role perceptions develop differently.

While it is likely that there were ideological precedents to the diffusion of the models defined by Siebert et. al. (i.e. the context of the Cold War, see Mancini, 2000, 265), Hallin and Mancini (2004, 13) argue that the normative nature of them led to "blind spots" regarding the understanding of journalists' roles and functions that fell outside the normative model.

"The gap between ideal and reality is far greater in countries such as Italy or Spain where journalist will express allegiance to the Liberal Model of neutrality and objectivity, while the actual practice of journalism is deeply rooted in partisan advocacy traditions" (ibid, 13-14).

It is this gap between theory and practice that accounts for the disparities in the study of the Mexican media system post year 2000. From a theoretical point of view, the new political arrangement in Mexico would lead up to a democratic system, with political plurality characterised by an active political opposition. Furthermore, liberalisation has led to a decreasing presence of the State in the Mexican economy,

thus prompting privatisation and competition. Journalism in this new context should therefore display traits generally attributed to the liberal model, such as autonomy, professionalisation, and a public service orientation. Nevertheless, journalism does not develop in isolation, but does so as part of a political and societal system. Therefore this research will adhere to Hallin and Mancini's approach to the study of a media system rather than a traditional comparison against the liberal model of Siebert et. al. Hallin and Mancini (2004, 14) aim to study media systems by

“analyzing their historical development as institutions within particular social settings. We want to understand why they developed the way they did; what roles they actually play in political, social, and economic life; and what patterns of relationship they have with other social institutions.”

Their models take into consideration matters of political history, consensus or majoritarianism in government, political pluralism, role of the State and rational-legal authority (ibid, 68).

A key concept in their study, and one that bears implications in all other aspects they observe, is that of political clientelism. As noted earlier, political clientelism is a form of social relationship in which access to resources is controlled by political patrons who distribute them arbitrarily in exchange for deference and political support. In a politically clientelistic system private interests outweigh the common good and personal connections are more important than formalised relationships. As argued by Sobrado (2002, 8) while

“the democratisation process depends on citizens who can think, are free and autonomous in their decisions, and know their rights and duties, the spurious relationship of clientelism obliges them to renounce their rights in favour of those of another”.

The concept of political clientelism is therefore useful in highlighting those aspects in which a system in transition is moving away from clientelism into democracy (see Fox, 1994, 53, Hallin and Papathanassopoulos, 2002, 176).

It is the concept of political clientelism that this research will focus on when analysing the Mexican media system. It will do so through two methodological approaches, by interviewing Mexican journalists with experience of covering political beats and through content analysis of newspaper items sampled from two different periods in time (one from the PRI regime, one from a PAN party administration).

The concept of political clientelism has existed in anthropology for some time (see Roudakova, 2008, 48), and it has long been applied in the study of Latin American political systems in general, including Mexico (Hellman, 1994; Fox, 1994; Sobrado, 2002; Taylor, 2004). Nevertheless, the study of political clientelism in a media system is still relatively new, with Hallin and Mancini (2004) and Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002) as the most salient examples. Other analysis of media systems that recur to discussions on clientelism are those of Papathanassopoulos (2001) and Papatheodorou and Machin (2003), while the work of Roudakova (2008) applies the concepts put forward by Hallin and Mancini to the Russian case. There is, therefore, not a set method through which we can study journalism while using political clientelism as a theoretical framework. Nevertheless, as noted earlier, political clientelism impacts the way journalism is conducted, as well as journalists' role perceptions and notions of public responsibility and autonomy. Other authors who have studied journalists' routines and role perceptions have done so through various methodological approaches, such as ethnographical research (Gans, 1980; Tunstall, 1971; Soloski, 1989), surveys (Sanders, et. al., 2008; Esser, 1998; Donsbach and Patterson, 2004; Donsbach, 2004) and interviews (Statham, 2008; Lars, 2007). Likewise, comparative content analysis has been used by scholars as means to understanding similarities and differences in press coverage in different periods of time, as well as a way in which to trace bias in news reporting (i.e. Devanathan, et. al.2009; Halloran, et. al., 1970).

For a sole researcher with limited funds and time at their disposal, interviews offer a convenient methodology through which one can get comprehensive information in a relatively short time. This is why interviews were considered as the most suitable research method to carry out in this study. Similarly, access to newspaper archives for the collection of content analysis data was an appropriate method to use, given the purposes of this study: to analyse differences in the way in which news were reported as a consequence of government change. Based on the list of traits that characterise media systems where clientelism prevails, presented at the beginning of this section, this study aims to find evidence of such characteristics through the methods adopted. Interviews can help us understand the environment in which journalists perceive themselves to be working in, be it one where they are free to develop professionally and can perform independently of media political allegiances or one in which media

organisations take their lead from political elites and directly impact the boundaries within which journalists can work and the lines they have to adhere to. Similarly, newspaper content analysis can help us identify bias amongst party lines and commentary-orientated journalism. More information about the methodology used in this research, is available in chapters three and seven.

Conclusion

Even though many of the studies discussed in this literature review point towards the existence of patron-client relationships between the government and the media in Mexico, they do so as one of the many characteristics of that relationship. What this study intends to do, however, is to put political clientelism at the core of the understanding of Mexican media-state relations, in order to posit the thesis that a move away from clientelism towards democracy would offer an indication of change from the practices of the past, as Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002, 176) suggest “The concept of clientelism is useful in media analysis, in part precisely because it illuminates normative issues of media performance in a democratic system”. From this perspective, the literature on the Mexican media system can be divided in two periods, the first one, which emerged while the PRI party was still in power, describes the performance of Mexican journalism as a product of both co-optation and corruption, which made journalism inherently biased and self-censored; and the second one, that argues that Mexican journalism has been transformed and now operates as a watchdog or a Fourth Estate. The most significant event in the so-called transition to democracy in Mexico has been the presidential elections of year 2000, in which PAN party candidate Vicente Fox was victorious, breaking the 71 year PRI party rule.

This research, however, aims to understand journalism in the context of a new political environment in which the power of the PRI party has diminished and is now but one contender of a tri-party system, where big enclaves of power are being held by the PAN and the PRD parties. This is not to ignore the prevalent influence of PRI party politics in every corner of Mexican society. On the contrary, it argues that because PRI party influence is so pervasive, routines in Mexican life have to be

evaluated more thoroughly in order to elucidate whether or not perceived changes have been profound or just superficial. In the existing literature, coverage that acknowledges the existence of other parties other than the PRI has been perceived as an indication of media opening, criticism of the PRI party in the press has been understood as assertive journalism, and a diminishing PRI party intervention in the mass media has been noted as press freedom. In other words, this research examines the existing literature which articulates changes in regards of absence or presence of PRI party influence, by exploring how routine practices in press coverage and attitudes of Mexican journalists have changed or not, regardless of PRI party allegiance.

The above will be achieved by elucidating how traits of political clientelism are manifest in Mexican media state relations. This chapter has noted a media system characterised by clientelism tends to emphasise commentary and opinions, where media logic is merged with party politics, and indeed journalism advocates the particular political faction that specific news organisations support. These in turn results in a low level of journalistic autonomy and professionalisation, as media organisations are strongly linked to political groups and therefore ‘parallel’ their interests and positions. How these situations occur in the Mexican media system will be established by the research methods adopted in this project. Although this chapter has also noted that there is not a set method to understanding political clientelism in a media system, as the concept is borrowed from anthropology and only recently been adopted to the study of journalism; it will aim to explore the use of interviews and content analysis for this purpose. Interviews have long been used in media studies to assert journalists’ role perceptions, while content analysis has been utilised as means to understanding similarities and differences in press coverage in different time periods, as well as to encounter news reporting bias. Therefore, both methods seem adequate in order to find how manifestations of political clientelism are present or not in current Mexican media-state relations from the perspective of the journalists interviewed and as evidenced in news coverage. More detail on the methods used in this thesis is presented in chapter 3 and chapter 7.

The following chapter will present a brief overview on the history and current context of both Mexican politics and the Mexican media system, arguing that the Mexican

case is one of political clientelism. This will be followed by four chapters on the analysis of 35 interviews conducted with Mexican journalists, further discussing the issues highlighted in this literature review. These are followed by two more chapters on the content analysis of two samples taken from different historical periods of news coverage in the Mexican press. The final chapter will present an overview of the results of this research, discuss its limitations and propose areas for further study.

Chapter 2

Mexican Politics and Mexican Media System

The literature on the Mexican media system often points out that the dynamics of the PRI party, and the way it evolved and has influenced the development of journalism in Mexico and our understanding of it. Lawson (2002) believes that the transformations in the political system both influenced and were influenced by changes in the media system. It is therefore important to recognise how the history of Mexican politics relates to that of the Mexican media, and how the legacy of the PRI party continues to have an effect on the current context of Mexican politics¹ and the media. This chapter will also argue that political clientelism pre-dates the PRI regime, and it is due to this pervasiveness that our understanding of what constitutes a shift towards a democratic system has to look more deeply into seemingly different arrangements in the political arena. In other words, the defeat of the PRI party does not necessarily equate with an end to political clientelism and an instant adherence to democratic values by all institutions of society, including journalism.

In order to understand how the relationship between the government and the media operated in Mexico during the PRI regime, it is important to analyse the history of the PRI party, how and why it was created, and how it managed to remain in power for seven decades. It is also paramount to describe the great amount of power that was given to the president and how the media related to the presidential figure, as all these traits, it will be argued, constitute patterns of a clientelistic political system. That information will be covered in the first part of this chapter, along with a description of the presidential elections of 2000, in which opposition candidate Vicente Fox, from the PAN party achieved victory, defeating for the first time in history a candidate from the PRI party. This chapter will also discuss how Mexican political opposition parties have

¹ See Appendix 1 for information on Mexico's geography, demography and structure of the political system.

developed throughout the 20th century, and it will review the current PAN administration.

The second part of this chapter will present an overview of the Mexican media² in two different periods: a) the media during the PRI regime (1929-2000), and b) the media after the PRI party defeat in the presidential elections of 2000 and the PAN party administration of Vicente Fox. The discussion in the present chapter serves as an introduction to the analysis of the primary data gathered for this research, which is presented in subsequent chapters.

Antecedents of the Mexican Political System

According to Serbolov (2003, 6) Mexico is the product of four wars: The Spanish Conquest, Mexican Independence, the Reform War³ and the Mexican Revolution. He acknowledges that two of these wars were 'legitimate' as they were a struggle between Mexicans against foreigners; Aztecs versus Spaniards during the Conquest and 'mestizos' and 'criollos' against 'peninsulares' during the Independence War⁴. The other two wars he recognises as illegitimate, since they demonstrate that Mexicans were incapable of solving their ideological differences or clashes of interest in a peaceful manner, even though these struggles gave Mexico a liberal government, a separation between the State and the Church, social rights, etc. Serbolov (ibid) also notes that Mexico had two previous attempts at democratisation, one in 1861-1863 with Benito Juarez and another in 1911 with Francisco I. Madero. In both cases the attempts failed as governments were divided, the president was weak and the congress strong, hence an imposing obstacle to democratising policies which they would not accept. Both attempts

² Further information about the history of the Mexican mass media, as well as matters concerning broadcast media and media ownership is available in Appendix 2.

³ During the Reform War the two struggling groups were the liberals and the conservatives, these will be referred to further in these chapter, though the labels 'liberal' and 'conservative' must be understood in such context as they do not refer to contemporary trends in political ideologies.

resulted in a legal and governmental paralysis, which led to financial, economic, political and social dysfunction. These circumstances facilitated foreign interventions, France in 1862 and the US in 1914, followed by the installation of military governments, Porfirio Diaz and Victoriano Huerta respectively, with the support of the US (Serbolov, 2003, 6).

Roderic Ai Camp (2003, 47) argues that Mexico established patterns that contributed to the development of its political models throughout its history as a colony and independent nation. He notes that after independence in 1821, there was an intense political conflict as many groups tried to legitimise their political ideas (ibid, 31). Two mainstreams of political thought were competing in Mexico by the mid-nineteenth century, liberalism and conservatism. Ai Camp (2003, 32) defines Mexican liberalism as a mixture of foreign and native ideas that rejected Spanish authoritarianism and embraced Enlightenment ideas from Europe and the USA. On the other hand, the conservatives “praised the reform-minded Bourbon administration of the Spanish colonies prior to independence and emphasized a strong central executive” (ibid).

While the liberals believed in classic economic liberalism, individual initiative and laissez faire, the conservatives promoted industrialisation and light manufacturing, yet both “looked approvingly on foreign investment” (Ai Camp, 2003, 33) and sought to attract it for mining and other industries such as textiles. Ai Camp (ibid) notes that neither group paid much attention to the Indian population because thinkers on both the liberal and conservative sides were ‘criollos’ of middle and upper-middle classes and sought to maintain the status quo and interests of their classes.

The liberals and conservatives fought against each other in the War of Reform (1858-1861) where the liberals ended up victorious. They imposed their political views in the constitution of 1857. A salient issue in the battle between both contending groups was

⁴ Mestizo refers to the ethnic mix of a Spanish with an indigenous Mexican, Criollo means second or further generation of Spanish born and bred in Mexico, and Peninsulares was the name given to Spanish born and bred in Spain living in Mexico.

the role of the Church, as liberals considered it an ally to the Spanish authoritarian domination (Ai Camp, 2003, 34). So the conservatives with the support of the Church sought foreign assistance, that led to the French intervention of 1862-1867 when Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian from Austria was pronounced Emperor. However, the liberals under the leadership of Benito Juarez overthrew Maximilian and Juarez was elected president in December 1867 (Rubio, 1998, 128).

From 1867 to 1876, Ai Camp (2003, 34) argues, Mexicans had “a taste of a functioning, liberal political model”. Yet successors to Juarez lacked political skills and could not maintain government, and power was seized in a revolt commanded by military leader Porfirio Diaz in 1876. Diaz tenure lasted thirty-four years, a period known as the ‘Porfiriato’; the regime was known for the motto “order and progress” (Rubio, 1998, 128). Diaz introduced a new generation of liberals to political roles, yet these liberals were not orthodox as in Juarez’ generation, rather they were more moderate and had adopted positivist ideas (Ai Camp, 2003, 34).

Positivists wanted political stability and peace as they saw them as the conditions to achieve progress. Those ideas evolved to the point of reintroducing conservative thinking into Mexican politics. So the Church regained presence, the executive was empowered and politics centralised. In fact, many of the characteristics of the PRI regime bear similarities to the Porfiriato. Diaz, as orthodox liberals before him, saw Indians as an obstacle to progress, so he applied policies that furthered social inequality (Ai Camp, 2003, 36). Not only did he force the sale of Indian communal land (known as ‘ejidos’), he saw Indians as racially inferior, so he promoted European immigration hoping to wipe out indigenous culture (ibid). However, the purchase of the ‘ejidos’ either by wealthy Mexicans or foreigners only increased the concentration of land in a few hands and antagonised mestizo and Indian groups (ibid).

The Diaz dictatorship is in many ways the main precedent to the political model established by the PRI regime. Even though the Mexican revolution ignited as a reaction against the authoritarianism of Porfirio Diaz, and the PRI claimed to adhere to

revolutionary values (hence maintaining the 'Revolutionary' in all its name changes), the PRI regime adopted many traits established by the Porfiriato. For instance, the linkage between the government and the army and the private sector; the monopoly of power in the central political leader, who had the ability to appoint or dismiss public officials -and in the case of the PRI, incumbent presidents-, and who also enjoyed a personality cult built around him; as well as control over the electoral process, which were conducted with regularity not to pursue government change, but to simulate democracy and as means of testing political alliances. All of this was achieved by the deployment of an extensive clientelistic network, where allegiance to the government was translated into benefits and rewards.

One of the main characteristics of the Porfiriato was constituted by the relationships between Diaz and the army and the private sector. Being a military man himself, Diaz tended to appoint members of the army in prominent positions of political power, a practice that carried on during the first administrations of the PRI regime. Diaz controlled national political offices, so he "used appointments to reward supporters or as means to co-opt opponents" (Ai Camp, 2003, 37). This was very important to the business elite, as access to power and decision making was closed to them, however, one fifth of all national politicians were businessmen during the Diaz dictatorship (ibid).

As for the electoral process, Diaz had control over them and continued to hold elections in order to "renew the loyalty of the people to his leadership" (Ai Camp, 2003, 38). This way he could also reward his allies with political offices, sometimes even choosing the same person for more than one position (ibid). Diaz also reversed the trend started by Juarez of conceding power to the legislative and judicial branches by making them subordinate to the executive, which was strengthened through the figure of the presidency (ibid). Diaz also expanded the federal government, so between 1876 and 1910 the bureaucracy increased by 900 percent (Ai Camp, 2003, 38).

Key to the permanence of Diaz in power was the development of a personality cult built around his leadership, as noted by Ai Camp (2003, 39). Diaz presence was seen as

indispensable, a guarantee to progress. So while concentrating on the personality of Diaz, the political system failed to develop and institutions to acquire legitimacy, which meant that stability in the political system was only ensured by the continuity of Diaz in power (ibid).

Finally, Diaz reinforced the paternalism that came from the political and social culture of the colonial and pre-colonial periods (Ai Camp, 2003, 39). This is but a form of clientelism, as Ai Camp (ibid) describes, Diaz favoured people through concessions, “providing them with substantial economic rewards, [thus] encouraged dependence on his personal largesse and the government generally”. This method, however, produced corruption at all levels of politics and “encouraged the belief that political office was a reward to be taken advantage of by the officeholder rather than a public responsibility” (ibid).

The failures of the Porfiriato, such as class struggle, foreign economic penetration, land ownership, economic depression, the clash between tradition and modernity, the lack of opportunities for social mobility, even the ageing of the leadership, amongst others, were the causes of the Mexican Revolution (Ai Camp, 2003, 40). There were many political and social ideologies leading the revolutionary movement. On the one hand there was an orthodox liberalism revival, represented by the Flores Magon family, who had influence in Mexico through the establishment of liberal groups and by the banned newspaper *La Regeneracion*, published from the USA, where the Flores Magon family was exiled. Ricardo Flores Magon advocated workers rights, the distribution of land and for agricultural land to be productive (ibid). Another important political figure of the revolution, Francisco I. Madero, fought not for structural changes but for equality in opportunity, he campaigned for public education, no re-election and effective suffrage. Radical social trends were represented by revolutionary leaders such as Pascual Orozco, who demanded municipal autonomy from the federal government; Francisco Villa, who wanted social reform including re-distribution of land and widespread primary education; and Emiliano Zapata, who was mainly concerned with the issue of land ownership and distribution (ibid).

Ai Camp (2003, 42) notes that, except for Madero, revolutionary leaders did not offer specific political principles, so the ideology of the revolution “emerged piecemeal”. Yet the revolution constituted a revival of liberalism. The outcomes of it were the ideal of effective suffrage, an increased nationalism, a renewed distance between the state and the church, the adoption of the concept of ‘ejido’ into the government administration of land, a legalisation of labour’s demands (i.e. minimum wage, working hours, right to strike, etc.), and a sense of constitutionalism as a reference to legitimacy (Ai Camp, 2003, 43-45).

While the events of the civil wars of Reform and the Revolution, as well as the orthodox liberal government of Juarez and the moderate liberal-turned conservative rule of Porfirio Diaz, along with the cultural and political heritage of the Spanish colonisation provide much of the antecedents for the development of the PRI regime, the influence of the USA must also be considered. During the nineteenth century, the United States seized more than half of Mexican national territory, and until the early twentieth century, there was the desire for more annexations (Ai Camp, 2003; 46). Furthermore, the USA interfered in Mexican affairs during the Mexican Revolution, which led to another American intervention in 1914. This prompted an anti-American response in Mexico that further contributed to feelings of nationalism as a direct opposition to American influence. These circumstances, Ai Camp (2003, 49) suggests, perhaps “encouraged a strong, even authoritarian regime that could prevent the kind of instability and political squabbling that had left Mexico open to territorial depredation”⁵.

⁵ Foreign observers usually overestimate the influence of the US in Mexican affairs, yet Hamnett (2006) argues that whilst the American invasions led to a pre-eminence of the US in Mexican foreign affairs ever since, this obscures the fact that Mexico was indeed quite successful in averting the French Intervention of 1862. Furthermore, the author suggests that more defining in Mexico’s modern history than the relationship with the United States, was the consolidation of the Diaz rule, as it completely weakened the first attempt at democratisation and consolidation of institutions championed by the Juarez’ government, and re-instated “personal arrangements” as “the political norm”, a model that prevailed throughout 20th Century politics (Hamnett, 2006, 340-343). For more perspectives on the influence of the US in Mexican politics, see Aguilar and Meyer (1999).

Origins of the PRI party

According to Cockcroft (1998, 112), states are constructed around a hegemonic class that aims to perpetuate and reproduce the circumstances that would ensure its permanence in power. Yet that was not the case in Mexico. The post-Revolution situation saw no clear dominant ruling class, as the bourgeoisie Mexican society had several rivals: the U.S. community of investors in Mexico, the church, peasants, workers and radicals. These were all competing for hegemony, which complicated the construction of a Mexican State (ibid). Moreover, after the end of the Mexican Revolution, in 1921, there was a significant number of revolutionary leaders, known as 'caudillos', spread all over the nation still involved in armed movements. One such caudillo, Alvaro Obregon, ruled Mexico as elected president from 1921 to 1924, followed by another caudillo, Plutarco Elias Calles, yet Obregon had himself re-elected as president for the period of 1928-1932, but was murdered before he could take office. Then president, Plutarco Elias Calles, "announced in his last presidential address to the nation the end of the era of the caudillos and the beginning of an era of institutions" (Aguilar and Meyer, 1999, 74). Emilio Portes Gil was named as provisional president for the following two years (1928-1930).

As stated in the 1917 constitution, political parties are the organisations acknowledged to carry out the democratic struggle for power (Aguilar and Meyer, 1999, 107). However, most parties created after the Mexican Revolution revolved around revolutionary personalities, serving as the vehicle to promote their personal agendas (ibid, 108). The Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR, National Revolutionary Party) was the first party to gain nation-wide recognition and achieved "an almost absolute domination of the position of popular election" (ibid, 109). This party was created after Calles managed to join the forces of the multitude of existing revolutionary parties into a single group, the PNR, the first name by which the PRI party was known. In January of 1929 in Queretaro, Mexico, the PNR celebrated its first National Convention. In 1930 the first government of the PNR began under the rule of Pascual Ortiz Rubio. However, the strong presence of Plutarco Elias Calles, the creator and 'conductor' of the PNR

party led to the resignation of Ortiz Rubio, after which Abelardo Rodriguez was appointed interim president (*idem*, 108).

The first years of the PNR government had the task to pacify and institutionalise the forces unleashed by the previous years and organise the Mexican political life into “Mexico’s greatest accomplishment of the century: the peaceful and institutional transferral of power” (Aguilar and Meyer, 1999, 75). More than a political party, the PNR was “the place in which the ‘revolutionary family’ would settle its differences and select its candidates” (*ibid*, 93). In order to achieve the latter, the Army was also incorporated into the PNR and the president acknowledged as its leader, so that army-led coups would be avoided. In such a system, political power was transferred from one group to another within the revolutionary family by a ritual known as “*dedazo*” (the big finger), as the president himself would decide who would be his successor. The system consolidated between the 1930s and the 1940s, after the oil industry was nationalised and the increased federal revenues allowed the state to co-opt local elites and buy off potential rivals (Lawson, 2002, 15).

Perfect Dictatorship

Levy and Bruhn (2001, 47) point out that the degree to which a revolution actually happened in Mexico is arguable, as what actually occurred was that the country switched from one elite to the other while the situation of the masses did not actually improve. They note that “Upheavals need not change everything to be revolutions, however, and certainly revolutions need not be democratic” (*ibid*, 48). Post-revolutionary Mexico, thus required stability, and in order to achieve it, the different leading groups of society got together in the PNR, constituting what was later to be known as “the revolutionary family” (Levy and Bruhn, 2001, 48; Aguilar and Meyer, 1999, 107). “Rather than rigidly adhere to “revolutionary principles”, the Mexican elite adapted to changing circumstances, alternating between more conservative and more revolutionary styles in order to hold together the broad post-revolutionary coalition.” (Levy and Bruhn, 2001, 47).

The Mexican political system under the so-called “Perfect Dictatorship” consisted of a “single “official” party, currently named the PRI” (Lawson, 2002, 13), which held control over politics and corporatist institutions resulting in an autocratic regime. Within the PRI, however, existed a wide range of political ideologies, which gave room to a certain degree of criticism just as long as it came from within the elite.

In other words, a change of government did not equal a change in the regime and it was these constant changes that made it more difficult for the opposition “to mount sustained protests against the system” (Lawson, *ibid*).

In this regard, Baker and Galindo (1994) note that the PRI was never one monolithic party, on the contrary, from 1929 to 1987 it was a spectrum of political and philosophical views. They argue that it would “be more accurate to call the PRI a coalition of competing, centrist forces, than to think of it as a single party with a narrowly defined ideological framework” (*ibid*). Barker and Galindo (1994) categorise the three political forces that made up the PRI coalition as the left –PRI(L)-, the centre –PRI(C)- and the right –PRI(R)-⁶. They argue that each administration up until 1988 represented one such faction, but that the coalition came to an end in 1987 when the PRI(L) split from the party. Ever since then, the PRI only encompasses the views of the centre and the right, which fits with Ai Camp’s (2003, 205) observations of the fluctuations in the ideology within the PRI party, which will be covered in more depth later in this chapter.

⁶ Barker and Galindo (1994) identify the administrations of each faction in the following manner:

1929-1934, President Plutarco Elias Calles, PRI(R), 1934-1940, President Lazaro Cardenas, PRI(L), 1940-1946, President Manuel Avila Camacho, PRI(C), 1946-1952, President Miguel Aleman, PRI(R), 1952-1958, President Adolfo Ruiz Cortinez, PRI(C), 1958-1964, President Adolfo Lopez Mateos, PRI(L), 1964-1970, President Gustavo Diaz Ordaz, PRI(R), 1970-1976, President Luis Echeverria, PRI(L), 1976-1979, President Jose Lopez Portillo, PRI(C), 1979-1982, President Jose Lopez Portillo, PRI(L) –this switch responds to a change in the policies following the oil shock experienced in the late 1970’s where the international price of crude oil declined unexpectedly-, 1982-1988, President Miguel de la Madrid, PRI(R).

Lawson notes that during the PRI regime the fundamental division in Mexico was “not between rich and poor –or even between different classes and economic sectors- but rather between groups and communities that were allied with the ruling party and those that were not” (2002, 16). As a matter of fact, Philip (1992, 8-9) notes that while there were horizontally-based organisations, such as peasant and trade unions, independent movements were often seen as suspicious and the government sought to break them up or to co-opt them into the official structures.

Mexican Presidencialismo

Carpizo (2000, 12) notes that nowadays there are two main government systems, the ‘parliamentary’ and the ‘Presidential’. The Presidential system was inaugurated by the Constitution of the United States of America in 1787 (Carpizo, 2000). This regime is theoretically based on a rigid, organic and functional separation of the executive and legislative powers, without excluding the practice of certain forms of functional cooperation and the pressure of one power over the other. It is characterized by the independence of the President, who is at the same time leader of the State and leader of the Government and who is elected, directly or indirectly by polls instead of a parliament. The President has certain prerogatives and important attributions, however, he is not politically responsible of the parliament, and he is unable to dissolve the parliament.

However, the government system that existed in Mexico with the PRI party cannot be defined exactly as a Presidential system, because the Mexican President was vested with a great amount of power, unlike the traditional Presidential system. This is why the Mexican government system was called “Presidencialismo” (Carpizo, 2000), rather than ‘Presidential’. ‘Presidencialismo’ is defined as the preponderance of the President, who holds the prerogatives of both a Presidential State leader, and a Parliamentary State leader.

Writing in the context of the PRI regime, Carpizo (2000) notes that the Mexican President had multiple powers, these come from three main sources: the constitution, ordinary laws and the political system. The great faculties of the Executive have implied the weakening of the other two powers, the Legislative and the Judiciary (Martínez, 2002). The attributions of the Mexican President during the PRI regime were described by González Cosío (1972 in Carpizo, 2000) as follows: a) the President is the indisputable leader of the official party; b) Workers and peasants are bureaucratized within the government system; c) The army is weakened in order to turn it into a political instrument of the State; and d) Fiscal matters are centralised. Carpizo (2000), argues that in the context of the PRI regime the Mexican President was predominant for several reasons. For instance, he was the leader of the predominant party, which included the majority of the Congress, as well as professional, working and peasant unions, and the army; the President had influence on the economy by having control of the Central Bank. Furthermore, the President had a strong influence on public opinion through the control of, and faculties he held, regarding the mass media. Carpizo (2000) also describes a wide array of constitutional and extra-constitutional powers that the President had such as being able to designate his successor and other state governors. Also, the President had *carte blanche* in all matters of international relations. Moreover, the President held the government of the federation's capital, Mexico City, which is the place where traditionally the circles of power, political and economic, congregate. Finally, a psychological element: generally, the dominant role of the Executive is accepted without question (Carpizo, 2000). As noted earlier, these are characteristics that bear much in common with the political system of the Porfiriato.

According to Lawson, Mexican *Presidencialismo* was key to the durability of the PRI regime, as Mexican presidents enjoyed untrammelled power during their tenure (2002, 14); they “could reward friends, indulge their avarice, bask in public adulation, and craft national policies”. As for the capability of naming their successors, Lawson (2002, 14) notes that this “helped ensure them protection from punishment after they left office”. Philip (1992, 4) observes that “A Mexican president can, literally, get away with murder”. Furthermore, Serbolov (2003, 6) argues that whoever opposed the will of the

president was faced with the 'three R's': "entierro" (burial), "destierro" (extradition) or "encierro" (incarceration). This measure was applied to even former presidents, like Alvaro Obregon –murdered-, Luis Echeveria, Gustavo Diaz Ordaz and Carlos Salinas de Gortari –extradited- (ibid).

The rituals that took place in the process of acquiring, possessing and transferring power from one individual to another constituted a very important aspect of Mexican *Presidencialismo*. In this sense, the political calendar was fundamental, as noted by Philip (1992, 4). "Mexican presidential elections are held in early July of the sixth presidential year and the new president is inaugurated in December." (ibid) More important than the outcome of the elections was the nomination of the official candidate, since the elections were considered a mere formality. The PRI presidential candidate was chosen from a group of potential runners denominated as "tapados" ('the covered ones') as it was all conducted in secrecy. The selection usually happened between September and October of the year previous to the elections and was thus referred to as the "destape" ('uncover'). Philip (1992, 4) notes that the time between the "destape" and the elections were very difficult for the incumbent president in turn as he had to face going from political pre-eminence to a state of semi-retirement; many presidents tried to prolong their tenure by choosing a subordinate successor, yet others were happy to depart quietly. Another issue departing presidents had to face is that the problems generated during their administration accumulated, so they had to react to the likely outburst of a political crisis.

The "tapados" were usually members of the cabinet, which was also chosen by the president in office. Throughout the administration, political figures tried to "catch the presidential eye", as described by Philip (1992, 5), but they had to do it very discretely, as being up-front about presidential aspirations was counter-productive. By the same token, presidents aimed to keep everyone guessing in order to secure his own power and to prevent any clashes between aspirants. Philip (1992, 5) notes that sometimes presidents set tests before choosing a minister. After the "destape", presidents aimed to have other political figures rally around the chosen candidate in order to ensure unity

within the party by rejoining all contending political factions. Outgoing presidents would seek to create continuity, while the incoming president would try to introduce changes, so that he could be seen as the man in charge, thus resisting pressures from his predecessor, as observed by Philip (1992, 6). This was known as the “rupture ritual”. Serbolov (2003b, 5) notes that this resembles the statements of Machiavelli, who suggests that the first thing the Prince must do is to hang “the most corrupt one”, and Mexican presidents have usually done that by incarcerating an important political figure from the previous administration. The most extreme example of this, and one that shows the growing conflicts within the PRI party, occurred when president Zedillo (1994-2000) incarcerated Raul Salinas de Gortari, brother of ex-president Carlos Salinas (1988-1994).

Nevertheless, many of the formal attributes of the Mexican president described by Carpizo have changed during the last two decades. Namely, since 1994, the figure of the Mayor of Mexico City was created as a publicly elected post, and it has always been held by members of the PRD party. In the current PAN administration, the majority of seats in Congress are held by the opposition, which is now comprised mainly of the PRI and PRD parties.

Roderic Ai Camp (1999) describes the Mexican political system of the PRI era as comprising of the following features. Firstly, there was a dominant one-party state in the throes of a multi-party conversion. Secondly, the executive branch was controlled for over seven decades by an increasingly narrow elite leadership. Thirdly, the electoral process depended on the executive branch. Fourthly, there was a semi-authoritarian political/religious culture flavoured by significant democratic principles. Fifthly, the executive branch dominated the federal system, which depended on the executive for financial resources. Sixthly, the judicial branch exercised little or no influence in the national government. However, he also describes some of the aspects in which Mexican politics have changed. Since 1996 the electoral process acquired autonomy and integrity. The one-party hegemony has been replaced by a three-party system. The legislative branch became active in policy-making since the opposition got control of the Congress

in 1997. Finally, the political leadership of the PRI party was increasingly divided in regards to what type of leadership and what ideological orientation should prevail in Mexico after 2000 (ibid).

Current Mexican Politics

Since September 2000 Mexico has been under the government National Action Party presidents: Vicente Fox Quezada for the period of 2000-2006, and currently Felipe Calderon for the period 2006-2012. Fox won the July 2000 federal elections, considered the fairest in Mexican contemporary history, as previous ones were usually suspected of being fraudulent. Prior to this administration, members of the PRI party held the presidency since the end of the Revolution. Traditionally, the PRI party had the monopoly of power in Mexico, and while not being a dictatorship, it was regarded as an authoritarian form of government. However, Mexico is undergoing a slow process of democratisation. Lawson (2002, 127) notes that the advances that Mexico has achieved towards democracy are:

- an electoral system worthy of emulation by established democracies
- a legislature that routinely rejects presidential initiatives
- an independent Supreme Court that renders definitive judgements on the constitutionality of laws and resolves disputes between different branches of government
- a media establishment that, though conservative and oligopolistic, is markedly more open and investigative than in past eras, and
- an overwhelming number of Mexicans in favour of democracy over any other form of government.

However, according to Serbolov (2003, 1) the future is not promising for Mexico. Vicente Fox, he argues, continued to accumulate political defeats, and his government was paralysed by Congress. Serbolov believes that Mexican politicians are immature when it comes to reaching consensus and that a democracy cannot function without democratic leaders as in the case of Mexico, where politicians are unable to give up their

personal interests over the national ones (ibid). Serbolov (2003, 6) argues that Fox took out the PRI from 'Los Pinos', the residence of Mexican presidents, but he did not take the PRI out of power. The PRI retained 48% of popular election posts, hence preserving the majority in Congress and most of governors and municipal presidents. This situation barely changed after the 2006 federal elections. Therefore, the government is divided, the PAN has the executive branch, but the legislative is held by the PRI and the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD). As during the PRI regime local governors were almost like employees of the PRI president, nowadays Serbolov (2003, 6) reckons, governors have much more power than their predecessors did, as previously they were limited by the power of the president. Finally, Serbolov (2003, 6) notes, it was not Fox who incited all the dissent in current Mexican politics, as it has always existed throughout Mexican history. Any president in Fox's circumstances would have faced the same problems, he argues. What made it more complicated for Fox was his political inexperience, his lack of political strategists and the fear that old-school PRI politicians, known as 'dinosaurs', would react should Fox dare incarcerate the most corrupt of them (Serbolov, 2003, 6).

According to Meyer (in Levy and Bruhn, 2001, xix), the central characteristic of the old authoritarian regime was political stability. This, he argues, was a characteristic prized by Mexican elites and the outside world, "especially the United States, since, among other things, it allowed for great security along its southern border during the Cold War" (ibid). However, the price of stability was lack of liberty for the Mexican society, an antidemocratic civil society, "the institutionalization of corruption in all levels of government, the uncontrolled growth of organizations linked to drug trafficking, and, finally, the consolidation of great social inequality" (Meyer in Levy and Bruhn, 2001, xix). Carrying this baggage, Meyer argues, Mexican society has the challenge of constructing new democratic institutions that would be compatible with the internationalisation of the Mexican economy (ibid).

So, while Mexico cannot yet be described as an established democracy, there have been some clear steps forward towards democratisation. However, in order to understand how

Mexico moved from a totalitarian one-state party government, where presidents had unlimited power and could even designate their successors, to a system of fair and open electoral competition, it is important to understand the origins of the PRI party, how it functioned and fluctuated throughout its seventy-one years in power and what were the circumstances that led to its defeat in the 2000 elections. The latter would also explain why some instances of the Mexican political culture have not become more democratic, and have thus failed to reinforce the so-called democratic transition Mexico is undergoing; and why PAN administrations have faced many challenges that were foreign to the PRI government.

The victory of the PAN party represents a discontinuity with all the practices of Mexican *Presidencialismo*, mainly because it was rooted in the one-state party system and hegemony of the PRI party, which has now been transferred into an opposition party (albeit one with extensive political control in the provinces). However, some authors argue that there were some continuities in the way power was passed on to Vicente Fox from Ernesto Zedillo, but also that some of the political defeats of the first PAN administration came from not adopting similar measures to those taken by previous PRI presidents. These arguments will be addressed in the section of this chapter dedicated to the current PAN administrations.

Mexican Political Opposition

An account of the Mexican opposition is best understood if we part from describing the importance of the presence of the PRI party in all areas of the Mexican political, economic and social life. Most of these characteristics have been described earlier in this chapter, so this section will begin by describing what the PRI represents as a political party, rather than as the one-state party that it once was. Rubio (1998, 28) notes that “The PRI is the most difficult party to define and characterize because it has been a political system in its own right”.

The PRI party was created in 1929 with the aim of getting together all the conflicting tendencies of the post-revolutionary Mexico, as means of institutionalising the revolutionary fight and thus ensuring political stability by solving differences within the party. So, from its early days the PNR-PRM-PRI party had a wide range of sometimes contradictory ideological tendencies under its umbrella. Yet officially, it was conceived as a party of the centre-left. It drew on the Rousseauian notion that the state is more than the sum of the collective, therefore advocating that official bureaucracy had the role to establish the path to development (Rubio, 1998; 28). So the PRI advocated a state presence in all aspects of political, economic and social life though the construction of a large government apparatus comprising state corporations, unions and businesses; protectionist and paternalist economic policies as well as a strong feeling of nationalism. While these policies were pursued by early administrations, the shift of power between groups of the left and right wings of the PRI increasingly led to the adoption of neoliberal policies and decreased the role of the state in all aspects. The impact of this situation eventually fractured the PRI party when the left wing members quit the party to form opposition party PRD. Furthermore, there have been growing differences between old-guard PRI members, known as 'dinosaurs', and the new generation of university-educated, neoliberal advocates known as 'technocrats'. As the PRI-government was for most of the 20th Century a one-state party, Ai Camp (2003; 210) notes that since July 2000, the PRI party was forced to cut its ties to the State and to begin to operate as an independent political organisation.

A wide range of 'ghost' political parties was created by the PRI itself in order to simulate plurality in politics. But true opposition to the PRI only came from the right conservative PAN party, created in 1939. Yet, it was not until the government of Adolfo Lopez Mateos (1958-1964) that according to Kaufman and Rubio (1998, 130) there seemed to be 'a greater participation of minority parties in the political arena. However, they did not transcend, as it was only until 1988 that a party from the opposition won an election, when PAN candidate Ernesto Ruffo Appel became governor of northern state of Baja California.

Judith A. Hellman (1986; 246) notes that the PRI dominance was not checked by vigorous opposition parties. Although they existed, opposition parties did not play the role associated with them in established democracies. They were so close to the government that they were often referred to as a “kept” opposition (ibid). Indeed, they were key components to the clientelistic system laid out by the PRI regime, as they were often financed by the government itself and at election times they would either support the official candidate or play a provisional opposition in order bargain for patronage positions, loans, contracts or other favours. The most extreme of these situations occurred during the 1976 elections when PRI candidate Jose Lopez Portillo had no opposition candidates to compete against (ibid, also see Ai Camp, 2003 below). As opposition did not seem like a serious alternative, abstentions rose during the 1960s and 1970s.

According to Lopez-Ortiz (2005), the Mexican left has been a creation of the PRI party. Yet the PRI ensured that the left was so full of vices that it would not constitute a real alternative to its power. So, Lopez-Ortiz (2005) argues, left wing parties were quickly accepted and supported by the PRI party. Intellectually, Lopez-Ortiz (2005) observes, the Mexican left has played three roles: enunciation, contest and consonance. Firstly, he notes that the left enunciates because its criticisms are only diagnostic as they do not offer alternative proposals under the argument that that was the government’s duty and that as opposition parties they would not do ‘errands’ for the system. While in established democracies opposition parties would create shadow cabinets, in Mexico the concept was unknown, thus stunting the growth of the political culture of opposition parties. Hence, the left praises activism and rejects pragmatism (ibid). Secondly, the left contests, that is, opposes, all policies of the government in turn as an expression of resentment rather than as a way to struggle for common goals. Thirdly, the left exercises consonance, by this Lopez-Ortiz (2005) means that members of the left wing parties are always on message, so political dialogue and self-criticism of the party are forbidden.⁷

⁷ For example, Lopez-Ortiz (2005) observes that the directives of the PRD can come up with a claim like “there were 12 million voters deleted from the voters’ roll”. Then all the journalistic apparatus of the PRD would announce to all newspapers that 12 million voters were deleted, and

He also notes that 'labels' are a common practice in the left rhetoric, for example, they would say that a policy is bad because it is 'salinista' and that another one is good because it is 'cardenista', but with no analysis to support such claims⁸. These shortcomings of the left have made it an undemocratic alternative, which is why the left had been so valued by the PRI. However, this gave room for the right to evolve as a real alternative to power more adherent to democratic principles.

Roderic Ai Camp (2003, 2005) notes that parties are usually created from disgruntled establishment elites, either by persons who have their political ambitions cut short, or as a matter of policy differences, and, in the case of the creation of the PAN party, it was the latter. He argues that the PAN party was a reaction against the statist, populist economic policies of President Cardenas (1934-1940). For several years the PAN only put candidates forward on the local level and only had presidential candidates from the 1958 elections onwards, with the exception of the 1976 elections, when it withdrew from the presidential contest as a protest against the monopoly of the PRI (Ai Camp, 2003, 205). Throughout the years the ideological tendencies of the PAN party have fluctuated from a conservative, pro-business, pro-church, to its current centre-right position (ibid).

The third most important party in Mexican politics is the PRD. It was constructed around a set of small leftist parties created in the 1970s and a group of PRI dissidents led by Cuauhtemoc Cardenas and Porfirio Munoz Ledo, originally known as the National Democratic Front (FDN). Ideologically, the PRD has tried to mix orthodox left-wing Marxist politics with a lighter version of statist philosophy coming from the left wing of the PRI (Rubio, 1998, 29). The conflict within the PRI that led to the resignation of Cardenas from the party comes from the fact that he was not appointed the presidential candidate for the 1988 elections (ibid). He then ran as candidate of the FDN, which eventually became the PRD. But Cardenas was not the only member of the PRI who left the official party to run for office as a member of the PRD. As Ai Camp (2003, 208)

with no further analysis, claim that they lost the elections because of those 12 million voters in question.

notes, many political figures resigned the PRI and joined the PRD to contend in gubernatorial races in 1998, provoking a negative reaction amongst many PRD leaders.

It must be noted that the first highly competitive elections in Mexico were those of 1988 when despite severe claims of fraud, PRI candidate Carlos Salinas de Gortari was declared winner. Some even argue that the victor of the elections was Cuauhtemoc Cardenas Solorzano, a former PRI party governor of Michoacan and son of PRI President General Lazaro Cardenas (see Ai Camp, 2003, 254-255; and Oppenheimer, 1997). In consequent elections, claims of fraud became a tool for bargaining for favours from the dominant PRI party rather than a way to demand a position in the political spectrum of Mexico, thus constituting another characteristic of the clientelistic networks endorsed by the PRI regime.

McCann and Lawson, (2003) note that since the late 1980s opposition parties like PAN and PRD have had over 50% of the votes in national elections, and this led the way to the PAN victory in 2000. They also note that while these changes in the political arena have brought “new possibilities for voters, they have also created a more complex and confusing political context” (ibid). For example, the way the presidential figure was conceived changed a lot due to the reforms promoted by President Zedillo, which means he could either be seen as yet another example of PRI dominance, a president who imposed his reforms over national politics, but also as a reformer who aimed to transform the old regime (ibid). McCann and Lawson (2003) acknowledge that prior to year 2000 even though the PAN and PRD were national players, they did not represent a true political alternative, rather an expression of the level of voters’ disagreement with the regime. In this respect, the PRD represented an intense rejection while the PAN was an indication of a moderate opposition.

According to McCann and Lawson (2003) the neoliberal reforms applied during the 1980s and the 1990s presumably divided the base of the once nationalistic PRI, while

⁸ He refers to ‘salinista’ as coming from President Salinas de Gortari, and ‘cardenista’ as following the ideas of Cuauhtemoc Cardenas.

both PRD and PAN “moved substantially toward the centre during the 1990s”. Their view is shared by Rubio (1998, 16) who notes that the reforms implemented by President Zedillo allowed for greater electoral competition, thus limiting access to power through traditional methods to members of the PRI party (i.e. party loyalty or active party membership), and indeed during his administration technical competence was a more valuable credential for political promotion. Added to this, economic reforms reduced the chances of gaining wealth through corruption. By conducting these reforms, Zedillo deepened the fractures within the PRI party. While dinosaurs in both the PRI and PRD could have taken advantage of the spread of power they generated, they were held back from doing so as the reforms also gave way to a more public political life. Rubio (1998, 18) argues, nowadays a good deal of political life takes place outside the control of the government or political parties, it happens in the media or through the autonomous IFE. Consequently, opposition parties like the PAN and PRD got a better chance to have their views aired (ibid).

There is a geographic divide in the voting trends for the three major parties PRI, PAN and PRD. Klesner (1995, in Ai Camp, 2003, 201) observes that “instead of a three-party system, two separate party systems seem to be developing in Mexico. In the north and west, the PAN and the PRI compete. In the areas south and east of the capital, excepting Yucatan, the PRD is the PRI’s main adversary”. As noted in the beginning of this chapter, while there are eleven official political parties in Mexico, only the PRI, PAN and PRD govern the thirty-two states and have control over Congress, whereas participation of the other eight parties is minimal if it exists at all.

2000 Presidential elections

According to Smith (2003), the Mexican presidential elections of July 2000 constituted the “Latin American equivalent of the toppling of the Berlin Wall”, as for the first time in 71 years the PRI party was defeated in a clean and peaceful election. The presidential elections of year 2000 saw the PRI presidential candidate being defeated for the first time in history. The victor was PAN party candidate Vicente Fox. Three years earlier,

the PRI party lost its majority in Congress, meaning that gradually, the PRI party was removed from office “in every level of government” (Moreno and Mendez, 2002).

However, that was not the first time the PRI party was challenged in presidential elections, as in 1988 the victory of Carlos Salinas de Gortari came under attack for fraud after the system used for vote counting ‘crashed’. One year before that, in 1987, the PRI party had a major split, and the faction that left the PRI party eventually turned into the PRD party. Then in 1989 the first state governor from a party other than PRI was elected in Baja California, the winning candidate was from the PAN party (Moreno and Mendez, 2002). Further reforms in the electoral system and the creation of the IFE were the lead up to the victory of Vicente Fox from the Alliance for Change, a coalition between the PAN party and the Green Party which obtained 43% of the votes (ibid).

Ai Camp (2003, 197) argues that the “victory of a party other than the PRI essentially stood the Mexican political model on its head, destroying permanently the incestuous, monopolistic relationship between the state and the party”. He also notes that the victory of Vicente Fox was a response to longer-trends in Mexican politics: regionalism, urbanisation and an increased level of economic and social development (ibid). As noted earlier, the PRI party gradually lost positions in government, as elections became more competitive. Ai Camp (2003, 198-199) notes a strange phenomenon in Mexican politics: while in other countries economic growth increases support for the governing party, in Mexico the opposite has happened. So economic growth translated into support for the opposition, as happened in the states with the highest per capita income, like the Federal District, Nuevo Leon, Baja California and Mexico State. This has occurred firstly because the PRI was much better organised in rural areas, and low-income states are mostly agrarian (Ai Camp, 2003; 1999). Secondly, educated Mexicans are more likely to vote for the opposition and they tend to live in high-income states. Thirdly, there are fewer reports of fraud in voting urban centres located in high-income states (ibid).

The geographic location of voters has also affected their views on democracy and their voting tendencies, as noted by Ai Camp (2003, 200). The author argues that voters who live close to the United States are more likely to regard the Mexican system as undemocratic and are more likely to support the PAN party⁹. As mentioned earlier, there is a geographic divide in the allocation of votes for the three main parties, and Ai Camp (2003, 201) notes that even in the 2000 elections, the PAN party did not win a single district in nine states. Other historical issues rooted in certain geographical locations also influence political tendencies, such as revolutionary ideas regarding peasant lands in Morelos, or strong Catholicism in Guanajuato, Jalisco and Michoacan; have made these states more prone to vote for the opposition.

The level of education of voters was another determining variable in the voting tendencies of the 2000 elections (Ai Camp 2003, 202). Of the total of Mexicans who voted in the 2000 elections, 58% had completed secondary or higher education and they voted mostly for Fox, “who received 42.5 percent of the vote nationally, obtained 49, 53, and 60 percent of the secondary, preparatory and university educated voters, respectively” (ibid). In contrast, PRI candidate Francisco Labastida did well with voters with a sixth grade or lower education level, though they only accounted for forty percent of all voters (ibid).

The charisma and personality of Vicente Fox was paramount to his victory, as he was not evaluated by the voters in the light of his professional abilities. Ai Camp (2003, 203) argues that it is possible that the personality of Vicente Fox was more important to the victory of PAN than the party itself. Fox changed the image of the PAN and strengthened its appeal through the organisation Friends of Fox (ibid). Vicente Fox also captured the vote of first-time voters, those aged 18-24 and who accounted for 18% of all votes, the largest single age cohort of voters (ibid). Fifty percent of the votes of this group were for Fox. The only age group in which Fox did not do better than his

⁹ Ai Camp (2003; 201) also notes that Mexicans living abroad have requested the right to vote by absentee ballot, and that observers argue that the refusal for such a request had come from the fact that there was a high possibility that the majority of them would vote for opposition parties.

competitors was the over 55 year old voters, who voted largely for the PRI candidate (ibid).

Finally, another influential factor in the victory of the PAN party in the 2000 presidential elections, observed Ai Camp (2003, 204), was the electorate's gradual move to the centre-right. While traditionally coming from the right, Ai Camp (ibid) notes that now the PAN is identified as the centre-right party while the PRI party is acknowledged as the right wing party. And in the year 2000 elections the PAN party appealed to more than half of the voters of four out of five of each ideological categories (left, centre-left, centre, centre-right and right) (ibid).

PAN administration

Although President Vicente Fox was a vibrant charismatic presidential candidate, his presidency was not as dynamic. Unlike PRI presidents before him, President Fox did not have the vast amount of powers of his predecessors, mainly because of a divided Congress, which slowed down the advances in the agenda he proposed. As Smith (2003) notes, during the PRI regime, as the majority of Congress was also from the PRI party, presidential initiatives were 'rubber-stamped', whereas president Fox had to negotiate in order to build cross-party alliances, furthermore, he did not "even enjoy the full support of his own party. And neither the once-mighty Institutional Revolutionary Party nor the smaller Party of the Democratic Revolution seems interested in providing constructive opposition".

According to Moreno and Mendez (2002),

"After the 2000 presidential election, Vicente Fox changed the style of the Mexican presidency in many ways, but perhaps the most significant change was not one of style, but of substance. The Mexican presidency has become more open and less effective. It is difficult for public policy and prospective legislation to move from a presidential initiative or good will to an actual government action or instituted law."

Or as Ai Camp (1999) puts it in regards of how there was no clear separation of powers, Mexico was “a one-party, one-branch system dominated by an omnipotent presidency”, which means presidential decisions were traditionally transformed into policy by the supportive legislative branch.

The election of Vicente Fox, according to Ai Camp (2003, 258) was the final stage of democratisation that Mexico faced. Yet in order to fully achieve democracy, he argues that there are issues to be addressed, such as “policy debates and political competition, citizen participation, accountability for upholding the rule of law and representative mechanisms, civilian control over the military, and respect of views and rights of others” (ibid). Ai Camp (2003, 258-259) notes that the presidency remains the most important institutional force in Mexican society, yet that left Fox with a dilemma, as performing as a paternalistic president would constitute a continuity with the PRI regime, but allowing complete autonomy to the states could bring problems in the case that some states follow less democratic policies. The latter, according to Serbolov (2003, 6) was exactly what happened, since, by no longer being accountable to the president, he argues that state governors became ‘state kings’ with unlimited power.

One historic deficiency of the Mexican democratic transition was in regards of human rights. In 1988 Amnesty International declared that “Mexico is a country with staggering levels of political violence” (in Ai Camp, 2003, 259). Despite the creation of the National Commission for Human Rights by president Salinas (1988-1994), there is still a sentiment of dissatisfaction within the citizens, as noted by Ai Camp (ibid). As a matter of fact, the presence of drug cartels made 2004 a peak year of murders of journalists, a retrograde step in the protection of human rights during the PAN administration (see Reporters Sans Frontiers, 2007; CEPET, 2006).

Serbolov (2003, 1) argues that the Fox administration had been but a long chain of political defeats for the president. Firstly, Fox could not put forward the political and economic reforms he intended because he failed to obtain the support from Congress, in which opposition parties had the majority. Secondly, he could not have a plural cabinet

because the PRD did not agree to take part in it. Thirdly, Fox failed to solve the conflict in Chiapas. Fourthly, Fox's tax reforms were rejected. Fifthly, the PAN party lost many votes in the local elections of the following years (2002-2005). Sixthly, the reform in regards of energy was also rejected. Seventhly, there was an economic recession from 2001 to 2002, followed by a period of recovery until 2003, when stagnation set in. Eighthly, Fox's health had not been at its best, he had spinal cord surgery and there were allegations of him being on Prozac. Ninthly, there had been crises in his cabinet, such as the resignation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2003. Tenthly, Fox had issues with political scandals regarding funding for his political campaign and because of the intrusion of his wife, Martha Sahagun, in political matters of the executive. Finally, the 'war against terror' diminished the importance of Mexico in the USA's foreign agenda and agreements between both countries, such as the one dealing with migration, were frozen.

The problems between Fox and the democratic transition, according to Serbolov (2003b, 1) began on the day of the presidential elections of July 2000. He argues that that day there were many concealed agreements between then president Zedillo and Vicente Fox. The agreement Fox-Zedillo covered three areas: there should be no changes to the technocratic neoliberal model, no member of the PRI party should be prosecuted for corruption, and there should be no constitutional reforms, especially those that would regard the one-state party as illegal (ibid). In exchange of all these, Zedillo offered Fox a smooth transferral of power and he included Fox and his collaborators-to-be in the presidential pay-roll, thus paying them salaries in advance to the date in which they would take office.

Zedillo knew that the PRI party would not be willing to give up the presidency to an opposition party as argued by Serbolov (2003, 2)¹⁰. So as soon as he noted that the vote counting was favouring Fox, Zedillo began to negotiate with him, as Fox thought he would win the elections, but did not think the PRI would accept it (ibid). Since Zedillo

¹⁰ A famous motto of the PRI 'dinosaurs' was 'we will not lose in the polls what we won with weapons'.

had caused a lot of discontent within the party, particularly with the Salinas family, he had to secure himself protection against them, and he aimed to get it from Vicente Fox in exchange for the presidency, as agreed in telephone conversations, Serbolov (2003, 2) observes. Before the voting was even finished, Zedillo demanded PRI candidate Labastida accept his defeat in public, followed by Zedillo who declared on television that the PRI had lost the elections even before the IFE made any official announcements (ibid). In addition to the four recommendations made by Zedillo to Fox, he also received warnings from Mexican boards of businessmen, Wall Street and Washington that he was not to make any amendments to the economy, even though he received the country in a state of crisis and recession (ibid). So in this way, Serbolov (2003, 2-5) notes, the change of government from Zedillo to Fox constituted continuity with previous transitions of power, as personal and obviously illegal agreements were made between the outgoing and incoming presidents that would on the one hand protect the departing leader, but on the other limit the incoming one. However, unlike presidents before him, who exercised their absolute power even against those who transferred it to them, Fox did not dare to break his agreements with Zedillo, something that would have allowed him to manoeuvre with respect to other aspects of Mexican politics, like corruption, improving the economy and positioning himself as a strong leader.

Mexican Media System

a. Press during the PNR-PRM-PRI regime (1929-2000)

"I don't pay to be hit"

The relationship between the media and the government during the PRI regime evolved from one administration to the next. Indeed, as shown previously, the politics of the PRI were not monolithic as the party served as an umbrella for differing political groups, and these changing conditions shaped the media system throughout time.

During the 71 years of the PRI party dominance the press depended largely on financial aid from the government that came in the form of the government purchasing of advertisement and by the concession of newsprint paper, which was often not even paid

for. As a matter of fact, Carreno (2000) notes that during the PRI regime up until the 1970s, the Mexican media was sustained not through the amount of copies they issued or the coverage they had, but the authorisations, concessions and any sort of financial and material support they received from the public sector, in other words, it was not the market itself in terms of audiences and advertisers but the government that made the media a profitable business. In this respect, Trejo (1999) notes four main deficiencies of the Mexican press during the PRI regime: it sought for advertisement, not readership, it relied on the use of gacetillas¹¹, it was sensational and its analyses were improvised and the information was uniform throughout the different publications.

Nevertheless, the wide range of interests and ideologies within the PRI left some gaps for flexibility in the press, therefore, different factions of the PRI had links with different media, there were regional and personal divisions which meant that at times of disagreement in the elite the press enjoyed greater independence even in the official media, something that also happened at the early periods of each new government, while the new president was undertaking reformist initiatives (Lawson, 2002, 56). Furthermore, as Hallin (2000, 98-99) describes, Mexican politics shift direction “coinciding with the transition from one president to the next”, and this “manoeuvrability in part explains how the PRI has succeeded in identifying itself with the populist and nationalist symbols of the Mexican revolution, even as it has drawn close to big business, both national and international” (ibid). Lawson (2002, 27) argues that there were times in which there appeared to be conflicts between the government and the media, when they were actually conflicts between different factions of the government, and these were reflected in the media as they often belonged to members of the political elite. The real problem to the regime of press control was actually that of the emergence of independent media that refused to accept government subsidies and was able to survive without them. In this instance, as traditional clientelistic practices did not work, the regime resorted to traditional censorship by exercising “manipulation of access, blacklisting, harassment and outright repression” (Lawson, 2002, 28).

¹¹ Lawson (2002, 31) defines gacetillas as “paid inserts typically prepared by the government and disguised as a bona fide newspaper article”.

As Monsivais (2003) puts it, the press was aimed at “one reader”, that one reader being the president. In this context the president was treated as untouchable in media contents. Any sign of criticism was not allowed and prosecuted if it ever appeared. Corruption and bribes were common, especially since the salaries of journalists were low and they supplemented their income from the “gifts” they obtained from government officials in exchange for favours (i.e. turning a blind eye when they discovered something devious, not giving importance to actions pursued by the opposition or giving a favourable spin to the coverage of their activities).

According to Lawson (2002, 28), media owners adhered to the clientelistic system of Mexican politics out of convenience as it worked for them: as long as they remained supportive of the government, they were ensured lucrative concessions, government subsidies, and protection from the emergence of competence and business opportunities outside the media itself.

b. Vicente Fox and the PAN administration

‘I don’t read newspapers, so I won’t get depressed’

In 2000, for the first time in 71 years, the PRI party lost the Presidential elections. Vicente Fox, the Presidential candidate of the ‘Alliance for Change’ coalition of parties, which included the PAN and the PVEM parties won the elections. Apart from early 20th Century elections, the elections of year 2000 were the first in over 50 years not accused of fraudulent practices by the PRI party.

The change of government implies many changes in the traditional Mexican political life. However, a new non-PRI President is unlikely to hold the same faculties as those that the PRI party did. For a start, since the Legislative power is now held by the opposition –the PRI is still an important party, now in its oppositional role-, rather than by the State party, this restricts the power of the Executive, hence the Legislature constitutes a real counterweight to it, instead of an ally, as in the previous regime.

Despite these changes, in regards to President Fox's relation with the media, Carreño (2001) notes that media-state relations in Mexico are archaic. Carreño (ibid) points out two facts in the current media-state relations that resemble those of the PRI era: first, a few hours after taking up his position as President, Fox also took over the television's major rating news programme where he was invited. President Fox assumed the role of the programme's conductor, who ended up as a background figure, and he himself introduced the members of his cabinet, and ended up organising a 'cheer' for his new government. This situation, as Carreño (2001) points out, was very similar to that in which President Miguel Alemán orchestrated the first transmission of Mexican television 50 years ago. Second, during the first transmission of the weekly radio message of the President, Vicente Fox proposed to exercise his Presidential prerogative to tell the media what deserves to be, and what does not deserve to be published, and to repress them for not complying with these precepts. Carreño (2001) argues that this situation is similar to that of repressive PRI governments, such as that of Díaz Ordáz, in the 1960s, but nevertheless, it is extravagant coming from a presumed new democratic regime.

Martínez (2002) although optimistic about the changing role of the print media over the last quarter of a century, believed that the Presidentialist system in the relationship with the media had barely changed in the new government, despite the campaign promises and proposals of Vicente Fox. However, Martínez (2002b) acknowledges that the inertia in the media-state relations in Mexico was not entirely the President's fault, since the "Mexican journalism suffers today a crisis of identity coming from the democratic transition itself". In other words, the Mexican media was so much a part of the old regime that the professionalisation of 'journalism' was widely forsaken and needs to be redefined in order to achieve a democratic media (ibid.).

Conclusion

Several authors argue that the extensive and peculiar power of the PRI party machinery has shaped the Mexican media system. But similarly, it has been noted that changes in the media have had an impact in the way politics is conducted in Mexico, more so when it comes to transformations that have led to the process of democratisation that the country is undergoing. This chapter has described the overall workings of the PRI party dominance through most of the 20th Century, and how its characteristics display patterns of a clientelistic nature. It has also discussed how the power of the PRI began to wane, as well as the rise of opposition parties in the political arena that led to the defeat of the PRI party in the 2000 elections, when the PAN party obtained the presidency.

While aspects that characterised the Mexican government throughout the PRI regime have changed a lot in the last two or three decades, and the fact that another party now holds the presidency, thus challenging the tradition of the Mexican *Presidencialismo*, there are still many challenges towards achieving a complete democratic transition. The clientelistic relationship between the media and the government was closely linked to the permanence of the official party in office during the PRI regime, so the way that relationship works now represents how close Mexico has moved towards establishing a democratic political system. It is important to understand how historical aspects shaped Mexican politics of the twentieth century and how they could carry on influencing them even after the end of the PRI regime. It is also important to fully evaluate what has been considered shifts from authoritarianism towards democratisation, as for example, the policies in regards to the media carried out during the Echeverría administration, where just a façade to regain public support and maintain the status quo. With this in mind, current scholarship of the Mexican media system and the effects of democratisation should be looked at closely in order reach a profound understanding of the processes involved in the transformation of journalism in a system undergoing political changes.

The characteristics of the Mexican political system contribute to understanding how and why the Mexican media system developed the way it did, and how profound transformations in the nature of journalism really are after a period of political change. The following four chapters focus on an analysis of interviews with Mexican journalists. These are followed by two more chapters on the content analysis of two samples taken from different historical periods of news coverage in the Mexican press. The final chapter will present an overview of the results of this research, discuss its limitations and propose areas for further study.

Chapter 3

Analysis of Interviews 1: methodology

The previous chapters have set out the context for examining the development of the Mexican media system. The interview analysis will explore journalists' perceptions of their role in the democratic transition of Mexico, as well as the transformations they have experienced in the way their work is carried out, as this study aims to understand the changes in the Mexican media system as a consequence of government change. Two methodological approaches were employed to achieve this objective: interviews with Mexican journalists and content analysis of newspaper samples from two periods in time. The interviews sought to gather information in relation to five main topics:

- a) journalists' career background,
- b) journalists' experience of editorial constraints,
- c) general information about their working conditions,
- d) how journalists relate to politicians,
- e) their perceptions in regards to democracy.

It is these five issues that have been analysed in the literature relating to Mexican journalism, and that underpin most of the scholarship on this subject.

The analysis of the interviews is presented in this and the next three chapters. The interviews sought to obtain information of a qualitative nature; however numbers emerge as a convenient way to present the data. In order to ease the reading of the text, some tables and vignettes with numerical data will be included in the chapters that analyse the interviews. They are merely illustrative, as most of the time, the information there presented is discussed in the text that precedes or follows them. Nevertheless, there is a comparative element to the information explored in this part of the research, as journalists were asked to discuss how situations changed from the PRI to the PAN governments, and the views of less experienced journalists are also contrasted to the more senior respondents. In these cases, quantifying how many said what contributes to the presentation of the information, without compromising the qualitative aims of the analysis. Appendix 3 presents a matrix of respondents. The presentation of the quotes

and paraphrases will be followed by a number in brackets, to indicate the specific respondent being referred to.

The present chapter outlines the methodology of the interview process. The chapter that follows presents the findings of the first part of the interview, which comprises the themes concerning journalists' work experience and their perceptions on editorial constraints and working conditions. Chapter five will look at the remaining themes covered in the interview in regards to how journalists relate to politicians and journalists' opinions on democracy. Finally, chapter six will compare the findings laid out in chapters three and four of this study with the literature on the Mexican media system in order to identify the similarities and differences between the two.

Methodology

Why semi-structured interviews?

The study aims to focus on journalists' role perceptions. Therefore, the study required a research method that would allow insights to be gained into journalists' working lives and perspectives. Due to its exploratory nature, the chosen method needed to allow participants in the research to describe and elaborate for themselves upon their perceptions, yet focused enough so as to orient responses towards specific topics. Semi-structured interviews were considered a suitable research method for this purpose, as they offer scope for reflexion and exploration on the side of the participant, yet they allow the researcher to focus on pre-defined themes. Furthermore, this method permits the collection of rich qualitative data in a relatively short time, a priced element whilst conducting a piece of doctoral research.

Berger (2000, 112) argues that there are three main ways in which to conduct social research: by observing what people do, by asking what they do, or by analysing texts and artefacts produced by people. Therefore, this study employs two of those types of research methods when analysing journalists' performance, firstly, by enquiring their

role perceptions, and secondly, by analysing the content of the product of journalistic work, in this case, newspaper news items.

According to Berger (2000, 111), an interview is a conversation between a researcher and an informant. Berger defines four types of interviews, informal, unstructured, semi-structured and structured interviews. Interviews “provide us with information that we cannot obtain any other way” (Berger, 2000, 113). “The interview is probing for information that the informant presumably has but may not be conscious or aware of or may not consider important” (Berger, 2000, 113). Similarly, Grinnell and Unrau (2007, 247) argue that interviews as a research method derive from psychoanalysis, therefore, they seek “to probe the interviewees’ deepest feelings and experiences and may well uncover emotions, attitudes and beliefs the interviewee was not even aware of prior to the interview”. Thus highlighting their adequacy for exploring perceptions, which in the case of this study, revolve around the work experience of Mexican journalists.

Berger defines semi-structured interviews as follows: “Here, the interviewer usually has a written list of questions to ask the informant but tries, to the extent possible, to maintain the casual quality found in unstructured interviews.” (2000, 112). In this way, semi-structured interviews still offer flexibility as an unstructured interview does, but at the same time, focus without being restrictive.

As this research aims to compare situations in two time periods relating to journalistic activity and role perceptions, interviews offer several advantages over other ethnographic methods, such as participant observation. Whereas this last method can only observe situations as they occur, interviews can explore respondents’ perceptions from different stages in time, thus allowing them to make observations about the past and the present.

The value of semi-structured interviews for social science research is highlighted by Berger (2000) and Grinnell and Unrau (2007), as discussed above. As for its use in the analysis of journalists’ role perceptions, several authors have resorted to interviews as

their chosen method. To name but a few, Tunstall (1971) carried out unstructured interviews for his study of journalism in Britain, as have done Statham (2008) and Nord (2007) in their respective studies of journalism in Europe and Sweden. The literature review of this thesis discussed the work of several authors who have used interviews as a research method in their studies of the Mexican media system, such as Adler (1993), Lawson (2002), Hughes (2006) and Torres (1997). It is therefore suitable that this study should use interviews, in this case, of the semi-structured type, as a way to further contribute to our understanding of both journalists' role perceptions and the Mexican media system.

The questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed from themes in the literature that pointed towards manifestations of political clientelism in the Mexican media system during the PRI regime, with the intent to compare how often or not such situations still occurred during the PAN party administration. As noted in chapter 1, political clientelism manifests itself in a media system by curtailing journalistic autonomy and professionalization, as media logic merges with that of particular political patrons and serves their interests.

The literature suggests that during the PRI regime media organisations were co-opted with the government, it is also noted that there was a wide range of media organisations and views in them that conformed with the wide assortment of groups that comprised the PRI party, and hence a few levels of criticism were present, though issues concerning core features of the political system remained off-limits to the press (see Lawson, 2002; 25). This situation led to self-censorship and tight editorial lines within the media organisations. When criticism was shown, however, the government quickly stepped in with different control mechanisms, such as direct requests from government officials to media owners and editors, or economic pressures to the media (i.e. withdrawal of concessions, paper supply or advertisement, etc).

As for journalists themselves, there are also accounts of co-optation in the form of bribes, commonly known as "chayotes". These took several forms but generally they

represent gifts paid in cash or in kind. Media organisations even encouraged clientelistic relationships between journalists and the beats they covered, as journalists were given a commission from advertisement purchased by their source. Low salaries and lack of professionalisation are attributed as the main reasons these situations occurred. However, for journalists who were critical of the system, there are accounts of intimidation, repression and even murders. Such a state of affairs, it is argued, made self-censorship common-place in Mexican journalism.

Finally, the government had control over the media through the access of information it granted journalists. As argued by Lawson (2002; 38), media in Mexico traditionally practised press-release journalism, simply chronicling government announcements and activities with no verification or follow up. When journalists were more sceptical or investigative, the regime controlled information and access to it to ensure its “spin on events and denying copy to independent journalists” (ibid). Furthermore, Lawson (2002; 39) argues “As with access to official advertising and other funds, access to official information was granted selectively in order to reward sympathetic media and punish independent ones”.

Although it is argued in the literature that many features of the relationship between the media and the government began to change during the last administrations of the PRI regime, the interviews sought to find out how often journalists indeed experienced the situations described above and whether or not they are different in the subsequent PAN administration.

The interview consisted of a set of 15 basic questions that aim to find out journalists’ impressions on issues that the literature suggest were common limitations to journalism during the PRI regime and signs of a clientelistic relationship between the media and the government. These vary from editorial constraints coming from within the media to those imposed by the government, professional and financial limitations, such as low salaries and co-optation between journalists and political figures, to limits on access of information. Further to this, journalists were also asked their views about democracy and

what they considered their role to be within the context of a democratic transition, in order to understand if and how these views differed between those interviewed (See appendix 3). The questionnaire aimed to seek evidence of how journalists perceive limitations to their profession that the literature suggests would originate from a clientelistic nature. For example, if they have had experience of media organisations they had worked having received instructions from political parties or politicians, or of media organisations actively pursuing to promote or disparage particular political figures, as this would suggest the media is 'paraelling' politics, as termed by Hallin and Mancini (2004). Political clientelism also indicates that journalism is elite oriented, so by understanding whom do journalists write for, or the audience target that media organisations have as a whole, we can also gain an understanding regarding the extent to which clientelism shapes journalistic activities. Furthermore, Hallin and Mancini (2004) argue that clientelism prevents journalism as a corps to develop common shared values, so by comparing the perceptions of journalists from a variety of age groups and different media organisations, we can gauge their levels of agreement around certain concepts and experiences, such as what they understand for 'censorship' or 'bribes'.

Sample selection

This study aims to compare the role perceptions of journalists working in two different time periods, the PRI regime and the new PAN party administrations in order to elucidate how manifestations of political clientelism vary from one period to another. As the study looks to examine the relationship between journalism and politics in Mexico, a requirement for the sample was that the interviewed journalists had to have experience of covering political beats, and hence be able to comment on their personal experience of relating to politicians for the purposes of their work.

Thirty seven Mexican journalists were interviewed in a period of six weeks, between March and April 2006 in Mexico City. However, more than fifty journalists were approached either by email or telephone, yet many of them refused to take part in this study or failed to show up when it was agreed to meet. Initial approaches were made by

reviewing the relevant sections of online newspapers¹, and looking through news items in which authors e-mail addresses were published. An e-mail was sent to such addresses introducing the researcher and requesting collaboration with this project; the message also advised on the dates in which the researcher was to visit Mexico, so as to be able to arrange for a meeting. Nearly half (17) of all contacts were secured this way. Three other contacts were obtained thanks to the assistance of a previous academic colleague of the researcher. The remaining contacts were achieved thanks to a snowball sampling strategy, whereas at the end of the interview, interviewees were asked to provide contacts of other journalists who fulfilled the profile required for this research. This proved a successful and adequate tactic, as once rapport was obtained, it was easy for the researcher to lead on the kind of contacts she required (i.e. ‘young’ journalists who could comment mostly on the PAN party administration, or ‘experienced’ journalists, whose experience span mostly through the PRI regime). In such a way, the researcher gained access to senior journalists (i.e. newspaper/magazine editors and/or owners), and even retired journalists.

Those interviewed range in age and experience from those who have careers of over 15 years to those that started working as journalists during the Vicente Fox administration (2000-2006). There are some exceptional cases of journalists who have careers of 20, 30, even 40 years long. This wide range of views, would allow the comparison of perceptions between the younger and the older journalists, in other words, from those who worked during what the literature suggests were the most repressive times of the PRI regime, to the political changes engendered by the decline of the PRI regime and the new PAN administration.

Ethical considerations

Grinnell and Unrau (2007, 247) are advocates of the use of semi-structured interviews when the researcher is working on his own or in a group of two. This further enhances

¹ For example, sections entitled or related to: “Politics”, “Mexico City” –named in some newspapers as “Capital” or “City”-, “National”, “First”, etc., from newspapers such as Reforma,

the value of this type of research method within a PhD project such as this one. Although these authors do point out that in case of a lone researcher there is an increased “hazard of interviewer bias when the researcher is both the hypothesis formulator and the interviewer” (ibid, 247). This is why they recommend simplicity in the instrument, as this allows the interviewer to give more attention to the interviewee, and thus focus on the informants’ responses. As the sections above note, the questionnaire design took this into account by producing an instrument of only 15 basic questions, which were focused enough, yet manageable for a sole interviewer. Another advantage of semi-structured interviews, which also aid the researcher in overcoming interviewer bias, is that during the course of the interview he has the freedom to seek in-depth clarification of interviewees’ answers.

Grinnell and Unrau (2007, 247) make a series of ethical recommendations when using interviews as a research method. They point that the researcher must be competently self-aware, and at the same time, be knowledgeable with his research subject. Having spent well over one year conducting the literature review for this study, in addition to having undergraduate and postgraduate education revolving around matters of mass media and political communication, the interviewer had previous experience of conducting interviews for research purposes, and was fully knowledgeable of the research matter, hence fulfilled both these ethical concerns.

Interviews lasted between 30 minutes for the shortest and 2.5 hours, for the longest, with an average length of 45 minutes. They were carried out in a variety of locations: newsrooms of media organisations, press rooms at governmental and party buildings, cafes and restaurants, as well as the homes of some of the interviewees.

La Jornada, Milenio Diario, El Universal, El Financiero, La Cronica de Hoy, as well as political magazines, such as Proceso, Macroeconomia, Milenio and Forum.

Upon introduction, the researcher briefly presented herself² and reiterated the purposes of her project. Interviews were digitally recorded with the proviso that recording could be stopped at any time, should the interviewee desire to do so, while anonymity was promised. Due to the personal nature of the information respondents provided, and the expressed potential risk to certain individuals should their identity be known, this measure is strictly adhered to in the presentation of the data, as in actual terms, 35 people working in the close knit environment of Mexican political-journalism could be easily identifiable. Furthermore, Mexico has in recent years been noted as the country most dangerous to journalists (Reporters Sans Frontiers, 2007), second to Iraq, with the difference that Mexico is not at war. The highest risk to journalists in Mexico comes not just from politics but from drug traffic, as will be discussed later in the present and the following two chapters. Many journalists in this study expressed concerns about the threat of drug traffic to their profession, alongside its sometimes blurred line with politics, and talked about their personal experience of these situations. In year 2008 alone, there were more than 6,000 drug traffic related murders in Mexico, including those of four journalists. As international organisations such as Reporters Sans Frontiers (2009) and the Committee to Protect Journalists (2009) note, the risk to journalism in Mexico emanating from drug traffic, sometimes in liaison with corrupt politicians and a generalised culture of impunity, is high and pervasive. Hence, the author prefers to err on the side of caution and not reveal data that could lead towards the identification of the people who agreed to take part in this research³.

² At all times I carried with me proof of identity from the University of Sheffield. Furthermore, as I aimed to interview press officers from the Ministry of Interior, I requested my supervisor to issue a letter endorsing my request.

³ Further to the escalation of drug traffic violence in Mexico in recent years, since the interviews were conducted in early 2006, some of the politicians referred to, particularly regarding matters of bans and duress against journalists, have moved on to more prominent government positions, hence enhancing the potential risk which respondents expressed during the interviews. For this reason, I am reluctant to disclose any more information about the informants to that which is contained in the following chapters.

Only journalists with experience in covering political news were approached, which meant that two interviews were discarded as they did not fulfil such requirement⁴, so of the 37 interviews that were carried out, only 35 were considered for analysis.

The context: Journalism in Mexico, matters of circulation and audiences

As noted in the previous two chapters, journalism in Mexico has endured a long tradition of both control and collusion with the government, that predates the PRI regime itself, but that became endemic during seven decade long PRI party rule. A thorough review of the history of the Mexican media is presented in Appendix 2 of this thesis. This section will recapitulate on the wider arguments already discussed and focus on notions of ownership, circulation and audiences, in order to contextualise the environment in which journalists interviewed in this study have grown up and worked.

The PRI and the media

The PRI party aimed to have widespread control of the media, it promoted the figure of a Press Office in every government department, not with the aim to liaise with the media, but to feed it with centrally devised messages. Beat journalists were regularly bribed, and when they refused to comply with governmental requests, they were coerced. Furthermore, the PRI regime resorted to other strategies to keep the media under control, such as the monopoly on the provision of newsprint paper, which was given on credit, or often free, to compliant media organisation, or denied to resistant ones. Other mechanisms include the purchase of government advertisement, of which many newspapers became financially dependent, as they were unable to survive without this stream of income. All this was possible due to a very extensive government system. However, when neo-liberal policies were adopted in the 1980's and the public apparatus began to trim down via privatisation, the ability of the PRI to maintain widespread control of the Mexican nation began to dwindle.

⁴ During the course of these interviews it was clear that the individuals did not fulfil the requirements for this research, despite their initial assertions of experience in conducting journalism and covering political beats. One individual was a former deputy who in the past had

Mexican broadcast media

Mexican television was born a supporter of the PRI regime, as the original concessions were given to then president Miguel Aleman and his associates, who years later became Televisa, the largest media corporation in Mexico and one of the largest in Latin America. Televisa “remained a virtual monopoly until the 1990s” (Lawson, 2002, 29; Esteinou, 2002) with over 80% of the Mexican audiences and most of the advertising revenue. As years went on, Televisa was granted more concessions that allowed it to expand its business to radio, cable and high definition television as well as satellite-capturing stations and Mexican satellite Morelos. Televisa’s business extends to more than just information and entertainment. Besides owning a publishing house, a foreign publications distribution business, a film production company, a home video distribution agency, cable and satellite television networks and one of the largest radio groups, it is also the owner of the football Aztec Stadium, football clubs America, Necaxa and Club San Luis and an investment society firm (Televisa, 2005).

The television system with Televisa was highly monopolistic and remained without competition until 1993 when President Carlos Salinas de Gortari privatised state television group Imevision, which controlled channels 7 and 13. Ricardo Salinas Pliego was the successful bidder for Imevision, which was then turned into Television Azteca; it was later leaked that one of the investors behind Salinas Pliego was Raul Salinas de Gortari, the President’s brother. Nowadays Televisa owns 306 television stations which comprise 80% of audiences and 70% of television advertisement budget (Esteinou, 2003). Television Azteca has 180 television stations and the remaining 20% of audiences and 30% of advertisement. The oligopoly of these two companies means that competition is limited and independent productions have little access to broadcasting outlets.

As for commercial radio in Mexico, Esteinou (2003) observes that 76% of it is concentrated by 14 families and the four biggest chains comprise almost half of the

contributed with opinion pieces in a national newspaper, while the other was a young journalism

stations (47.8%). Etcetera (August 2005) notes that the ambiguity of the legislation regarding broadcast concessions has allowed for concession owners to sell and rent their concessions to the higher bidder thus leading towards an even more concentrated ownership of the media. For example, Radiorama is one of the largest radio groups in the country, it claims to have 214 radio stations in both AM and FM, but according to the Secretary of Communications and Transports, it only has three concessions; the rest have been rented or purchased. Group Radio Formula owns only 39 of the 101 frequencies it operates, yet according to the SCT it only has 28 concessions (Etcetera, 2005). Other big radio groups in Mexico are Televisa Radio, also known as Sistema Radiopolis, Grupo Siete Comunicaciones, Grupo Radio Centro, ACIR, Grupo Imagen and MVS Radio (ibid).

The high concentration of ownership of the media in such a small group, Carreno (2005) argues, constitutes a reverse in the system of power of Mexican media state relations. During the PRI regime, Carreno (2005) observes, it was a case of a cohesive political power before a fragmented power of the media, whereas now it is a case of a cohesive media power facing an intensely fragmented political power.

Riva Palacio (2004, 51) notes that the more educated the population is, the less it tends to watch television or else it tends to watch more cultural television, such as Canal 11, which has increased its audiences in the last few years. Also, he notes that in 2002 television audiences watched television preferably in the evening, and for more than three hours, the preferred channel was Channel 2 of Televisa with 42% of audiences, followed by Channel 13 of TV Azteca, with 39% of audiences, and with surprise he notes that viewers mostly watch news programmes (Riva Palacio, 2004, 51)⁵. As for the radio, Riva Palacio (2004, 51) notes that 81% of Mexicans listen to the radio on an average of 4.5 hours a day. The radio though, remains as a means of entertainment, as

graduate whose only experience was working for an NGO publication.

⁵ For a critical perspective on broadcast media and its portrayal of news, see Bourdieu (1997, 18).

82% of its listeners tune to music stations and only 36% tend to listen to news programmes.

Mexican press

Lawson (2002, 61) notes that between 10 and 15% of the population gather news from newspapers. He notes that in the mid 1990s there were around 200 newspapers and newsmagazines in Mexico, out of which only about twenty of those papers and one magazine sold more than 30,000 copies per issue (Lawson, 2002, 62). The largest publications were concentrated in Mexico City and some other larger cities, like Monterrey and Guadalajara (ibid).

Riva Palacio (2004, 54) notes that much of the criticism made of Mexican newspapers comes from the low circulation figures they have. In 1990, the highest selling newspapers, Excelsior and Esto only sold 11 items per 1000 habitants, the second edition of Ovaciones sold 10 per every 1000, La Jornada and the first edition of Ovaciones sold 5 per every 1000, El Financiero three, El Heraldo two and both La Aficion and Novedades one per every 1000. By 1995 the figures reduced even more, per every thousand habitants of Mexico City, Esto sold four items, Excelsior, La Prensa and Novedades sold two, and El Financiero, La Jornada, El Universal, El Heraldo, Reforma and Ovaciones 1st and 2nd editions all sold one item per every 1000 people (Riva Palacio, 2004, 54). In regards of circulation, Fromson (1996, 128) notes it is very difficult to have an accurate figure in Mexico, as real circulation numbers differ greatly to the circulation each newspaper claims to have. He gives different examples for 1994, when newspaper Excelsior claimed a daily circulation of 200,000 when in reality it was closer to 86,000; El Universal claimed 181,000 but it was actually only half of that; La Jornada claimed 75,000 yet it only sold around 40,000 (ibid). According to data gathered by magazine Etcetera in October 2004, claimed daily circulation of newspapers was as follows:

- La Cronica, 43,020
- Milenio, 26,111
- Unomasuno, 27,473
- Excelsior, 25,357
- La Jornada, 107,291

- El Universal, 84,448 (on Sundays, 154,020)
- Reforma, 145, 650
- El Economista, 32,507
- El Financiero, 91,923
- El Heraldito, 40,580 (figure for 2003, in 2004 it was purchased by journalist Gutierrez Vivo and renamed Diario Monitor, with a daily sale of 9,350 items for 2004)

Another report by magazine Etcetera in August 2002 compares the figures of print as informed by the union of newspapers retailers and distributors with the claimed circulation numbers given out by newspapers themselves. Etcetera's report shows that there are huge discrepancies between the two as, for example, newspaper Unomasuno claimed to have a 75,000 readership, yet for that to be true, Etcetera (2002) argues that each item would have to be read by 4.6 readers in order to reach that number. There are similar examples for other national newspapers, and this situation, Etcetera (2002) observes, is leading towards a slow but steady tendency of reinforcing three national newspapers: El Universal, La Jornada and Reforma.

Riva Palacio (2004, 55) notes that the newspapers addressed to the masses, meaning those with contents characterised by violence, sex and scandal, have the greater readership, yet they have little influence with the decision-making elite. He also notes that the more financially independent a newspaper is, the more it tends to be critical and impartial, such as some of the most recently created newspapers La Jornada (1984), Reforma (1993) and El Financiero (1980) (ibid).

Lawson's observations on the current arrangement of Mexican newspapers place a great deal of importance on the notion of financial independence, and hence can be placed in the libertarian notion of a free press anchored in a free market (see Lawson, 2002, 65). Hughes (2006) on the other hand, believes that while financial independence has been important in the opening up of the Mexican press, what has actually made a difference towards democratisation of the Mexican media has been the influence of civic journalism, where journalists actively and purposefully mean to make a difference with their assertive and professional reporting. Civic journalism, Hughes argues, found a

more receptive outlet once financial independence had become more widespread in the newsrooms.

As noted in the beginning of this chapter, the issues presented in the current section, along with the discussions presented in the previous chapters informed the themes considered for the design of the research tool. The questionnaire, as already discussed, aimed to reveal manifestations of political clientelism that existed in the Mexican media system during the PRI regime, and compare how often or not such situations still occurred during the PAN party administration

Conclusion

This chapter has defined the methodology used in the interview process applied in this research project.

The aims of this study are to elucidate to what extent the way in which journalists carry out their work now that the PAN party holds the presidency is different to the way it used to occur whilst the PRI party was in power. Information on journalists' work routines and role perceptions was gathered using semi-structured interviews and the sample of 35 interviewed journalists was gathered by a combination of direct approaches to journalists as well as a snowball technique.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as a research method due to its potential to gather rich qualitative data in a short period of time, whilst allowing the research subject to make reflections and comparisons upon the themes brought up by the questionnaire. The necessary ethical considerations were addressed both when designing the research tools, when carrying out the interviews and whilst presenting the data. For the purposes of this research, it was required that respondents had the experience of covering political beats, as this would put them in a position to be able to discuss how they as journalists related to politicians. Therefore, the sampling process revolved around achieving this specific and focused group of interviewees. The questionnaire was constructed around

themes in the literature that pointed towards manifestations of political clientelism in the Mexican media system during the PRI regime, with the intent to compare whether or not there were continuities in these during the new PAN party administration.

To further contextualise the Mexican media system, this chapter engaged in a focused discussion of the background in which Mexican journalists carry out their work, by reviewing the ways in which the PRI party managed to control the media in Mexico, and presenting information on the current state of affairs of broadcast media ownership and circulation figures of the press. On this matter, the chapter discussed some of the peculiarities of the Mexican press, such as its low circulation figures and the dependency of the press on government advertisement for financial sustenance.

The analysis of the data gathered through the interviews carried out is presented in the following three chapters. The first of them, chapter four does so by focusing on the themes concerning journalists' work experience and their perceptions on editorial constraints and working conditions. Chapter five will look at journalists' relationships with politicians as well as their perceptions on democracy and the social responsibility role of the media, while chapter six will compare the findings of the interviews with the scholarship on the Mexican media system.

Chapter 4

Analysis of Interviews 2: journalists in Mexico, experience, roles and careers

The previous chapter discussed the research methodology and sample techniques used for this part of the study concerning interviews with Mexican journalists. This chapter presents the findings related to the first three of the five main themes which the interview questionnaire addressed in regards to journalists' work routines and role perceptions; these are:

- a) journalists' career background,
- b) journalists' experience of editorial constraints,
- c) general information about their working conditions

The remaining themes of the questionnaire, those relating to journalists' relationship to politician and their perceptions of democracy are presented in chapter five, while chapter six will present an overall discussion comparing the findings of the interview analysis and the literature on the Mexican media system.

Careers, training and experience⁶

In general, Mexican journalists who participated in this sample have very prolific CVs, as there are only rare cases in which journalists have worked for only one or two different media organisations. Most of them have worked for different newspapers and or magazines, and most of them have even worked for radio or television, a few of them have also worked for government organisations or as academics.

Out of the 35 journalists interviewed, 34 attended college. It is unclear, however, how many of them actually got their degree, as a few of them admitted that they failed to

⁶ Appendix 3 presents a matrix of respondents. When presenting quotes of respondents in this and the next chapter, a number in brackets will follow them, indicating the respondent the text refers to.

submit their thesis. Most of the journalists studied journalism or communication studies, and only five of those who went to university did something different, two of them studied law, two more did economics and the last one did literature.

Table 4.1 Education of Mexican journalists

College education	Journalists
Communication studies/Journalism	29
Economics	2
Law	2
Literature	1
Non	1
Total	35

The majority of journalists studied in public universities, 22 at the UNAM (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México), two more at UAM (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana). Of the remaining ten, four studied at the School of Journalism Carlos Septién, one at Universidad Iberoamericana, one at the Universidad del Distrito Federal, one at the Universidad Intercontinental, and one at the Universidad del Valle de México. It is unclear where the other two remaining journalists got their degrees as they did not mention it in the interview. As for postgraduate degrees, three had obtained masters degrees, one at the ITESM (Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey), and the other two abroad, one from California, the other one from Spain and a further two were undertaking masters degree studies, both at ITESM⁷.

⁷ It is difficult to assess the quality of Mexican universities, as there is no body commissioned to do this as for example the RAE or TQA do in Britain. Also, independent evaluations carried out by newspapers are a new phenomenon in Mexico. In this case, newspaper El Universal (2008) ranks UNAM at number 1 of its list, UAM at number 3, Universidad Iberoamericana has position 11 and Universidad del Valle de Mexico appears in position 18. Other universities in Table 4.2 do not appear in El Universal's rankings. Another assessment by Reader's Digest (2007) places UNAM on top of the list, Universidad Iberoamericana at number 4 and Universidad del Valle de Mexico at number 10. Other universities in Table 4.2 do not feature in Reader's Digest ranking.

Table 4.2 Universities where journalists did undergraduate studies

University	Journalists
UNAM	22
UAM	2
Carlos Septién	4
Universidad Iberoamericana	1
Universidad Intercontinental	1
Universidad del Valle de México	1
Universidad del Distrito Federal	1
Unknown	2
Total	34

The majority of the journalists interviewed in this sample had between 11 and 25 years of experience. Eight had between five and ten years of experience and a further eight had more than 26 years of experience. It must be noted here that five of the six journalists who did not have studies in communications or journalism fall into this last group of more experienced journalists, which shows a trend towards more specific professionalisation of journalism in the newer generations.

Table 4.3 Years of work experience

Years of experience	Journalists
5-10	8
11-15	6
16-20	7
21-25	6
26-30	2
31-35	3
36-40	2
41+	1
Total	35

As mentioned above, journalists had very prolific curricula. Only two of the journalists interviewed did not have experience in newspaper journalism, as the remaining 33 did. Nineteen had worked in magazines, fourteen in radio and eight more in television. Five

had published books, five more had worked for other private organisations, three had academic experience and eleven had worked for government organisations⁸.

Table 4.4 Newspapers where journalists have worked

Newspaper	Journalists
Reforma	10
La Jornada	7
El Universal	7
Excélsior/Nuevo Excélsior	4
Milenio Diario	4
El Financiero	4
La Crónica de Hoy	3
El Economista	3
El Nacional	3
La Prensa	2
Ovaciones	2
El Día	2
El País	2
El Heraldo de México	1
México Hoy	1
Monitor	1
Diario de México	1
El Independiente	1
Others (provincial)	6

The newspapers more frequently worked for in this sample were Reforma with 10 mentions, La Jornada and El Universal with seven each, Unomasuno with six, and Excélsior, Milenio Diario and El Financiero with four each. It must be noted that some of the newspapers journalists had worked for in the past no longer exist, such as El Heraldo and El Independiente. Three journalists had experience working abroad, one for an American radio station and two more for Spanish newspaper El País. There is a wide variety of magazines journalists worked or had worked for, most often mentioned were Proceso with five journalists, and Vértigo with four, other magazines were Etcétera,

⁸ Journalists who had worked for government organisations did mostly in areas related to the Press Office or Social Communications. Their involvement ranged from writing the daily news summary that was handed out to public servants, to monitoring the governmental institution's coverage in the press, to holding the posts of press officer, one of them for the presidency during the Echeverría administration (1970-1976).

Milenio Semanal, Macroeconomía, Fórum, Eme Equis, La Crisis, etc. In regards of television experience, five had worked for Televisa, three for TV Azteca and four for Canal 40, but there were others who had worked for Canal 22, MVS, MTV and Argos⁹. Finally, when it comes to radio stations, there was a great deal of diversity in where journalists had worked. Some examples were IMER, Grupo Imagen, W Radio, ABC Radio, Radio Fórmula, Radio Red, Radio Mil and Monitor.

As most of the work experience of the interviewed journalists revolves around print journalism, the claims discussed in this section of the research will centre on print journalism. When journalists refer to periods or events occurred to them whilst working in broadcast media, or when discussing the responses of the two members of this sample whose experience was limited to broadcast journalism, this will be prompted in the text. The fact that the assertions and conclusions presented in this thesis are centred upon print journalism is not so much a limitation to the study, but a way to narrow and focus its reach. As noted earlier, journalists' curricula are rather prolific; hence their experiences have been shaped by this variety. The limitation of the focus on print journalism is discussed in the final chapter of this thesis.

Summary of journalists' career profiles

So, only one of all journalists interviewed in this sample has not got university education, which shows that the trend for professionalisation began several generations ago, or that educated journalists are more prone to taking part in academic research such as this study. However, the younger the journalist, the greater the chances he or she read journalism or a related discipline such as communication studies. And while a majority of journalists studied at public universities, all of those who pursued post-graduate education did so either abroad or at private universities. So overall, the journalists in this sample show that university education is valued amongst them, which is salient, as in Mexico journalism is not rendered a profession and no qualifications are required to undertake it. Journalists of all ages have a prolific curriculum and experience or seniority is not a factor to determining the likeliness of them covering a certain beat.

⁹ Note that some of these overlap.

Editorial constraints

When asked if they were ever given an instruction on how to frame an issue that would imply an editorial constraint, many journalists considered themselves lucky to never have experienced such a thing. Others believed that they belonged to a new generation where such things did not happen anymore. While more than one third of them (15 out of 35) said they had never received orders, the rest of them said they had in different ways, from being told directly to write or not to write about certain people or events, and how to write about them, to having their copy changed or, very often mentioned, “simply not published”. Those who described direct editorial constraints were usually linked to issues relative to the business partners or advertisement clients of the media organisation, whether public or private. While some journalists showed strong opinions against being told how to write claiming that their credibility would be compromised should they follow such orders, other journalists believed that as employees of a media organisation it was their duty to follow orders, hence they did not see a conflict of interests in editorial lines. As one journalist noted

“In Mexico there is no single media organisation that hasn’t got a link with a politician or a businessman. In the end, media are enterprises and they are seen as such. They are not public institutions that can be audited and questioned on how they use their resources. They move and make agreements with whomever it is most convenient, and I think that happens everywhere in the world”. [25]

This will be discussed in more detail later on.

Journalists were also asked if they or the media they worked for had ever received editorial orders from the government, be that either during a PRI or PAN party government. About a third (13 out of 35) said that had never happened to them, and a similar number said otherwise (12 out of 35), while the rest did not give a straightforward answer. When further discussing the issue, most of those who said they didn’t have such experience, said they had heard it used to happen in the past but that this was a new era, or that as a reporter or journalist they wouldn’t know, as such calls from the government are more likely to be given to their bosses and editors. Some other journalists said that the media organisation they worked for was so close to the

government that there simply was no need to give such orders, that was noted for newspapers such as El Universal and Unomasuno during the Salinas administration (PRI party, 1988-1994), and for La Jornada in the current administration, linked to the government of Mexico City of the PRD (2000-2006). On the other hand, however, there were journalists who believed such a situation was not true for the media organisation they worked for as they were always critical of the government, hence not likely to obey orders from it; this was noted for Reforma, Proceso, Canal 40 and La Jornada, the latter referring to its position on the federal government, since, as noted above, this newspaper was also noted to be closely linked to the Mexico City government of the PRD.

When journalists were asked if they or their media organisation had ever received editorial orders coming from the government, 13 said that had never been the case. And even though only 12 answered “yes” to the question, fourteen described situations in which they or their media had received orders from the government that directly involved their work. A third of those 14 situations described occurred during the last PRI administration (1994-2000) and seven during that of president Vicente Fox (2000-2006). The journalists or their editors received phone calls for different reasons. Some were offered bribes, other were intimidated and some editors were requested to remove or dismiss the journalist in question. Only in three occasions did editors comply with such orders, one during the last PRI administration (1994-2000) involving the press officer of President Zedillo [20], and two in the Fox administration (2000-2006), involving the Secretary of Public Security of the Federal District, a member not of the PAN party, but from the PRD government of the capital, Mexico City [24, 7]. It must be noted though that the latter involved two different journalists of two different media and different situations. One journalist noted that receiving orders from above “is a very common practice that unfortunately still exists. There are those who ask for the head of a journalist and they are granted with them. It’s happened to many of my friends.” About herself she said

“you didn’t know someone had called to ask for your change. It was a ‘you look tired, you need a holiday,... I’d better put you in a less stressful beat’ but you never knew somebody had called asking for your head”. [2]

Those who had received calls from the Presidency during the current administration said that rather than give orders, they try to give a point of view, “they are not so brutal anymore” [4] the director of a national newspaper said, who also pointed that when he started in journalism (during the PRI regime) it was the Ministry of Interior who decided what happened in the news, while another journalist noted “some politicians still think that [the phone call] works, that’s archaic!”[19]. A former news editor of Canal 40 describes that very often he or his superiors received calls from the president Fox’s wife Martha Sahagún (who was also the president’s press officer) and from the Ministry of Interior, yet that never influenced what they aired in the programme [26]. Eventually, Canal 40 was forced off the air, and he believes it was because they never complied with Martha Sahagún’s orders, yet he did not believe President Fox himself was responsible for it. In regards to the same conflict, another journalist believed that criticism of the president is tolerated in a different way when it comes to the bigger broadcasting organisations “A parody of the president on Televisa is seen with joy and humour... my experience with Canal 40 was of absolute hostility, not so much from president Fox, but from Martha Sahagún” [28]. While another journalist from newsmagazine Proceso also believed that the current presidency reacted differently to the broadcast media and other organisations that give a more favourable coverage to the president and his family. He argued that there was a mutual exchange of favours between Fox and Televisa, TV Azteca and radio broadcasters, while critical media were “punished” through the lack of allocation of government advertisement, as was the case of Proceso, which in addition, was libelled by Martha Sahagún [17].

The rest of the journalists who said they had been intimidated since the demise of the PRI regime were involved with other elements of the government, such as the Federal Agency of Investigations (AFI) [21], the Ministry of Public Security of the Federal District (SSPDF) [24] and the Tribunal for Federal Elections (TRIFE) [2], which shows that the continuation of such practices is not limited to the presidency or the Federal Government, as these institutions are independent from it, or, as in the case of the SSPDF, they are part of the government of Mexico City, held by the PRD party since 1997.

Financial pressures

Journalists were asked if the media they worked for had ever suffered financial pressures either from the government or private figures, either in the present or in the past. A little over a third (15 out of 35) said they had no knowledge of it, many saying that as reporters or journalists, it would only be the administrators, owners or editors who would be aware of those situations. Some of the journalists' opinions in this respect were that this was a new era, that the Federal government did not do that anymore, that the private companies pressured more than the government, or that "the problem is not a fearful media and an intolerant government, but that there aren't enough readers" [22]. Furthermore, other journalists mentioned how in the past the newspapers they worked for were co-opted with the government, so they never had any problems, as a matter of fact one journalist told how Unomasuno received free paper during the Salinas administration (1988-2004).

A further fourteen journalists said they had knowledge of financial pressures being applied to the media they had worked for, seven of those occurred during the last three administrations of the PRI party and five more during the Fox administration. The financial pressures journalists described were a) advertisement boycotts orchestrated by the Army on one occasion [23] and b) by president Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988) on another [4], c) by not distributing the newspaper Reforma by the PRI controlled National Union of News Vendors during the Zedillo administration (1994-2000), which forced Reforma to find alternative ways of selling the newspaper [19], up to, d) in the five cases corresponding to the PAN government (2000-2006), the withdrawal of advertisement from the Presidency and the PRI party.

So, the withdrawal of advertisement by the government is seen as a strong control mechanism, and one that still occurs. A former reporter of Canal 40 said that the lack of advertisement from the president's office "sank the channel" [28], while a former news editor also believed that the channel went off the air because it became uncomfortable to senior members of the government, including the president's wife [26]. Yet one more journalist believed the owner of Channel 40 had a lot to blame for, as he was a very bad

administrator and the government only took advantage of that fact [21]. Another editor of a national newspaper put it plainly: “the media are businesses, we live off advertisement and the main client is the government... you don’t bite the hand that feeds you, you’d be left off with no income” [20], yet he saw as a good move when Zedillo and Fox decided not to grant advertisement to all media and left the others to fend for themselves.

So while some journalists believe that receiving money from the government compromises the media’s coverage of it, others believe that by not being given money, the government is controlling the media by challenging its survival. One Proceso journalist expressed both opinions simultaneously [17], he spoke of the Federal government of the current PAN party administration trying to control Proceso by denying it advertisement while favouring other media, namely Televisa, TV Azteca and radio broadcasting organisations. While he believed that President “Fox has instrumented a policy of censorship through the [lack of] allocation of advertisement to the media that are not devoted to him” and thus affecting Proceso because of its critical coverage, he argued that Fox followed a policy of reciprocated privileges between the president and the broadcast media owners. Further in the interview, however, he noted that “If there is no [financial] independence there is no journalism. Hagging kills journalism”. Another journalist described how newspaper El Financiero during the De la Madrid administration (1982-1988) had a very critical stance regarding the economic policies of the government and was thus the object of an advertisement boycott. He noted that was a very “congruent and admirable conduct that you wouldn’t expect from someone who is the owner of a media such as El Financiero” [4]. Which shows that some journalists do not expect media owners to practice journalistic values, or to risk their income in pursuit of them. This will be returned to when discussing clientelism in the end of this chapter.

Censorship, self-censorship

Fourteen of the 35 interviewed said they had been the object of censorship, compared to only six who said they had never experienced it, furthermore, only two journalists said they had exercised their work with “absolute freedom”, whereas the most of those who had been censored tell of more common mechanisms for censorship, such as having their copy changed or not printed at all, often under the excuse of lack of space.

Their attitudes to censorship and self censorship go from feeling frustration, as one journalist described about not having one story printed “you feel helpless and limited, because in front of you, you have a censor, an inquisitor of democracy, of free speech, who you don’t know whose interests’ he’s working for”, or as another journalist notes for the magazine he works for, not only is there an editorial line, it is so influenced by private interests, that their stories are very distant to reality. One journalist noted about being censored while working for *Reforma*

“I suffered from seeing how some stories were not printed because they affected the interests of businessmen close to Raúl Salinas, ... and that wasn’t the censorship of the government, but the self-censorship of the owners because they were friends of or did not want to upset businessmen¹⁰” [5].

But some journalists had a rather passive view of censorship, as described by one journalist, he once had the dilemma of either committing self-censorship or being censored, and since then he had opted for the latter, saying “it’s better off to be censored by someone else than myself” [16], similar views were expressed by other three journalists, mostly saying that it was others who censored them and not themselves, one of them said “it’s never been self-censorship, it’s always censorship, plain and simple” [11]; yet one of them preferred not to submit stories that she knew were not going to be printed, as she said it only made her upset [9]. Finally, there was another group of journalists who did not believe censorship existed as such, instead, they said there was orientation or editorial lines, which were not necessarily censorship and that as long as

¹⁰ Raul Salinas de Gortari, businessman brother of president Carlos Salinas de Gortari, 1988-1994.

they adhered to what they were being requested, there were no problems, as one of them put it “knowing what they want, that’s how I write the story, otherwise I know they won’t print it” [7].

One journalist admitted to self-censorship because of personal reasons, as the politician involved in a story of corruption was her friend [2], and another said that “sometimes you keep information to yourself for the sake of your own security or that of the media”. A third journalist admitted to being censored by his media organisation during the current administration in regards of a conflict with a prominent political figure with whom the media had a financial agreement, and to further commit self-censorship as a result of feeling intimidated by the institution led by that politician: he described one evening when he returned home

“The cleaner told me she got a call from the Ministry of public security asking to confirm my personal details. The message was clear, it was then that I got scared. I said to myself I will do as the station tells me, I won’t play the hero and I won’t be in the ten o’clock news telling how my family was kidnapped because of a story I did” [24].

Or as another journalist put it “during the Echeverria (1970-1976) administration there were many murdered journalists, with Salinas (1988-1994) there were 46. Whether you wanted it or not, you constrained yourself” [32].

As revealed in the paragraphs above, journalists’ interpretation of ‘censorship’ is not unanimous. This situation, this study argues, is a manifestation of clientelism. As noted by Hallin and Mancini (2004), political clientelism compromises professionalisation and autonomy in a media system, and hence, journalists lack commonly shared values. This situation will be manifest again in forthcoming sections of the interview analysis -such as those referring to bans and bribes-, and will be more thoroughly discussed in chapter six, and again in the final chapter of this thesis.

Forbidden topics

Traditionally, the Mexican media had three forbidden topics: the president, the Virgin of Guadalupe and the army. Claiming that the president was off-limits to the press meant that criticism of the government in general was not permitted, just like not criticising the Virgin meant not criticising religion in general. Journalists were asked if this was ever true in their experience. Twenty of them said they knew it was true, or they heard it was true in the past, while two in three (24 out of 35) said it was not the case anymore. Of the three subjects involved, about a quarter of the journalists interviewed (8 out of 35) noted it was still difficult or complicated to talk about the army, some even saying it was still a forbidden theme, while others said that the army had become touchable as there had been stories about its involvement with drug trafficking. Yet only a couple of the journalists spoke from personal experience, those who did, said the army was a very closed organisation that was not keen on revealing information, and one that easily gets upset if any of its data is disclosed, so much that one of the journalists was sued and intimidated by the army after the publication of an academic paper in the magazine he edits.

In regards to religion, about a third of the journalists (12 out of 35) believed it was still off-limits to the press, while nearly one in every four (8 out of 35) thought it was not untouchable anymore. Some journalists described how, during the current administration, they had received specific orders about how to treat religious subjects and the prominence of them in the media. For example, one former radio journalist described how during the last visit of the Pope in 2002 all the reporters of the station were deployed along the main boulevard where the Pope was going to go through, saying how it was useless and irrelevant

“we were three blocks apart from each other, and transferred the transmission to one another describing what was going on, each speaking for just a few seconds, saying things like ‘the Pope waves to the people, a woman carries a baby, somebody else throws a flower, now on to my partner’” [24].

Another journalist told how just a few months earlier she had done a story on Catholics and Evangelists and her editor asked her specifically not to ask any questions about the virgin of Guadalupe [21]. One journalist noted that Mexico “is still sickly, a very religious country... media organisations prefer their journalists not to touch such subjects” [32]. Often journalists noted that being a Catholic society and very devout to the virgin, there was no point in discussing subjects that for the audience were matters of faith, not of fact, so much so that a couple of journalists said there was some sort of censorship, but that it lied on the audiences, not on the media, as one journalist put it “you can’t mess up with something so symbolic for Mexicans because you know you would get a big part of the population against you” [15]. However, some journalists noted that religion was now a touchable subject, as there had been stories about paedophilia amongst priests and about the finances of the church. But same as with the army, few had a personal experience on the matter and most agreed that it was very difficult to talk about religion and that it was a subject to treat very carefully.

In regards of the third subject, the President, it was the only one in which journalists unanimously agreed it was no longer off-limits to the press. Most noted that the President not only was criticised but relentlessly ridiculed in the media, some said it was because President Fox was an easy target, while others believed that it was President Fox himself who had no respect for the presidential institution. One journalist commented on President Fox: “poor Fox, he doesn’t see how hard he’s been hit, but how often!” [20], while another one reflected “Ironically of the three subjects the only one that clearly we can say has been completely taken down is the president, in any case that one should be the most important of the lot” [31]. However journalists note that the desacralisation of the presidential figure dates back to the PRI regime, a couple saying the President could be criticised since Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988), two more saying it was since Carlos Salinas (1988-1994), and most notably, a quarter of them maintained it was since President Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000). A couple more journalists, nevertheless believed all subjects had always been touchable to a certain extent, one more saying it was just a matter of being fearless [30], and another one saying “while the President was untouchable, one could always criticise minor politicians” [10].

However, it is significant how despite a widespread belief that no longer were there forbidden subjects for journalism, there was no consensus regarding the levels of criticism allowed for either the army or religion, as opposed to the president, where journalists felt they were free to criticise and even mock him.

Criticism is now permitted, unlike in previous governments, however, the response of the authorities, some journalists argue, is still the same, as some had experienced repression or financial pressures from the President's office or from figures close to him, such as his wife or the Ministry of Interior. Some journalists actually believed they were freer during the government of Ernesto Zedillo and that the Fox administration had been a step back in freedom of speech. It is also notable that journalists consider the army and religion as subjects to be treated very carefully, yet no such remark was made in regards to the president.

Finally, journalists were asked if they thought there were other issues that remained untouchable, a couple talked about the bank rescue and former bankers, one of them saying the information about them remained closed, while another journalist specialised in financial journalism described several acts of censorship whenever she tried to talk about that subject [5]. Two more journalists believed that institutions related to law enforcement, such as the Police, the Federal Agency of Investigations and the General Attorney's Office, attempt to remain untouchable through intimidation. Two more journalists noted that it was unlikely to criticise big corporations such as the Carso Group, because they invest a lot of money in advertisement in all media in general, one journalist noted "There is no fear to criticise Fox, but there is when it comes to [Carlos] Slim and his advertisement power" [1]. One more journalist, who has written several books about current affairs, said that his last ever book will be about Mexican journalism "because no one else would give me a job after I tell all the truth about it!" [29]. Most notably, however, many journalists (27 out of 35) named drug trafficking as a subject that was already untouchable for most media in the north of the country and one that had the potential of becoming untouchable for all media in general, especially because it had

infiltrated other governmental organisations, such as local governments, the army and the police. This will be returned to in the next section.

Repression, threats and intimidation

Many of the previous questions hinted at acts of repression and intimidation. When asked specifically about them, around a quarter of the journalists (9 out of 35) said they had never experienced any form of coercion, yet they often mentioned it happening to others, while more than half of them (20 out of 35) described acts of duress occurred to themselves. Journalists responded to this question drawing from their experience of both the past and the present. Acts depicted range from mild pressure, such as being followed around the institution they were covering by an official, to receiving intimidating calls or letters, having their phone bugged, being stalked by judicial agents, receiving death threats, up to one journalist having his office gun shot and one more being kidnapped, but most notably, five journalists mentioned being sued, some more than once. One senior journalist said he was backed up by the newspaper he writes for all the times he had been sued, yet libels remain a strong political control over journalists since many media organisations cannot afford the legal expenses and journalists are therefore not supported [10].

Despite the intimidation, four of the journalists said they never felt fear or that their coverage of events was not affected. A couple more said they would feel in danger if they investigated in more depth. One journalist regretted never to have received a threat “it just means I never got close enough to power” [32]. Another one said he once received a hand written letter from the lawyer of a drug lord and he felt it was an act of intimidation, but only felt fear weeks later when that person was murdered [12]. Some journalists noted that governmental repression was nowadays more likely to come from the Police, the Attorney General’s Office or from local caciques or strong-men in the country. A few more journalists said that there was no risk of repression while working in Mexico City unlike the rest of the country.

A frequent observation was that politicians do not coerce anymore, “it is not politically correct” [1] one journalist noted, rather they intimidate through legal instances, such as libel action. Nowadays pressure comes instead from organised crime and drug trafficking. So, some journalists believe, journalism is now more difficult and dangerous “politicians used to threaten you, drug lords just kill you” [35] one journalist noted, and several others made similar comments. As another journalist stated in relation to threats by politicians

“it is easier to go through institutional channels because there you have more elements to say ‘he attacked me’, you can expose politicians, even if they won’t be punished, but that doesn’t happen with drug traffic ... they do not answer to anybody” [21].

As noted earlier, a great majority suggested drug trafficking as a very dangerous subject to talk about, and often mentioned how some media of the northern states had received constant pressure from drug cartels, so much so that many newspapers had opted for self-censorship for the sake of security. A journalist of magazine *Proceso* commented that the reports from the correspondents in the northern states are printed anonymously in order to protect them [8] while another senior journalist said how he was told by an editor from *El Mañana* newspaper of Tamaulipas, where he writes occasionally,

“‘please don’t be upset if we ever not print a story in which you criticise drug traffickers, because it can cost us our lives’ so they have accepted that to survive they have to be silent about everything that refers to drug traffic” [29].

Several journalists commented on the high number of journalists that had been murdered or who had disappeared in the current administration “now drug lords rule, not the government” [22] argued one senior journalist. Journalists often claimed that drug trafficking is closely related to the Army, the police or politicians:

“The line is so thin it gets lost. You never know when an investigation on a fraud or a political matter can turn into drug trafficking, or when an investigation on drug trafficking turns into a political matter, or about paedophilia, or people trafficking, or weapons trafficking. Everything is so rotten inside!” [25]

complained a crime journalist.

Bribes

An accurate description about bribes, known as “chayotes” or “chayo”, was given by a journalist who said that “The *chayo* is like the devil, everybody talks about it, but nobody has seen it” [25]. Only three of the 35 journalists interviewed admitted to have accepted *chayos* in one way or another: one Televisa producer noted that when he was just starting as a microphone assistant (during the PRI party rule) after doing a report on a politician, somebody came round and discretely put money in the pockets of all the production team members, no one seemed to bother about it, and he just carried on, yet he also described how now in his role as producer he tries to prevent members of his team from accepting bribes. Another journalist said he once, during the PRI party rule, accepted a bribe forced by circumstances, it was indeed a blackmail as he was offered money “to leave the country or else” [29], he accepted it, but denounced it on his return to Mexico several months later. Finally, a senior journalist who was in the past press officer to a PRI party Mexican president noted that *chayotes* were not really bribes but gratuities to journalists [27]. The rest of the journalists interviewed (32 out of 35) denied ever accepting any form of chayote, although more than half (22 out of 35) had been offered them, while only seven journalists said they had never even been offered them. Almost all of the individuals interviewed (31 out of 35) believed *chayotes* still existed, and only one journalist thought they did not, although he argued it was likely they prevailed in the country. The latter view was shared by other journalists, who claimed it did not really happen in Mexico City as much as it did in other states.

Other common opinions about *chayotes* were that a) they have become more “elegant” and “sophisticated”, as they come as presents rather than just money in an envelope or “sobres” (in Spanish), which was another way to call such bribes, b) they are not offered to the journalist as such but to the editor or the owner of the media, in this respect one journalist said

“that isn’t even chayo, that’s part of the business, if a public servant wants a good story, he doesn’t go to the journalist who is there everyday, that one is given just a meal or little things, instead they go to the editor, and he is given a good amount” [24]

or as another put it “we don’t know higher up, what the directors get” [15].

Remarkably, the subject of bribes was one that all the participants were eager to discuss. There is however, no consensus as to what constitutes a *chayote*. Some saw it as any sort of present, including those offered for birthdays and Christmases¹¹, paying for meals, drinks or travel expenses, any form of cash payment (the so called *sobre* falls into this category), be it regular or a one-off, up to bigger presents, such as electronic equipment, cars, domestic appliances, and mortgages, credits, business facilities or media concessions. In more specific accounts, journalists mentioned being offered other things, like prostitutes, another journalist mentioned that the Congress currently gives monthly grocery vouchers to journalists, and one more said that cash payments had become more “modern”, as some local governments and the PRD were known to have given debit cards to journalists instead.

Some journalists believed that they were offered bribes just to test them out. One individual described how while he was covering transport

“a guy asked to meet me up at a restaurant and told me he had a very interesting project for creating a fleet of safe taxis in Mexico City ... he offered me \$400,000 pesos per year if I advertised his project in my stories” [7].

And while some said they had taken a very strong stance against them, some others said they had felt tempted. An example of the former view was expressed by two young journalists, one of them said “if you take a chayote once, you will take them forever” [9], and the other one said “I’m just starting my career, I don’t want to taint it” [33]. As for feeling tempted, one journalist mentioned how he had to cover up for a colleague for a couple of weeks at the Union of Education Workers, days later he received a call asking him to

“go back and collect what [he] had left there. It was two cheques for \$1,500 pesos each, my salary at the time was \$5,000 per month. I said I would go

¹¹ It was also noted that during the holiday season it was usual for parties or government institutions to raffle gifts for journalists.

but right there I will tear them to bits. Three thousand pesos just for two stories! I wondered should I take them or shouldn't I.[24]"

In the end he did not take them but was awed at how easily he put his integrity in question.

As much as politicians are condemned for endorsing corruption, a lot of the blame is also laid at the feet of journalists as they themselves admit. Some said it was not unusual for journalists to approach a politician for "a bit of help", others noted that journalists still fight over the sources more predisposed to giving gifts, such as crime or finances, and other individuals mentioned knowing of journalists who missed the times when *chayos* were more common or even the scheme in which journalists were given a percentage of advertisement bought by their sources, which, some said still exists in certain media. One journalist said that in the trade sources that tend to buy more advertisement are known as "productive sources" and a way to punish a journalist is actually to move him into a more unproductive source. Another one told how journalists flagrantly negotiate the "price" of the stories at the General Attorney's Office, while one more said that Televisa cameramen charge deputies \$500 pesos for appearing in the panning shots at Congress.

Nevertheless, other journalists blame the media for keeping a "complicit silence" over bribery. Two journalists argued that in the past *chayos* were another way in which media organisations and the government worked together, as the government supplemented the low salaries paid by the media thus ensuring favourable coverage by journalists and allowing media organisations bigger profits. Nevertheless, journalists believe that low salaries are still common place. Low salaries were very often noted a reason why journalists succumb to corruption, especially if they had a family to look after. A journalist complained never to have been offered a bribe "it was indeed unfortunate because I had to work three shifts to make ends meet!" [34] and went on complaining at how low salaries have always been. One journalist put it as "some papers give such low salaries that they are simply sending off their journalists to steal" [2]. Another one commented how some years ago he was offered a wage-less job at a newspaper in

Guadalajara, with the incentive that he could earn as much as he wanted on the outside. A freelance journalist said however that there was a lack of organisation in the guild that left them “at the mercy of media corporations” [22].

More than one in every four journalists (10 out of 35) however said that not even low salaries were an excuse for corruption and that bribes were unacceptable as they were a sign of lack of ethics or professionalisation. Some argued that taking bribes was being complicit in a crime against the nation, as they are funded by public money. Many journalists pointed out that journalism is known for not having high wages, so people expecting them should find a different job. Two journalists made similar comments implying that there are a lot of people who earn very little money all over the country, yet they do not become criminals to increase their earnings. Yet some journalists noted that for some journalists *chayos* are indeed crucial to their personal finances, although one more noted that while for some it is a sustenance, other journalists are simply greedy. In defence of journalists who take bribes, one journalist said that “they take them not because their criterion is not full, it’s just that their wallet is empty” [25].

As with other subjects previously discussed, there were arguments about changes in regards of bribery being a result of professionalisation and a new generation of journalists coming into the field. Many pointed out how Reforma newspaper forbids its journalists from taking any kind of gift or else they risk being dismissed. Some saw this as a means for independence and a breakthrough in Mexican journalism. Higher salaries in Reforma were also acknowledged as a reason why their journalists were less likely to take bribes. However journalists who work or have worked for Reforma noted how they are uncomfortable and frowned upon by other journalists “they see you as pedant or sort of puritan” one individual said. However not all had such a rose tinted view of Reforma, one senior journalist said he knew of columnists of Reforma who earned over \$50,000 pesos per month and still received *chayotes*.

One young journalist however thought it was a little over the top to think that “just for accepting a pen or having breakfast in an event where everybody else is eating, the way

you report on the story is going to somehow change” [21]. And most remarkably two other journalists, despite claiming they had never accepted bribes, made comments that contradict such statements. The first of them described how sometimes he was sent to cover a story outside Mexico City out of the blue with all expenses paid, and he claimed that in the end “you fulfil a journalistic goal” [3]. The other one, a senior journalist, editor of a national newspaper said that charging an advertisement percentage was a *chayote* for some, but for some others it wasn’t, so it depended on how one defines a bribe. Furthermore, he noted that getting a credit is not getting a gift, as in the end one is paying for it, so that cannot be seen as a bribe [20]. When asked if he was ever offered a *chayo*, he admitted “in every possible way”, but his response to the question if he ever accepted them was “no, never”, yet he carried on saying “if you took [a bribe], the commitment was of that moment, the next day it was a different thing”. He was then asked if *chayotes* were an untouchable subject for journalists and he said “some have tried, but it is not fitting” and returned the question to the interviewer by asking if she had the moral authority to judge them¹², “nobody does”, he answered himself, and described how a couple of journalists tried to run stories about who in the field took bribes, yet he said even those journalists had taken bribes “its not that it is a forbidden subject, it’s just that everybody has got something on their backs”. These last two accounts show how the lack of consensus as to what is to be considered a bribe gives room to different levels of acceptance or condemnation, even though both were keen on denying they had ever received pay-offs. And the latter justification, coming from a high rank journalist of a national newspaper, shows how deeply embedded this practice is in Mexican journalism.

Clientelism

The final question asked in the first part of the interview was in regards of the perceived changes in the deferential relationships between the media and the government from the times of the PRI regime to the current PAN administration. Almost half of the

¹² At this point I answered that I was not a journalist, he said “no, in general, in your life, have you the moral authority to judge other people?”. I told him “well in that case nobody does”, an

respondents (17 out of 35) agreed there had been changes, as opposed to a third of them (12 out of 35) who gave answers such as “its about the same” or “more or less” and only one saying that it is exactly the same. Some (4 journalists) noted that previously the relationship between the media and the government was one of submission and that nowadays there is more transparency and scrutiny of government spending, which have made bribery and corruption more difficult. One more individual said that the government no longer had as much money as it did in the past. Furthermore, one journalist noted that public relations had somehow replaced repression, and others argued that an increased political competition had contributed to the opening of journalism. Four journalists said that nowadays there was more freedom of the press and, as in other subjects previously mentioned, some journalists argued that this was a new generation that had different professional values, as one journalist put it “you’re not just looking for sustenance, you want a professional career”. In the same line, some journalists noted that some circumstances had changed, for example, the practice of giving journalists a percentage for advertising income or that receiving ‘chayos’ used to be socially accepted.

On the other hand however, several journalists (9) argued that there is still a power relationship between the media, the government and the private sector where the commercial interests of the media are highly important and this in turn creates submission in the name of advertisement revenue. One young journalist noted “as a media you cannot live off your readers, your income comes from advertisement. You wouldn’t talk about Slim or your sponsorship from Telmex is finished, you cannot hit your advertisers”, which is a similar point to many expressed earlier in this chapter. One journalist argued that “information belongs to businesses” while another one noted that “the media are the spokespeople of the government”.

While a couple of journalists noted that clientelism had weakened as a consequence of a change in government, “the PAN and Fox changed a lot of the old schemes” was one opinion expressed in this regard, there were others who argued that the new

answer he agreed with.

administration had continued the old practices: “with Fox there have been new attempts to daunt the media”, or that they had indeed worsened: “with the PRI you knew what to expect, ... with PAN is just hypocrisy” was noted by a news editor who went on to discuss government pressure against La Jornada and Canal 40; and another journalist argued that the Fox administration had been a step backwards because of the increased number of murdered journalists and the close relationship between Vicente Fox and Martha Sahagún with Televisa, TV Azteca and radio broadcasters. A senior journalist noted that nowadays the corruption came from the left, most notably from the PRD and PT parties: “they are very corrupt, the GDF [Government of Mexico City] subjugates the media through advertisement ... and cash payments”. And a journalist from La Jornada argued that “the advertisement from the GDF for La Jornada has compromised criticisms of López Obrador”, which can be seen as a counterargument to the claim that an increased political competition has led towards an increased opening in the press.

Rather than believing the clientelistic relationships had been overcome, journalists simply expressed some practices had been reduced. This shows that even though more than half the respondents believed there had been positive changes, clientelism is still a major concern in Mexican media-state relations. This is indeed remarkable when noting that a considerable number of journalists were ignorant of their media organisations being the object of financial pressures, or more significantly, almost all of them declared they had never received bribes. And even though there was an unanimous conviction that the president can now be the subject of criticism in the press, the government, be it federal or local, is regarded as a source of cooptation and control of the media.

Conclusion

Clientelism was prevalent in the relationship between the media and the government during the seven decades of PRI party domination. Government control and co-optation of the media were noted as a regular occurrence during the PRI regime. Control mechanisms of the media varied from financial pressures, bribery and repression; censorship and self-censorship were common and assertive journalism was usually

oppressed. The interview aimed to find out to what extent journalists believed these situations have changed if at all. In conclusion, there are two main themes that emerge from this analysis:

Journalists' perceptions

The evidence presented in this chapter shows that overall, journalists believe that it is now possible to criticise the government without compromising their own security and that repression from public officials is not as harsh. However despite this increased freedom journalists still seem to perceive themselves and their profession as on the receiving end of authoritarian governmental oppression and censorship. This is because in the minds of the journalists the government is still perceived as oppressive and controlling. For example even though journalists tell of experiencing censorship when their stories could have damaged business partners or advertisers of their media organisation, they still consider the media as victims when the government denies them advertisement.

Furthermore, journalists seem personally unwilling to test the boundaries of their new found freedom. They are passive and docile, as they avoid conflict by not writing stories that might clash with the editorial line, despite the perceived greater freedom to touch taboo subjects and are content in the knowledge that unethical decisions, such as censorship, are taken by someone else. Even though many journalists claim to have been the object of censorship, it is difficult to know to what extent stories were changed or discarded because of censorship or because of a more habitual editorial decision, as either way, journalists are not likely to question editorial decisions or orders received. It seems that modern day journalists still define themselves and their profession in terms of being oppressed, censored and disadvantaged by government, despite their evidence to the contrary, and it appears that the profession as a whole still exhibits a kind of victim mentality that restrains their ability to act assertively, while at the same time, still expecting favours from the government in the form of advertisement expenditure. In other words, there is a prevalent clientelistic mentality amongst journalists.

There are differences of interpretation in key issues around the performance of journalism and in regards to matters that traditionally have been understood as limitations to the profession in Mexico, such as those concerning bribes, editorial constraints, and bans. The lack of common ground, this study argues, is a manifestation of political clientelism. Journalistic autonomy and professionalisation are compromised in clientelistic systems, and a manifestation of it comes from a lack of shared professional ethics and norms. This leaves journalism as a corps disjointed and lacking in coherence regarding how their profession should be pursued, thus leaving them at the mercy of the rules imposed by the media organisation they happen to work for. This subject will be further addressed in Chapter 6 and again in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Structural changes in politics

Despite the clientelistic mentality that the journalists exhibit, there are also some very real sources of media control, but these have changed. Government pressures can now come from all parties at all levels of government, which shows that post-PRI regime the practice has not disappeared, rather it has spread to other parties, yet it must be noted it has not been as ruthless on the part of the presidency as in the previous administrations. In effect, most of the pressures described seem more like media management techniques than actual acts of duress. Yet media organisations take the stance of ‘do not bite the hand that feeds you’ and are willing to comply with external demands. Finally, drug traffic is considered a new cause for censorship, self-censorship and repression, and generally a threat to freedom of expression.

The next chapter will look deeper into how journalists relate to politicians and how they acknowledge their role in the process of democratic transition that Mexico is said to be undergoing, while chapter six will compare the findings of the analysis of the interviews with the literature on the Mexican media system, and offer an explanation of the similarities and discrepancies found.

Chapter 5

Analysis of Interviews 3: working within the realms of the red circle

The previous chapter presented the findings of the first part of the interview conducted with a sample of 35 Mexican journalists. It dealt with questions regarding journalists' professional backgrounds, and their experience of matters that the literature points out as common limitations to journalism in Mexico, such as a culture of collusion between the media and the government and precarious working conditions for journalists.

This chapter focuses on the second part of the interview, which aimed to find out how journalists related to politicians in their everyday task of gathering information from them. In this regard, literature suggests that there were several restrictions and control mechanisms that limited access to official information, such as the following:

- Access to information was granted selectively by politicians to compliant media.
- Bans and blacklists were common amongst politicians, thus restricting the access to information.
- Journalism was elite oriented as the media did not address the general public (see Monsivais, 2003, 155; Riva Palacio, 2004, 99).
- Information was “newsworthy” just as long as it did not compromise the relationship of the news organisation with the government –the media’s main source of income-, thus ignoring readers and audiences (Riva Palacio, 2004, 26).

In regards to the latter point, Riva Palacio (2004, 26) argues that Mexican media organisations do not want to confront the government and risk their business and that “most of them consider –because that is how they act- that their priority is to inform only that [information] which would allow them to save their relationship with the government in the best possible way”. In fact, most of Mexico’s newspapers have a very low circulation and readership, Benavides (2000, 93) notes that there “are newspapers without readers but with a constant supply” of government paid information.

This situation is typical of clientelistic societies, as Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002, 188) argue, in such circumstances, information is a private resource, exchanged in certain exclusive relationships and not something to be shared widely and horizontally, as in more pluralist societies.

This part of the interview also intends to set out the opinions of journalists in regard of what they consider to be their role in the democratic transition process that Mexico is undergoing, and what they consider to be the reaches and limitations of the advances achieved so far in the opening of the Mexican media. Riva Palacio (2004, 35) notes that the dynamic relationship between journalism and politics in Mexico does not lead towards the construction of democracy, rather, he believes, they are an impediment to it because of the clientelistic relationship between the two. Relevant to this analysis are considerations in regards of the degree to which the media system parallels the structure of party politics, and the role orientations and practices of journalists. These are understood by Hallin and Mancini (2004, 26-30) as some of the characteristics of political parallelism, a phenomenon that is more prevalent in media systems where media organisations are closely linked to political organisations and where journalism lacks autonomy, a common culture or a “distinct sense of social purpose, apart from the purposes of the political actors with which media are affiliated” (ibid, 38). Therefore, this notion of political parallelism emerged as a key issue when addressing topics such as bans and access to information. About this matter Riva Palacio (2004, 66) notes that the Mexican press does not consider itself linked organically or ideologically with any political group, yet they act as such “under the mask of a journalism with no ties. In this way, there are those who (...) defend the government and the PRI [and those who] support the PAN or the PRD, and stress the information that could harm or discredit the regime, hiding or minimising that which affects their clientele”.

It should be noted here that due to time restrictions at the moment when the interviews were conducted, some of the questions of this second part of the interview were not asked of all journalists. This will be promptly noted by mention of how many journalists answered each question. The following chapter will finalise the analysis of the

interviews by comparing the findings presented in this and the previous chapter with the literature on Mexican journalism.

Relationship with politicians

Lawson (2002, 38) argues that “control over information and access was crucial for maintaining [the government’s] spin on events and denying copy to independent journalists”. When journalists were asked if nowadays relationships with politicians were open or if they encountered restrictions, five noted that relationships with public figures are open, while a majority of 21 expressed opinions that regard the relationship as restricted, four more said it was neither open or restricted and the rest did not express an opinion about it. In general, journalists adopt a deferential position towards public figures and head on confrontations are not likely to arise, thus the approach is subtle even when they resort to what they consider more aggressive methods, like the so-called ‘punch-them-up’ journalism, which will be described later in this section (for a view on the Western ‘model’ see Blumer and Gurevitch, 1995).

In the context of the then current PAN party administration, journalists identified two ways to gain access to a politician, the institutional way and the non-institutional. The first involves contact through the press office of the politician or ministry; eight journalists said this was their main means of contact. However, it was widespread opinion that press offices more than facilitating access to public servants only provide obstacles and are more concerned with propaganda than the free availability of information. Some journalists even said that having a good contact within the press office is paramount to gaining access to information, and that they have to be very deferential to everyone in the press office in order to get what they wanted “if they don’t like you, they won’t give you anything” said one journalist in this regard.

The non-institutional way involves many tactics. Some opt for gaining access through other people close to the politician they aim to access while avoiding the press-office route, or similarly, by contacting other journalists who have had access before to the

politician in question. A couple of journalists noted that an effective way of gaining access is through beat-them-up journalism: they write an unfavourable piece about a certain person with the expectation that that person would get in touch to try to give his version of events and from there building up a more direct relationship. Another very common way of getting access is the so called “pavement interview”: “sometimes the only way in which you could ever get access to a politician is to run into him while he’s getting off the pavement” [6]. Another way to getting information is through minor politicians within the same organisation that the journalist wants to cover, which some journalists admitted, leads to a journalism of shadows and gossip. Finally, three other journalists noted that one of the contributions of the Vicente Fox administration (2000-2006) was the creation of the Federal Institute for Access to Information (IFAI), where they can request information without having to get it straight from the politician/ministry in question, but the disadvantage of it is that it takes a long time to give the results [18]. All these alternative ways of gaining contact with politicians is blamed on a culture of restricted access to public figures or the information from their offices:

- “sometimes you may ask for interviews and nobody would grant them, that’s why this culture of the pavement interview, which is very common, it’s the consequence of the little access.” [6]

- “What freedom of expression or transparency in information? You have to talk to all the gate keepers that you have to go through in Mexico. “Why do you want to know that?” “what for do you need that data?” It’s a useless waste of time. My first contact is to look for the person who is closer to the politician in question. What’s the outcome? There would be those who know you and may take the request and pass it on to the person you want to contact. But there would be others who’d ask you to go through the bureaucratic way of speaking with the press officer, send a letter, a formal petition, many ask for a questionnaire... and there’s plenty of press officers who want to give the interview on behalf of the politician” [5]

In regards of the relationship itself, nine journalists noted that it is one of mutual use and convenience “they use you, but you use them as well” [11]. Three of the four journalists who did not express an opinion as to whether the relationship was open, restricted or neither made such comments. Some even noted that not only do they have to be friendly to politicians, they also have to be respectful and deferential, or even pay lip service to get them to talk. One journalist noted that he has to make it look like he’s putting himself at their service so that they agree to give him their mobile number and thus making access easier: “I say to them, give me your mobile number so that whenever I have information that concerns you, I can call you and get your version” [7], another journalist noted that he says to them things like “I really value your opinions, since you’re such a sharp person, so I’d like you to share your views with me about this matter” [31]. Three journalists noted they actually avoid any sort of personal contact with politicians, “there’s no point in getting their version, I know they are lying, the evidence around show’s that they’re not doing their job” [9] said a young journalist.

A couple of journalists admitted to be happy to let the relationship grow into a friendship, while two more noted those friendships cannot be honest and four more saying that establishing a friendship with a politician they cover goes against professionalism. Furthermore, two more journalists noted that whenever they spoke to a source, it has to be understood that it is in the terms of them as journalists, or as one of them put it “I am a journalist, not a priest and I’m not their mate, if they tell me something, anything, they risk it being printed” [26]. A young journalist noted “there’s colleagues who even go out partying with them (the politicians), but then how could you ever expose them if they’re paying for your nights out?” [33].

Five journalists said politicians are willing to speak, as opposed to four that said otherwise, and three more said it depended on the politicians, and two journalists saying it actually depended on what media they worked for. Nevertheless, four journalists said it was easier nowadays to get access than it was during the PRI regime, one said it’s always been the same, and only one saying it is more complicated now. And finally, one

journalist noted that actually the media have now a greater power over politicians than politicians over the media.

So, in the current context of Mexican media-state relations, the interaction of journalists with news sources is one of bargaining for information, and the position the journalist tends to take in the relationship is one of subordination and deference. Information is a valued commodity that politicians are not willing to share unless it is to their advantage for it to be publicised, and the role of press offices is not one of facilitating the release of data, rather one of guarding information and dispensing it for the convenience of the organisation or politician they represent. Journalists nowadays therefore, in order to obtain information ought to go through several gatekeepers or find tactics to avoid such bureaucracy, a popular one being the so-called “pavement interview”, and a few resort to the Federal Institute for Access to Information, a useful tool for some journalists, albeit one seldom mentioned and with the limitation of long waiting times to get results.

Official information is still treated as if it were highly classified, this was noted to happen during the PRI regime by Lawson (2002, 38), a situation that he argues, encouraged press-release journalism and gave the government another tool to control the media through manipulation of access. Although this is a common feature of journalism in other media systems, the difference in Mexico is that, as Benavides (2000) has noted, the system encourages journalists who more faithfully replicate press releases and official declarations, as these are the basis of the body of news items and without them journalists find themselves unable to produce copy. Therefore, there is little change in this matter even though journalists have adopted new tactics to gain access, as described above, but the overall perception is that access to information is still difficult to obtain.

Conditions to access to politicians

Lawson (2002, 39) argues that during the PRI party rule “access to official information was granted selectively in order to reward sympathetic media and punish independent ones”. So, journalists were asked if there were currently any sort of requests or

conditions to be granted access to a politician. Of the twenty eight who answered this question, eighteen noted there were conditions, requests or “understandings” and “negotiations” as some put it; seven said there weren’t, and three said sometimes there were. The most common request mentioned was regarding information given off-the-record, with 7 mentions, and the reaction to that was that sometimes they had to agree to it, otherwise they’d lose the trust of that source, or that if the information was too relevant, they had to take the position that “the story is the story” and therefore they should print it. Trustworthiness, therefore was noted as an important compromise “if a public servant gives you information and asks for your protection, you have to guarantee it... I am going to die with many names!”. [25]

Another request was that of being told things like “don’t be harsh on me” or “help me on this one”. Four journalists have experienced this kind of request, one of them a young journalist who said it was the press officer of a public figure who told him “please be nice to my boss” [33] when he asked for an interview, but he didn’t make much of it, but wondered “if you actually knew them, you’d get into a dilemma.”

As in the previous question, some journalists noted there are several obstacles and gate keepers, and as a young journalist put it, “if the subject you want to talk about is very controversial, they won’t even answer your calls” [21]. Four more journalists said it wasn’t really a matter of requests, rather there were a lot of negotiations, which they saw as part of the trade. A common request was to give the questions of an interview in advance, and there were mixed reactions in this regard: “to ask for the questions in advance is a premeditated act of censorship, because for a start they are deciding what you can ask and what you cannot”. [5] But another journalist said he was happy to give them the questions beforehand “so that they can prepare their answers instead of just rebounding the questions” [31].

One other journalist noted that requests and conditions are only for those journalists who accept bribes, while another one said that doesn’t happen in Mexico City, but it does in other states. Some journalists lamented the fact that there were conditions in order to get

information “(conditions) happen a lot in the trade, but it shouldn’t happen ... politicians don’t say it but they manage information to their convenience” [11], “negotiations are part of your job and its regrettable, leaks are usually the source of good information” [25]. [proceso] Furthermore, journalists noted that politicians only give out the information that is in their interests, or even, sometimes they negotiate giving certain information the journalist needs in exchange for having printed information the politician wants to make public.

So similar to the building of rapport with politicians, trustworthiness emerged as a key element to maintaining such relationships and hence having access to information. In the present, journalists have to earn the confidence of sources in order to be trusted with off the record information, but also have the need to comply to requests such as “be nice to me”, “don’t be too harsh”, “don’t make me look too bad” and the like. And the price they pay for not agreeing to such demands is losing the source.

Bans, blacklists and institutional credentials

Bans and blacklists of journalists were a common occurrence during the PRI regime, as argued by Lawson (2002, 39), who notes that “Such machinations encouraged press-release journalism in the pro-government media and gave the state yet another club with which to bludgeon recalcitrant, independent-minded reporters. In other words, manipulation of access complemented the array of favours and bribes that tied Mexico’s media to the regime”. The next question in the interview aimed to find out if journalists had ever experienced bans. Nearly half of all journalists who responded (17 out of 32) said they had, twelve that they hadn’t and three said they didn’t know. The people or groups journalists claim they’ve been banned by come from all political groups and in every level of government, from local council officials to party leaders, cabinet ministers and presidents. Most remarkable, however is that 11 out of those 17 argued they had suffered some sort of rejection in the then current PAN party administration, two of those bans even turned to threats, yet it must be noted those did not come from the federal government or the PAN party, rather they came from prominent politicians of the

PRD. Thus, it can be argued, that while bans were a characteristic of the PRI government, the practice has spread to other local governments and parties, including the PAN party and the Executive government, nevertheless, such bans hardly ever turn to threats.

However, responses to this question must be taken with reservations, as there is not a widespread consensus as to what constitutes a ‘ban’. For some it was the fact of being black-listed and denied access to certain areas or people “between 1998 and 2000, I was one of the most critical of Vicente Fox and it got to the point when they no longer allowed me in the offices of the PAN party” [10]. For others it was just being shun at by certain people, but not necessarily being denied access as an specific action as in a black list “Oscar Mario Beteta wouldn’t speak to me, but never a thing of being put in a list, no¹” [5], “(Marcelo Ebrard) doesn’t like me, so he asked the newspaper that I should not be sent (to cover him)²” [7].

Sometimes what journalists considered bans are one-off situations when there are frictions with certain people, but that later on change or overall do not affect their activities. A senior journalist tells how in a press conference with president Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000) he asked a sensitive question which the president answered “with no problem whatsoever, but that same night they bring me back from Chihuahua and tell me, ‘you’re fired’, so they had called from presidency (to request his resignation)” the matter was disclosed by a fellow journalist from another newspaper and two days later he received a call from the President’s secretary to “apologise for the misunderstanding and tell me I still have my job” [20], an experience he considered as a ban. Similarly,

¹ The respondent is a journalist who specialises in finance and politics. Oscar Mario Beteta, from a prominent family of politicians, who in the 1980-1990’s worked in various banks and the stock market before becoming a journalist. The respondent was referring to a period when Mr. Beteta was a source of financial information.

² Marcelo Ebrard: Minister of Public Security, Mexico City Government, PRD, 2000-2006; Mexico City Mayor, PRD, 2006-2012. The respondent is referring to the then current administration when Ebrard was serving as Minister of Public Security.

and also during the Zedillo administration, another journalist tells of a time he was intimidated to disclose a source by a General in the Judiciary Police, as he refused, the General told him “leave the premises and I will make sure Reforma never has any information about the General Attorney’s office again” [25], which he wrote as a story, the following day he received a call from the General Attorney to tell him “don’t worry, you’re not banned, carry on doing your job and we’ll do ours”.

For another journalist the ban came alongside a threat and a libel, she had written a story about funds deviation by PRD Mexico City Mayor Rosario Robles³, who then sued her and the newspaper for libel “as days went by the PRD people told me poor you Rosario is a dog and is going to harm you. They did not answer the phone, did not give me any interviews, and did not even greet me. They turned away whenever they saw me” [2]. However, she had the full backing of the newspaper, who assured her “we have seven lawyers to defend you” and “hold on, even in the extreme case that they lock you up, we will pay the bail to release you, but we will not apologise”. Despite feeling intimidated, two years later the case was dropped and she felt “exonerated”. This also show that bans respond to group or party interests, as another journalist notes, also in regards of the PRD “at some point, members of one section (of the PRD) considered Vertigo to be priista (favourable to the PRI), even though there was a good relationship with the rest⁴” [11], or “La Jornada is not welcome by groups of the right” [16].

The latter examples also show that while some journalists note that the ban is something personal, i.e., “There’s people out there who do not like my style or who think I was not fair to them” [13], most importantly, others argue that its not them as journalists who are being banned, but the news organisation they work for: “Yes, but it wasn’t me, it was the media organisation, for example Fernandez de Cevallos” [11] or “The teacher’s union

³ Rosario Robles, PRD, served as interim Mexico City Mayor between 1999 and 2000, to allow her predecessor Cuauhtemoc Cardenas to step down from such post in order to campaign as the PRD presidential candidate for the 2000 elections. Therefore, the respondent is referring to that period.

⁴ Vertigo magazine was created in 2000, therefore the respondent refers to the current administration.

didn't like Canal 40⁵" [21]. There are also those who think being banned is a really normal occurrence, and those who say they do not care, as there are always other sources of information available.

Overall, however, the examples presented show three key issues, firstly, bans are mostly dealt as an organisational matter, as many journalists note it is not them who were shunned but the organisation they work for, and the reaction to them are also organisational, that is why some journalists are encouraged to put up with what may emerge from them (i.e. threats, libel), while other news organisations succumb to the demands they get as a consequence of the actions of the journalist (i.e. dismissing the journalist, changing him to another beat). This institutional correspondence can be explained as a matter of political parallelism, as journalists tend to be welcomed by politicians who their media favours, and shunned by those the organisation is not friendly with. Secondly, in regards of politicians and public figures, the actions of some can be averted by their superiors which shows they are sensitive to bad publicity when the attempted spurns come from below, but just as well, lower hierarchy politicians and party members follow suit when one of their leaders aims to eschew a journalist or news organisation. Thirdly, it is a grey area what journalists understand as a ban, so it is open to their own interpretation. This in turn, when the matter of bans is considered alongside institutional credentials rises some contradictions, as will be explained below.

Journalists were asked how important were their institutional credentials for their work. Their answers in this regard had two main tendencies, those who spoke in terms of what doors were closed or opened to them according to the news organisation they work for, and those who saw it as a matter of whether it was the media or the individual who mattered when it came to accessing information. Of the twenty eight journalists who answered this question, 13 said working for a certain organisation opened doors for them, of those, six were referring to Reforma, two to Vértigo and the rest one of each: Jornada, Universal, Milenio, Excélsior and Crónica. Of those who said Reforma, it must

⁵ Canal 40 was created in 1995 and ceased to exist in 2003, so the respondent is referring to some time whilst the channel was in existence.

be noted however that some of the journalists referred to periods when they worked for that newspaper as not all of them did anymore at the time of the interview. Only two journalists said that working for the organisation they do was a limitation, they were from Universal and Televisa respectively, so much that the Universal journalist said “sometimes I don’t even say I’m a journalist” [7], and the Televisa journalist noted “I don’t say I work for Televisa, I say instead I work for the programme ‘Punto de Partida’” [21]. And two more said that it worked both ways, as sometimes doors were opened and other times they were closed, both worked for Proceso.

Furthermore, there were journalists who answered the question from the perspective that it was either the media or the individual that made the difference in the access of information. Six of them said the media was really important, two of them claimed that ‘the name of the media is like your last name’, one more noted that “sometimes ministers see me not because of who I am, but because I work for Reforma” [25]. But claims in this regard were for both advantages and disadvantages; a young journalist said it was complicated to get information because “Diario Monitor hasn’t got the presence of other newspapers” [33]. On the other hand there were two journalists that said it didn’t matter who they worked for, since it was their individual skills that got them access to the information they needed or that they tried to be known for themselves, rather than their media: “its not the same to work for a national newspaper than for a small recently created magazine, yet in the long run its your individual credibility that counts, you don’t belong to the media.” [4], “El Universal is a wonderful newspaper, but I don’t expect to always work for it, or to always be a journalist, I’d prefer to be known for my name rather than as a journalist of El Universal” [31].

So, when contrasting the responses given to the question about bans to that about institutional credentials, there are some apparent inconsistencies. Seven of the journalists who said the media opened doors had also said that they had experienced bans, as opposed to four journalists who denied ever been banned and said the media opened doors, two more saying they had been banned and the media both opened and closed doors for them, and only one journalist saying he had been banned and the media closed

doors for him. The ambiguities are clearer when reviewing the individual cases. As noted earlier, bans are interpreted differently and have a different impact on the individual in relation to the reaction of the news organisation, the hierarchy of the public figure in question and the duration of the so-called ban. Also, while some could have referred to being banned in the past, they could have also been referring of the doors being opened or closed in the news organisation they currently worked in, which also explain some of the incongruities.

In relation to the latter question journalists were also asked who they reckoned had better access to information in the present. Some said it depended on the relationship between the media and power, many added in this regard that broadcast media had the most advantages “For Fox and his administration the print media does not exist, there’s only Televisa and TV Azteca” [23], “Politicians are only concerned on appearing on the telly, they won’t say no to Televisa” [30], “All ministers want cameras, to be on the telly” [7], “There’s politicians who like the TV, but it may be because there they don’t [have to] say that much” [14], “Televisa is the only media that can request a state minister to answer a phone call from them” [26]. While there is a widespread feeling that the broadcast media, in particular television and most notable Televisa have better access, in regards of print media the newspapers more frequently noted as having the better access were Reforma, La Jornada, El Universal and Milenio, in that order for newspapers, and Proceso for magazines. The widespread sentiment that Televisa had overall the best access to information is contradicted by the comment of the young Televisa reporter quoted earlier, who said Televisa had a bad reputation and she’d rather not say she worked for it, and that politicians not only deny interviews, they would not even answer phone calls when she aimed to discuss problematic issues.

Nevertheless, the matter of accessibility or lack of it, emerges again as an issue of institutions, as only five journalists put emphasis on the role of the individual, and just two of those noted it was the individual alone who made a difference when acquiring access to information. The rest laid the importance on the media in general as the determinant factor to getting information, sometimes in detriment of themselves as

individuals, or even by conforming to the news organisation as part of their identity. Therefore, the access or lack of experience by journalists reflected in their perceptions about bans and institutional credentials shows the preferences of some sources in regards to friendly media organisations, thus turning this into a matter of political parallelism.

Who the is media addressed to and who do journalists write for

Carlos Monsivais (2003, 155) argues that during th PRI party rule the media in Mexico was addressed to a single viewer/reader: the president, and Riva Palacio (2004, 99) notes that the media were used by the power elites to send messages to one another. Journalists were asked if they agreed that the media was addressed to an elite in the past and if that was still the case. And the follow up question was about for whom journalists wrote.

Twenty four out of twenty five journalists who answered this question agreed with the statement that the media in Mexico was addressed to an elite, and one said neither, but remarkably none said they disagreed. Furthermore, they were asked if that was still the case, 8 said yes, four said no, and three more said neither. “It still happens, when you get the grasp of Mexican politics you realise that if today La Jornada says something, tomorrow there’d be a reply on Crónica” [3], “The press doesn’t care about what happens in society, and people doesn’t give a damn if Elba Esther Gordillo and Roberto Madrazo are fighting” [4], “Every newspaper is used to send messages to different groups... La Jornada invents its own country!” [5], “Yes, it happens a lot, politicians are like dogs, they only understand by hitting them with newspapers!” [9], “It’s so clear, when there’s a camera, (presidential) candidates talk to the president” [24]

Many journalists argued that the prevalence of this situation happened because there is very little readership on the one hand, and newspapers are addressed to a small group on the other: “Newspapers are not written for the President, but neither are they for the general public, they are made for one elite” [12], “the media are elitist institutions, read by a very small group” [13], “the press is made for the sole use of certain groups of

society” [11]. But sometimes journalists argued that they were partly responsible for that situation: “We don’t have mass media because we don’t make a mass media” [13], “We forget who we are writing for. You want to get the splash, to knock down the politician, but never wonder –do citizens care about this?” [15], “the problem is that we do not go in depth, we remain in the surface... it’s a bad habit of journalists just to put the recorder and then yes, he said this or that” [25], “Its unfortunate, because the media should give voice to the people” [16]. Some journalists said the elections were a clear example of such occurrences: “the coverage has been nothing but the reproductions of what the candidates are saying to one another” [35], “the campaigns have been nothing but messages between candidates” [24].

Yet as noted above, there were those who believed that there was a transition to that situation: “not so much anymore at a national level, but it still happens in the country” [21], “it still happens, but less every time” [26], “they still send messages to one another, but now its in the open and as a journalist you decide whether or not you comply with it or not” [28]. And there were those who disagreed and thought the situation had really changed: “the president was everything, he was god, not anymore” [1], “the readers are more critical, hence newspapers have changed” [14], “it’s changed a great deal, there’s a society in motion that demands more quality from the media” [22].

Given the antecedents of the Mexican media system, it is not surprising to find that nearly all of the journalists who answered this question agree that the media used to address an elite group of society during the PRI regime, as suggested by the literature. As for whether or not they considered those situations still prevail, one in every three journalists thought that was still the case and only six thought it was not, which shows that journalists perceive little or no difference in how the media operate in this regard in the present PAN administration. Whereas during the PRI regime the media focused predominantly in coverage about the PRI party and news were biased against the opposition, nowadays there is more political plurality, yet the media is still focused on group messaging rather than informing the public. This explains why so many journalists believe the media still addresses an elite group.

The next question in the interview aimed to find out how journalists recognised themselves as part of this issue of elite-oriented journalism⁶ by asking them whom they wrote for⁷. Nearly half of the journalists interviewed (16 out of 33) said they wrote for politicians or the so called “red circle”, which is the group of society to which power elites, decision makers and educated people belong to or some put it more plainly as to the sources they cover, for example a journalist who covers the chamber of deputies said she wrote for “deputies and their families, the government of Mexico City, political parties” [2], while another journalist who covers the PAN party said “my readership now is very limited, the PAN party and more narrowly the group led by Demetrio Sodi” [7], “you always expect to be read by those you write about” [12]. One senior journalist put it very plainly as “I write for Fox, I’d like the president to read me, but I’m inspired by my friends and I write for them too” [27]. Some journalists gave specific profiles of their readership, and many of those had a very clear bias not only towards people in the government, but also high income readers “mid high class, many of whom are politicians, many live in Lomas, Polanco, San Jerónimo, businessmen...” [20], “the middle classes, educated people with disposable income, opinion leaders” [26].

And while, as in previous answers, journalists noted it was a mistake on their behalf not to address the audiences (i.e. “I write for the deputies, but that’s a mistake, society is being ignored” [16]), there were others who thought it was not possible to do it otherwise: “(due to low readership) things hardly ever get to the people” [15], “I think there’s a public opinion now, but very limited because very few people read newspapers” [27], “I thought I was going to change the world (...) but our country is so third world even in its culture, people do not read!” [32], but another journalist gave a different view on this matter: “I write for the middle classes, the higher ones don’t read they do business, and neither do the lower ones, they have to survive” [29]. Remarkably, of those who did not give a specific answer (6 out of 33), four gave descriptions that would likely fit the so-called red circle: “managers, business directors, analysts and

⁶ According to the “National Poll about Political Culture”, only 10% of the population use newspapers as the medium through which they get information (Consulta Mitofsky, 2005).

⁷ The question referred to the way journalists currently conducted their work.

government advisers”, “the profile of the newspaper reader is something like 50% live in Del Valle area, with monthly salaries above \$30,000 pesos, graduate educated...” [6], “it’s a minority, informed people, more grown ups than young people” [23], “people interested in keeping up to date, from different classes, I don’t think its just the red circle” [21].

One in every four journalists (9 out of 33) said they wrote for the people. The answers tended to be about a didactic element in their style: one put it as “I am obliged to think of the ordinary folk, I don’t care what my colleagues say, so I write the context of the news item [17]”, “middle, mid-low classes, (...) I try to be didactic, politics does not have to be boring or encrypted and obscure” [10], “ordinary people, citizens concerned in democracy, I manage general interest topics and I give them the context” [13], and two young journalists thought their job had a pragmatic end “it’s a bit pretentious, but I write expecting a reaction, I am a very local thing, about communities, issues that are not important in a national level, any copy you write you must do so thinking its gonna have a purpose, right?” [9], “I cover boroughs and city issues, the people call me and tell me this is going on or find out about that” [33]. And one freelance journalist said “I write for a reader who is a lot like me, who’s aware of problems with violence, who hasn’t got a very good financial situation, but who survives and is optimistic. Yet I don’t think of the reader when I write, I think instead of the quality of the information I’m giving” [22].

Finally, two journalists said they wrote for both politicians and the general public, one said: “I care about the politician reading me so they know what we as citizens want” [4], and the other one said “I expect my readership to be ordinary people, but the usual thing is to get calls from the red circle. I try to write for an audience who is not aware of anything. I try to explain everything” [19]. Again a pragmatic intention is present, as well as didactic means.

So there is a clear tendency towards addressing an elite rather than the general public, and the way the news is presented, according to how journalists said they did it, also

varies in regards of who they are approaching. While those who claim they write for the people made comments about their style, none of those who said they wrote for those in the power elite/red-circle made remarks of the like.

So, if the media is addressed to political elites and journalists tend to write with the expectation to be read by precisely the same people they are writing about, this confirms what Riva Palacio (2004, 99) argues when he notes that “the Mexican press never functions as a bridge between those who govern and those who are governed, neither is it a mirror of society. It is the medium through which the elites communicate to one another”. So rather than informing the public, the Mexican media functions as the spokespeople of the power elites, thus the over-reliance in the reproduction of declarations which will be mentioned later on in this chapter.

Agendas

Next journalists were asked what agendas they worked with⁸. Almost half of the journalists (15 out of 32) said their superiors, usually an editor or an editorial council, decided on the topics they had to cover. A further third of journalists (10 out of 32) said they decided on the themes themselves. Three more journalists said it was a joint decision between them and their editor, and three others said it was “reality” that dictated the issues they covered. Nevertheless, even though the majority of journalists said they received instructions from above, some also noted that they had room for individual decisions or that they could negotiate the agenda. Some noted it was a common task to come to an agreement, though a couple of journalists considered it more as a struggle between them and the editor, “It’s such a hassle! It’s a conflict between what the director of the newspaper wants, what the editor wants and what I consider appropriate, and of course, the context of things outside the newspaper” [6], “Myself. They give me instructions but usually they haven’t got a clue!” [Osorio].

⁸ This question also referred to journalists’ current work practice.

Seven journalists noted that agendas were defined by an editorial council or through regular, usually weekly or fortnightly editorial meetings. It must be noted however, that two of those journalists are indeed part of the editorial council of the media they work for. “We have a list of subjects. Every week we define 5 or 6 subjects. There are others that get to us as (public) denouncements or as leaks” [8], “There’s an editorial council that includes representatives from society. They get together every 15 days and they shape the agenda” [14], “The editorial body. There’s meetings. The agenda is made up at the start of the week” [20]. Furthermore, several journalists talk about setting the agenda around the activities of the people they cover “I know beforehand what my candidate will be doing, I set up my agenda based on that” [7], “with the invitations we get, the information editor sets it up, and if there are overlaps, the journalists can choose” [12]. Very few journalists talk about complete freedom on deciding their agenda “I look for themes different to those of other media, or I seek another angle” [23], “I must be a privileged one. I prepare a menu of stories that I offer to my editors” [22] said a freelance journalist, but one journalist had a different opinion “in no media can a journalist aspire to dictate his own agenda” [13].

As noted above, two of those journalists who said agendas were formed by an editorial body were actually part of it, so it was considered pertinent to review the answers given to this question in relation to the seniority of the journalists. Of the eight journalists in senior positions who answered this question, three said they could choose the agenda themselves, two more said they were decided collectively, two more said decisions were taken by an editorial council, and the last one said the agenda was dictated by reality. Their answers do not reflect the struggles or the submission mentioned by journalists in lower positions, but neither do they express complete freedom or indeed the drive to search for novel topics or do investigative journalism. Their responses range from simple and straightforward such as “reality”, “myself”, “In my column its topics of current affairs” to answers that reflect their position in the media organisation “Collectively, of course I decide, but in here we all propose and decide. I have the maximum responsibility, the last word” [4], “Collectively, I have my own ideas” [13],

yet it must be noted this last journalist is also the one who said that in no media can journalists aspire to dictate their own agenda.

There is then a widespread sense that, as previously noted (see previous chapter), when it comes to agendas, in general journalists assume a dutiful position of following orders of their superiors. Only a couple of journalists thought it a struggle to define the agenda, hence there is conformity or at least no evident clashes about deciding what to cover. No accounts about editorial constraints were mentioned in the answer to this question, which suggest that even those journalists whose superiors dictated the agenda did not see that as an interference to their freedom, or at least it was not a cause for conflict. Furthermore, while it was noted that there is more freedom to cover subjects previously thought of as taboos, there is still the notion that the media conforms to the government agenda, rather than seek alternative stories. This was clearer when journalists were asked which topics were given preference. Five journalists noted priority was given to social or human interest subjects, five more to political issues, four more noted current affairs, two said it was general interest and two more said finances and corruption. As with the previous question, many answered that it was “reality” or the “current state of affairs” that was given preference, and there was not much of a sense of going beyond that, for example one answer was “what is going on in Congress”. And while a senior journalist at political magazine *Proceso* noted that journalists there were free to work on stories they chose, he noted that many themes came as public denouncements or as leaks. On this line of thought, another journalist complained that there was a saturation of statements, or “*declaracionitis*” a term used by many journalists, and not much investigative journalism. One journalist simply put it that it was “as in a tennis match, you go wherever the ball goes”. So it seems that Mexican journalists are rather passive when it comes to setting agendas and usually unable to assert their independence from their superiors. Consequently, agendas are made up from the cues received from public figures, as opposed to set up by their own prerogatives.

Press coverage v. Broadcast coverage

Journalists were asked how coverage currently compared between print press and broadcast media. Almost half of journalists argued that coverage in press was more profound than in broadcast media, and while none noted it to be otherwise, that is, more shallow, four noted it was comparable. Some press journalists (3 out of 35) noted they had the duty to give something extra, which could be the context or an analysis “we set it up as a challenge, we ought to give an added value, which is the how and why” [19], “[a] good journalist goes beyond TV and radio, you give a plus” [2]. Some journalists (6 out of 35) not only thought coverage was better in print press, they also considered broadcast journalism had other flaws: “it is utterly shallow and sometimes even irresponsible” [21], “there are less commitments in the press, you have a bit more freedom. In TV the relationship with power is very close” [16], “time is scarce, so they don’t give the spaces” [20], “because of its immediacy TV presents the fact, but does not go further” [12], “it’s a dictatorship of profit. There is no right to reply” [23]. One newspaper journalist also noted that his duty was to give a different perspective or more depth to his stories than it had been done in broadcast media, yet he added “if my editors tell me, the story goes this way, even if it is the same approach as that of TV and radio, then I don’t move a thing, that’s an order” [7].

However some other journalists (3 out of 35) thought that each media had its own language: “its three different languages and in each of them you’re making journalism” [26]. Nevertheless, time restrictions were noted not just for broadcast media, but also for print media, and the growing importance of the internet was mentioned as both an asset and a limitation: “before you had more time to prepare the story, now we compete with broadcast media. It’s all faster and with less detail. Copy is shorter and of more impact, visual design is more important. I don’t see any advantages in press coverage [6], “through the web newspapers now have the immediacy of the radio” [19], “it’s changed a lot for all media, its all faster (...) there’s plenty more sources of information for society, and now there’s the internet” [14]. The latter also added that Journalism schools were partly responsible, as they did not train graduates to use new technologies, but also that there was a cultural problem of society in general.

Yet as in the previous question, some journalists noted that lack of quality in coverage was their responsibility, and that a big problem was the over reliance in statements and lack of investigation: “Journalism in Mexico has a problem: ‘declaracionitis’. There’s no research, no journalistic work to get figures or data, just statements. The problem is journalists. So it’s not about censorship. Journalists have bad customs” [3], “There’s almost no investigation, it’s all a matter of ‘he said’, ‘he declared’, ‘he confirmed’” [21]. In this regard one journalist noted that it was a matter of financial pressures that led to this: “News organisations live by the day and their employees must produce information everyday and they cannot afford a reporter dedicating a long time to follow one story. It’s a loss for the business. Journalism is full of statements and without the range of elements that could help the reader fully understand it” [18].

Democracy

The interviews were conducted in the spring of 2006, just 3 months prior to the presidential elections in Mexico. So, some questions in regards of the coverage of the presidential campaigns were included in order to assess journalists’ views on democracy.

Coverage of presidential campaigns

During the PRI state-party rule, elections coverage was biased in favour of the PRI party candidates and reporting of the opposition was not just minimal, it was also done in a negative way (see Lawson, 2002, 52). Journalists were asked if they considered coverage of presidential campaigns had changed in the present to how they were conducted during the PRI regime. Almost half of the respondents (14 out of 32) said coverage had changed, as opposed to nine who said it had not and four that said more or less. There were many aspects mentioned as to what had changed, from the duration of the campaigns to the technology involved in the coverage. While some changes were welcome, others were regarded as negative for the transition to democracy. One journalist, for example, noted that presidential campaigns started pretty much when the

Fox administration began in 2000 with internal, yet public disputes in every party for whom was to be their candidate. Two more journalists noted that what has changed was the way politicians campaign, one noted that the candidate has changed as he tried to get more media attention, and another put it as: “they used to travel all over the country, but they’re not interested in that anymore; what they care about now is immediate impact, mainly radio and T.V., with 10 minutes of good coverage you get what you did not travelling throughout the country” [10]. Related to this, one journalist noted that parties are more open, as nowadays journalists are allowed in the party campaigning offices “that gives them a greater coverage, candidates now know that the way to reach voters is through the media” [7]. Two more journalists noted that technology has had a great impact, as new communications allow a faster transmission of information.

But most frequently mentioned was the perception that coverage is nowadays much more plural and balanced for all parties. A third of journalists mentioned this to be the case (12 out of 35): “before it was all very careful of the PRI candidate” [19], “there’s a lot more equilibrium” [11], “now all candidates get coverage” [12], “before 2000, you knew who was going to win, now it’s a close competition” [25]. Nevertheless, some resented this equality of coverage as a shortcoming: referring to the fact that there were five parties contesting the presidential elections, but two of them were small parties, one journalist said “I think all should get coverage, but with the importance they merit” [18]; similarly, another journalist said “without stories that are worth it, all five get the same space (...) there’s equity in detriment of information” [23]. One more journalist said that campaigns had changed in 2000, as 1994 was an atypical campaign (since PRI candidate Luis D. Colosio was murdered), but that nowadays “there seems to be just the good ones v. the evil ones” [2], yet another journalist saw the 2000 elections as a time of transition and 2006 as a time of complete liberty that had led to “lots of confusion” [6]. So, even when change has been perceived, there are still misapprehensions as to how that has benefited coverage.

Issues that were mentioned earlier in the interview were pointed out again as things that have changed in regards of the coverage of the campaigns, with one mention each; they

were: a) before there used to be bribes, b) since the media now pays for their own travel expenses they can be more critical, c) now there is more access to public information, and d) now journalists are not afraid anymore to be critical.

However, many journalists noted campaigns had not changed at all: “it’s the same, there’s a lack of intelligence, it’s flat and boring!” [4] noted one journalist. In regards of the perceived equity of coverage, one journalist noted “it has changed quantitatively, ... but not qualitatively” [8]. One journalist said that the elections of 2006 were “the re-run of the 2000 elections, only characters have changed, Lopez Obrador is playing the Fox of 2000” [2]. Another journalist shared this view “with the current campaign and the previous one there’s no difference, only the parties have changed, then it was Fox with more coverage, now its AMLO⁹ [34]”. Yet there were concerns about the information provided in the coverage: “what are we covering? the gossip, the he-said-she-said, coverage is just being that, the scandals” [20]; “there’s no debate, just scandals and gossip” [28], “it hasn’t changed, it’s archaic, stories are just repetitions of the same over and over” [24], “no, it is still very elementary (...) just reproducing what the candidate said and that’s it” [22]. Therefore, there are more criticisms against the tendency to print statements as stories in this issue. The latter journalist noted that its not the fault of the journalists, but of the shallowness of the campaigns themselves “there is a great limitation, but it has to be with how poor campaigns are; campaigns have been predictable, and so have been the stories” [22], but another journalist had a different opinion “journalists should press candidates in order to get better information” [13]. So, there were criticisms of the quality of the coverage, while some journalists thought it only reflected the quality of the campaigns, others noted it demonstrates the shortcomings of journalists themselves, most notably, lack of investigative journalism and a tendency to reproduce statements as news stories.

⁹ Mexico City Mayor, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador is commonly referred to by his acronym “AMLO”.

There were four journalists who noted that coverage had changed more or less, and their opinions indeed combine those of the two previous groups, as the typical answer was “now there are more candidates, but there is no depth, no debate” [3], “there’s an attempt to give all candidates the same space (...) stories are the gossip, not the proposals” [7].

So, overall, the impression is that things have changed on the one hand by opening up spaces to cover the campaigns of opposition parties, which were previously dedicated solely to the PRI party candidate. On the other hand, however, it is considered that coverage has not improved since, as it is focused on rumours and gossip, or as previously noted, it is centred in the reproduction of statements and there is no insight into the proposals. In short, the perception is that campaign coverage now has more breadth but less journalistic depth.

Information for political decisions

Following up the previous question, journalists were asked what kind of information they considered was necessary to provide citizens so that they could make informed political decisions¹⁰. A staggering majority (27 out of 35) expressed desires to provide a didactic content, educate, discuss the proposals, and provide more analysis or deeper information: “to debate the proposals, we have the reader badly used to have gossip” [3], “tell them who he (the candidate) is, not just his words” [15], “give elements to the reader so that he can develop a criteria” [18], “we should focus on the proposals, and if they fall or say something stupid, we shouldn’t even mention it, that should be ignored. We should say what they propose. That’s what people need. Not knowing if they are arguing with one another, that doesn’t solve anything.” [11], “It’s very important to give people not the information that the government wants to be spread, but information about what is failing, what they are not doing, corruption, a journalism of denouncement” [33], “to provide a moral and educative formation” [34], “to make the population know that politicians are their employees” [4].

¹⁰ This question referred to journalists’ current working practices.

Journalists' responses were more about what they thought they ought to do, rather than what they actually do, so their answers again reflected what they perceive as shortcomings of journalism, such as shallowness in the reports and what they call "statementitis", which is the over-reliance statements as the entire content of news, an issue that was stressed by seven journalists. Some others, however, showed their dissatisfaction with politics, by noting that the information journalists ought to give should make readers aware of the fact that politicians should be accountable to the people, or that some of the promises candidates were giving were impossible to accomplish. Interestingly, no one noted editorial restrictions as a reason of the limitations in the coverage.

On the other hand, three journalists expressed a lack of interest from the audiences: "I think there is enough information available in the media about the proposals, but there is no interest on the part of the people" [6], "we're a country that reads very little (...) it is a structural problem of the country, and the media is part of that structure, it's very difficult to change" [32], "Sadly, there is no (political) participation beyond the vote itself" [28]. Finally, however, one journalist argued that people were informed and had all the elements to make an informed decision: "citizenship has already more or less the idea, there have been scandals, its known what are the weak points of each of the three candidates. They (people) have plenty of elements to make a decision. There are no more secrets" [1].

The overall view is that of pessimism, either about the quality of the coverage or that of the involvement of the population in regards of making an informed political decision in the light of the forthcoming presidential elections. Journalists indeed show a very negative and sceptical perception about their profession, as will be shown in the following sections of this chapter. Yet it is significant that no organisational restrictions, such as editorial constraints were mentioned as an impediment to exercising a better coverage.

Importance of journalism

The next question in the interview aimed to know what journalists perceived as the importance of journalism in creating a political culture in Mexico in the current context. Ten journalists said the importance of journalism was, or should be, “fundamental”, as “an informed society makes better decisions”, “its part of your life (...) journalism affects you directly, its about what you can expect to happen tomorrow” [9], “the more analytical and investigative journalism becomes, the greater the social conscience it will create” [3], “the more rigorous the information is, the more the people will form a criteria and make better decisions”. In general, journalists expressed opinions of the like, which suggested that through the provision of good information, citizens would become more aware of their democratic rights and duties.

Some of the observations mentioned earlier emerged again in the answer to this question, such as concerns about the excess of statements as news items, the lack of differentiation between information and opinion, lack of follow up of stories, and the fact that news are targeted to a small proportion of the population rather than the general public. While most of the journalists talked about what the media ought to do to fulfil its role in the democratic process, three journalists noted that journalism is in fact achieving its goals, but the limitations of its impact lay elsewhere: “it is doing it, but newspapers only reach one million people” [27], “people barely read, we’re very lazy. Mexicans can’t be bothered to think” [24]. There were three more journalists who believed that journalism does not have an important role in forming a political culture, “its not that important (...) journalism is a tool for those who already have a political culture” [12], “political culture is not formed by journalists, whoever wants to go to a political meeting would do, even if he doesn’t read” [25], “it is not the duty of the press to form a political culture, its duty is that of providing information. It’s politicians who have the obligation to form a political culture” [14]. One more journalist did not have a romanticised idea of the duties of journalism, he claimed “we’re not the fourth estate, and we should not play to be so. Journalism is very simple, we publish what is important for society, period. (...) Journalism doesn’t change anything, it doesn’t throw governments, it exhibits them. I don’t save the country every night, I just do my job” [26].

Unlike in the previous question, one journalist expressed her concerns about the role of news organisations when answering this query: “Journalism is a fundamental weapon for freedom of communication. The problem is that weapon can turn against society when it is used for manipulation. In Mexico, society is highly manipulated. Society is advancing very slowly and at times journalism has had an erratic behaviour, with ups and downs” [29]. On another note, a journalist argued that the issue of funding was paramount “the less hands are involved in the media, the more professional they would become, and the more mature society would be” [35]. Finally, one journalist noted that in order to transform journalism, journalists and those who form journalists ought to be transformed, and stressed that “journalism schools should focus on hard work” [24].

Journalists, therefore, have high aspirations as to what journalism should do, such as becoming a tool for the improving of society and smooth transition to democracy. Yet those ambitions are faced with the pessimism about their profession shown throughout the interview, but at the same time, there is disengagement on the role of social responsibility of the media, which somehow exonerates the shortcomings of journalism.

Scenarios for Mexican journalism after 2006

The final question on the interview asked journalists what they considered to be the possible scenarios for Mexican journalism regarding the likely results of the elections. The question sought to explore how journalists evaluated the changes and developments in journalism could be affected by whatever the result of the elections. This was the question that brought the most comprehensive answers.

Journalists replied in three different ways. The first one was by giving a general consideration of the substantiveness of the advances and developments of journalism. The second was by assessing the possible outcomes for one (who they thought was the most likely winner) or all of the three main candidates. And the third way was a combination of the previous two. More than half of the respondents (18 out of 34)

replied with a general assessment, eight more with a party and/or candidate perspective, and eight journalists gave a mixed evaluation.

The first group was the most optimistic of the lot, as 10 out of the 18 had a positive view of the future, five had a negative, and three had a mixed view. The other two groups however, tended more towards the negative. Of those who replied by speculating on parties, seven out of the eight had a negative view and one had a mixed view. Of the last group, those who mixed general assessments with party evaluations, one had a positive view; three had a negative view and four a mixed view (out of a total of eight).

Most of the respondents who foresaw a positive future for journalism or thought the developments were solid and not likely to be reverted belonged to the group who offered a general assessment, and only one other journalist shared such optimism, from the group that tended to offer both a general evaluation and a party consideration.

-“Good journalism stands for itself. A presidential order wouldn’t knock you down” [15],

-“Journalism has a good level of openness, not so many restrictions from the government, there’s more freedom” [16],

-“Nowadays conditions in Mexico can guarantee it (freedom of the press), regardless of what the candidates say. Mexican society is really aware of politics. A step backwards is very unlikely in that matter” [18],

-“There’s no turning back in the developments. Whoever wins will come to a society that is ever more critical and active” [26]

-“Mexican journalism is not going to change. It is very strong and solid, self financed, it doesn’t need the government to subsist” [27]

-“I think the press has won a lot of spaces. It’d be very difficult to remove rights that you’ve earned. You go forwards, not backwards, otherwise it’d be very regrettable.” [33]

-“It looks like there will be a political change, but whether or not AMLO wins, citizens know that their vote counts and that will make them demand more. We’re on a good way, and that will open up the media and make journalists more responsible” [32]

However, fifteen more journalists had a negative view of the future. Some had concerns about drug traffic and organised crime, and others about news organisations themselves:

-“Very threatening (...) we’re living a great threat to journalistic activities because nowadays politics and economics are linked with a very harmful tie called drug traffic. (...) and what is being most damaged is the development of our society, of our democracy” [5]

-“Whichever candidate wins, whoever wants to do critical journalism is going to have problems, but that’s our daily bread, no politician likes to be criticised. (...) The risk comes from the side of organised crime. Drug traffic has repercussions in Mexico City and that I can’t see how could ever be stopped.” [8]

-“We’ll carry on being critical, but if we cannot manage to sell more, we will go on depending on the compromises of the media owner with the political and private powers. If people do not support the media by consuming them, we will have an investigative journalism, but limited to the interests of the owners or the powers that be” [11]

-“What I think is more severe are the work conditions of journalists, which are more and more precarious. (...) we’re becoming an ever so cheap merchandise for journalistic businesses” [22]

-“There’s going to be a very severe post-electoral conflict because media organisations issued their vote before time with alliances with politicians” [29]

The negative views of those who made distinctions in regards of candidates or political parties tended to stress the concerns of the journalists towards authoritarian leaders:

-“I think AMLO is going to win, and he is the one who dislikes journalists the most. He refuses to be transparent, he doesn’t answer questions. Madrazo is a thief and Calderón is graceless” [2]

-“‘Peje’ is (intolerant), with his practice of ‘whatever my finger says’” [7]

-“At La Jornada I am afraid that AMLO wins (...) we will become an officialist media” [9]

-“I think AMLO will win, the guy will shut fundamental liberties like freedom of expression. He’s intolerant to criticism. He thinks he’s the messiah (...) we will go back to the struggles of the past” [10]

-“I see it difficult. AMLO is not open, he does not accept criticisms, the PRI is a bit more open and PAN, I don’t know, same as Fox” [12]

-“If AMLO wins, we’ll do really bad! (...) he is authoritarian; he would shut down a newspaper” [20]

-“All of them concern me. Madrazo would be a precious president, the old PRI style; Felipe (Calderón) is dictatorial and an egocentric, like Martha Sahagún; AMLO is not transparent” [21]

-“The three are candidates with authoritarian tendencies. I know stories of censorship from them all” [19]

Finally, eight journalists had mixed views about the future:

-“I don’t think the elections will play such an important part, because some important changes have been achieved. (...) the impact will be on regards of access of information, which can change depending on who wins (...) other matters that can have a greater impact is in relation to the financing of the media” [6],

- “Any development would have to come from society. Power makes all candidates the same (...) Madrazo would be a return to co-optation, corruption; AMLO is very intolerant of the media and criticism, so any development should be social, We the media are a reflexion of society, if society goes forward, so would we.” [4]

-“Its uncertain. With Fox we thought things would change, but they didn’t. Canal 40, murders of journalists, Mexico is one of the most dangerous countries for journalism. Is that what the change meant? I hope it doesn’t get any worse (...) the right of the media to be more critical has been hard earned. Developments come because society demands them.” [25]

- “You cannot go back to limiting the media, but you can go back to controlling the media, yes, through pressures” [35]

-“Looks like AMLO is going to win. He seems to have a democratic formation, but also a very authoritarian tendency. It makes me a bit apprehensive. (...) I’d like the power of some media to be more limited. Society can demand, the weight of public opinion.” [28]

So, overall, positive views were focused on how solid the developments of journalism were considered to be, and on the role of society. On the other hand, the concerns of the journalists were about the impact of drug traffic and organised crime in their activities, the way media operate as business with regards about how they as employees were treated or the implications the financial links of the news organisation with politics or the private sector could affect the extent of their coverage, but mostly, about how the personal characteristics of the candidates could affect journalism would they become the president. In this point in particular, most of the apprehensions were about Andrés Manuel López of the PRD, as fourteen journalists made a negative comment about him, mostly about how journalists considered him to be authoritarian or intolerant. Only one journalist had a ‘more or less’ opinion about López. Felipe Calderón of the PAN party received six negative views, one mixed view, but remarkably, was the only candidate to receive positive views, of which he got three. Finally, Roberto Madrazo of the PRI party was given six negative views and a mixed one. The number of mentions each of the candidates got also reflects the tendencies of the time about the likeliness of the results of the elections. The PRD was leading in the polls and many journalists answered the question assuming López was going to win, or stressing it was very likely he’d be the victor. The PAN was second in the polls, yet Calderón received considerably less mentions than López (10 against 15). And the PRI party was the third in importance, yet Madrazo was only mentioned six times. The other two parties contending in the elections, New Alliance Party (Partido Nueva Alianza) with candidate Roberto Campa, and Social-democrat Alternative Party (Partido Alternativa Socialdemócrata y Campesina) with candidate Patricia Mercado, received no mention whatsoever.

It is notable, however, that although in previous questions journalists expressed a lot of criticisms about themselves as limitations to journalism, only one individual came back to it when assessing the scenarios for the future: “I’d like to believe that whoever wins

we will evolve to a better journalism, but we have passed from being a journalism that reproduced press releases to a press that reproduces statements” [13].

Conclusion

Blumer and Gurevitch (1995, 35) argue that role relationships between journalists and politicians are cultural products prescribed by normative and institutional commitments. A clear definition of their roles not only provides models of conduct, but also patterns for the resolution of conflicts, so much so that ‘so long as [journalists] are true to [their] roles, [they] are protected’¹¹. Such a shared culture of role definitions and expectations imply that communicators are “playing a game with more or less agreed rules” (ibid, 36), with common appreciations to news values, fairness and objectivity. However, the patterns displayed by the way in which Mexican journalists relate to political sources are those of a type of media system that, the authors argue, is “governed by more authoritative and paternalistic goals” (Blumer and Gurevitch, 1995, 16). This has two consequences for the audience: either audiences tend to follow the roles assumed by party and media communicators giving greater emphasis on partisan roles, or audiences clash with message senders and “avoid political information, distrust the media and feel alienated from politics” (Blumer and Gurevitch, 1995, 17). This would explain why a) journalistic goals are blurred with those of party politics and b) why journalists address their stories to the so-called red circle. The lack of role definitions constructed around a notion of professionalisation affects not only the way journalists relate to their sources, but also the way they feel about their occupation.

In general there is a very low morale amongst Mexican journalists. They are negative and sceptical about their profession and many consider themselves vulnerable to the media organisations or authoritarian measures by politicians. Their responses suggest not only that journalists tend to conform to the line and requests of their media, but also that it is difficult to remain independent. Journalists are only assertive when and in

¹¹ The phrase is used to describe how a BBC news executive dealt with complaints about coverage during the general election of 1997.

regards of the people that their organisation backs such assertiveness, and are submissive and docile otherwise. Their position before their sources is one of deference and to their media is one of obedience. Access to public figures and official information is still difficult, but journalists appear resourceful in the many tactics they employ to gain it. However, agendas are generally set by their superiors and rely heavily on the activities of public officials. So, regardless of matters of accessibility, stories have not become more assertive, added to this is the fact that journalists admit to profuse quotations as the body of news stories and lack of investigation. Furthermore, journalists are aware that they write for an elite group of society of which politicians and party members are a great part, so much so that some journalists even admit that they expect to be read by those who they write about. Additionally, journalists believe access to information is a matter of how the media relates to power rather than about journalistic skills, many even put themselves down by admitting that it is the name of the media, not themselves, that makes a difference when gaining access to information. On another note, despite many journalists noting they have experienced bans, they do not appear to be so prevalent nowadays than how they were reported to occur during the PRI regime. However, they have expanded, as they were noted to happen from all political parties and in all levels of government, but they seldom turn to threats. Once again in this matter, political parallelism explains the manner in which media organisations react to those who try to impose bans on them. Journalists are encouraged to put up with pressures or to give in to them, depending on the position of the media organisation.

Journalists are idealistic about the importance of journalism for society, however they are pessimistic about their prospects. While they believe that coverage is more plural they do not think it more profound or inclusive, hence its overall impact is of limited scope. Journalists are apprehensive in several ways. Firstly, their own indifference and lack of enthusiasm to make better journalism. Secondly, the compromises of media organisations with the public or private sector, as they could impact their coverage. Thirdly, the authoritarianism of political leaders, since they could limit or revert advances in media opening. Fourthly, passivity of society who would not demand more from the media or politicians. Fifthly, the overall impact in their profession by other

factors such as organised crime and drug trafficking. Editorial constraints were hardly ever mentioned during this part of the interview, so conflicts or clashes were not blamed for the shortcomings of coverage, but the overall disposition to docility, deference and elite-oriented journalism may explain why it would be complicated for them to pursue reporting in a different way.

The findings presented in this and the previous chapter will be analysed in the following chapter, which will discuss the results of the interview analysis in the light of the current scholarship on Mexican journalism.

Chapter 6

Analysis of interviews 4: redefining journalism or political patrons?

The previous two chapters have focused on the results of the interviews conducted with a sample of 35 Mexican journalists. The interview aimed to find out to what extent Mexican journalists exhibit different attitudes and experiences to those reported in the literature as common occurrences in the Mexican media system, many of which have been considered as limitations to the professionalisation of journalism in Mexico, such as a culture of co-optation between the media and the government, as well as coercion from political figures. This chapter will compare the findings of the previous chapter with the scholarship on the Mexican media system.

The Mexican media system has historically been described as clientelistic, due to its relationship with the quasi dictatorial PRI party during its seven decade rule. Yet recent changes in the political system have led to arguments about a transition in the Mexican media towards openness and democratisation, often as a result of breaking links with political patronage. The media are usually discussed as organisations in allegiance or at odds with the government, yet the literature does not address how at its very core, that is, routine journalistic practice, the media's dealing with the government takes place.

This part of the study aims to fill such a gap by understanding how journalists relate to official figures and their overall impression of their profession and its impact on the democratic transition Mexico is undergoing. By doing so, it hopes to elucidate whether or not the Mexican media still behaves in a clientelistic manner or if indeed it is heading towards greater freedom and democratisation. The previous two chapters have laid down the evidence collected through interviews with 35 Mexican journalists. This chapter will juxtapose these findings with the literature on the Mexican media system in order to identify where the research both differs and concurs with current scholarship. It will then draw on the broader literature about other media systems to try to explain the cause of the disparities

The perfect dictatorship vs. the Fourth Estate

As mentioned in the literature review, Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa described the Mexican political system under the PRI regime as “the perfect dictatorship”, as it monopolised power through extended, albeit softer, means of control. Yet other authors consider that Mexican journalism has evolved into a more open and democratic type of journalism, hence assuming a role of “fourth estate”. Many of the key issues on how the Mexican media system has been categorised in the literature have been reviewed in chapter one of this study. At this juncture it is worth reminding ourselves some of the relevant issues of this subject. The next two sections briefly review the two lines of thought by which the literature depicts the Mexican media system, the “perfect dictatorship” and the “fourth estate”.

The perfect dictatorship:

Media-State relations as collusion and coercion

In the context of the PRI party dominance, the media were considered an important part of the political system: journalism was “passive and self-censored, with most political coverage based on official press releases, and with many areas of controversy being off limits” (Hallin, 2000, 99). The relationship between the media and the PRI-government was noted as one example of a “carrot and stick” approach. Yet the links between political power and the media were regarded to be so close that most authors generally consider coercion, repression and harsher forms of authoritarian government control as seldom necessary (see Hallin, 2000, 98-99; Hughes, 2006; Lawson, 2002). Therefore, the lure of the carrot was noted to be the driving force behind journalistic practice, yet La France argues that “one does not have to peer too deeply into the nature of government-press relations in contemporary Mexico to discover that the “stick” has not been sheathed; indeed, it plays a disturbingly large and even increasing role in keeping journalists in line” (1993, 216).

“Chayotes”, the “Gacetilla” system and poor quality journalism

The literature also notes that during the PRI era limits to journalism came not only as a result of direct government intervention, but also from environmental factors of which the government was but one. Writing in the 1970's, Cole argues that limits to the press in Mexico come from three sources, society, government and the media (1975, 66-71). Societal controls involve language, religion, morals, literacy and other factors removed from the operational nature of the media. Governmental controls include subtle and overt means of control, such as legislation, loans, unionism, libel, advertisement purchase, coercion, and so on. And institutional controls are those internal to the media organisation, such as poor reporting quality, sale of news space, poor journalistic training, low salaries and bribes or 'chayotes'. These controls, the author noted, had contributed to the stability of the media system and while press freedom had varied from one administration to the other, the press rarely criticised the president while he was in office (ibid). These limits to journalism were noted to exist throughout time, as over two decades after Cole's study, Benavides (2000) notes that the sale of news space, the over-reliance on official declarations and press releases, and the many forms of bribery offered to journalists constitute a “gacetilla system” that discourages professional journalism. In other words, during the PRI party rule authors have regarded Mexican journalists as passive and subjected to restrictions that compromised the quality of their work.

Elite oriented journalism and matters of press freedom

Scholarship on the Mexican media system during the PRI regime notes that news content is addressed to the political and business elite, while criticism of official figures in the press is not a sign of journalism acting as a watchdog, but rather of journalism being used as another political tool of the PRI party machinery (Adler, 1993). “[G]overnment institutions use the press to talk to other members of the “ruling coalition”, rather than to the larger “public opinion”” (Adler, 1993, 20). In Mexico “criticism of the government by the press does not necessarily add up to press freedom” (ibid, 20). Indeed, Adler argues, criticism of the government exists in the press, but the President remains “untouchable” (ibid, 9).

Forbidden topics, censorship and self-censorship

As discussed in chapter three, there were topics off-limits to the press during the PRI regime. Traditionally, three subjects had been considered “untouchable”: the president, the army and the virgin of Guadalupe (see Lawson, 2002: 50, Martinez, 2002). The image of the president was managed in a very strict manner, and access to him was heavily controlled (see Lawson, 2002, 38-39). “[C]ore features of the political system – presidential authority, official corruption, electoral fraud, etc.- remained decidedly off-limits to the press” (Lawson, 2002, 25). This environment, it has been argued, led to censorship and self-censorship in Mexican journalistic practice.

In general, the attributes of the Mexican media system in this line of thought are that journalism is limited through coercion, co-optation, lack of professionalisation, censorship and self-censorship. The second trend in the literature highlights the aspects in which the media system is noted to be different from the latter, as discussed below.

The fourth estate

Another tendency in the literature about the Mexican media system focuses on the changes it has gone through, either as a cause or a result of transformations in the political context of Mexico. Some of the changes in the political context of Mexico were the PRI party’s loss of its monopoly of political power as a consequence of internal conflicts, the growth of opposition parties and elections becoming more transparent.

Economic liberalisation of the mass media

A break from government sponsorship is noted to be a relevant measure in the opening up of the press in Mexico (Lawson, 2002, 91). Fromson (1996, 131) argues that there is no way to justify the vast number of newspapers existing in Mexico, with its insufficient readership and functional illiteracy, other than a “cynical government strategy to use advertising dollars to sustain a large number of weak newspapers, thereby preventing a handful of stronger ones from dominating the official advertising market”. Therefore, he argues, media owners of newly established press organisations, such as Alejandro Junco of El Norte, realised they had to be independent of government subsidies in order to survive. This new trend was followed by El Norte’s sister publication Reforma and other

provincial publications, like Siglo 21 in Guadalajara and El Imparcial in Hermosillo (ibid, 131-136). Added to financial independence are greater professionalisation of journalists and the use of new technologies, which, Fromson (1996, 136) believes, have resulted in more aggressive and critical reporting.

“Civic” journalism

The literature notes the emergence of a new trend in Mexican journalism that is “autonomous, assertive and politically diverse” with the “potential to enhance civil participation and government accountability to citizens, the civic objectives expressed by its principal practitioners, and its location in the upsurge of Mexican civil society and citizen participation” (Hughes, 2006, 5). This new breed of journalists “tended to be decidedly more independent than their counterparts of previous generations” (Lawson, 2000). This type of “civic” journalism was noted to precede and indeed enhance the economic liberalisation of the media discussed above (Hughes, 2003, 110). The consensus in this second line of thought about the Mexican media system is that journalism has shifted from a mouthpiece of the government to a “watchdog” or a “fourth estate” that actively monitors the government, holds it accountable of its acts and is concerned about informing the citizenry.

The next section of this chapter will discuss how the findings of this study concur or contend the assertions expressed in the literature regarding the Mexican media system.

Changes and continuities in the Mexican media system

The evidence of this research, as articulated in the previous chapters, suggests that indeed the harsh government control of the PRI regime is not present in the latter PAN administrations, although there are some manifestations of coercion from other political parties but to a lesser scale. However, the autonomous, critical, assertive and civic journalism was not found either. Rather, journalism in Mexico is currently in an ‘in-between’ condition, as its not as harshly controlled by the government or limited by editorial constraints, journalists do not gain from clientelistic favours, yet they do not perform independently and assertively.

While a greater degree of freedom is perceived, journalists are still over reliant on official sources for information, and they agree that their audience does not lie in the average citizen, but in members of the power elite, often consisting of the very same people they write about. Coverage is poor as it comprises largely of quotations of official statements and investigative reporting is seldom explored. Journalism is therefore stagnant and lacking in empowerment, as journalists often put themselves down and surrender their identity and initiative to what is expected of them from the media organisation, and play down their role as actors in the democratic transition of Mexico. Finally, although it is a subject that has been discussed by other authors, albeit as a secondary matter, in this study it is clear that the role of drug traffic has a pervasive cooling effect in journalism, as the threat to press freedom from that end is becoming ever more visible, and its impact is felt throughout the Republic, leading to widespread silence and self-censorship.

One basic distinction to make before discussing the findings of this research is in regards of the current political organisation of Mexico. During the PRI regime all aspects of the government were dominated by the PRI party: the Executive, Congress and local governments. Even the government of the capital, Mexico City, was in hands of the president. In 1997, however, the PRI party lost its dominance in Congress to the PRD and that same year the figure of the Mayor of Mexico City was created as a publicly elected post, and has been held by the PRD ever since. And more significantly, in year 2000, for the first time in its history, the PRI party lost a presidential election, this time to the PAN party, who also won the elections on 2006. Put differently, politics in Mexico shifted from a one party rule to a more plural system dominated by three main parties, the PRI, PAN and PRD. Furthermore, while in the past the PRI and the president were the prevailing source of information, nowadays it's all the three parties with their contending positions. In other words, the political elite now consists of three main parties, yet it remains an elite. It is important to make this clear as one of the arguments of this chapter is that many of the practices that characterised the relationship between the media and the PRI party government have spread to other parties and not to more inclusiveness and alternative forms of coverage, as other authors have argued.

When it comes to restrictions to press freedom, the academic debate tends to argue that the machinery of the PRI regime, which not only included all branches of government but also the army, labour and peasant unions as well as the economic elite, either pressured or colluded the media in order to ensure positive coverage of the government. Furthermore, media owners in this context were usually linked with the PRI regime, if not members themselves, as even former presidents became media owners. The favours media organisations received from the government ranged from concessions, cheap or free newsprint, to advertisement purchases, credits and tax exemptions. In turn, the media offered favourable coverage, thus journalists were subjected to tight editorial lines, censorship, self-censorship and even repression.

Overall, journalists in this study believe that media organisations do not receive orders from the government anymore, or if they do, they are not obliged to follow them, in fact, they say the calls they receive are not as such ‘orders’ but requests to express a point of view. Even though they say there still are politicians who intend to impose their visions, they are regarded as “archaic”. There were mentions of calls on behalf of President Fox of the PAN party to some media organisations, like Canal 40 or Proceso, but journalists say they did not influence their coverage. Interestingly, of the two occasions mentioned in which media organisations succumbed to the requests of a government official, they came from a minister of a local government of an opposition party. This is a big difference from what is reported to be the case during the PRI regime, as then it was usually elite politicians, sometimes the president himself, who would make that sort of requests. The suggestion is therefore that other political parties have become more prone to establish clientelistic relationships with media organisations on the one hand, and on the other, that media organisations can still portray themselves as critical of the government just as long as they criticise the Executive, even if they are clienteles of local governments and/or opposition parties. Interestingly though, journalists still perceive the government as oppressive and controlling, despite the fact they seldom are victims of repression, and if they are, it is more likely to be from a party other than the PAN.

In regards to matters of themes being off-limits to press criticism, the evidence of the interviews of this study suggests that indeed there is more freedom, as “untouchable” subjects are now subject to criticism, interestingly more the president than the army or the virgin. Yet it does not indicate that journalism has become more assertive, as either Lawson or Hughes note. Journalists no longer fear for their safety were they to write a story that criticises the government, the army or the church. Nevertheless, they find it difficult to obtain information about the army because of the way the institution itself operates, and believe they have to be cautious with both the army and, more particularly, with religion, so as not to disturb sensitivities of the audience. Not only is the image of the president the subject of criticism, it is even the object of mockery. So much so that some journalists noted that now the brave thing to do is not to criticise the president, but to defend him. This shows how relaxed journalists now feel about the reactions they get from the Executive in the new administration. One journalist, who blames President Fox for the disappearance of Canal 40, believed there was more freedom in the Zedillo administration, the last of the PRI government. However, there was the account of another journalist who was dismissed after asking an uncomfortable question to president Zedillo, yet there were no accounts of similar situations of personal sanctions as a consequence of criticisms of president Fox.

As for matters of editorial constraints, journalists tend to consider themselves freer than their predecessors, but at the same time they regard themselves as employees of the media organisation, and therefore deem their duty to follow orders. One interviewee put it plainly as “I, as a journalist, sell my services to the media organisation” and another as “the media are businesses that live off what they sell, what they sell is the truth, and truth has a price. It’s like a salad, we make it as you want it and from it depends the price”. Accounts of censorship usually revolved around business partners or advertisers of media organisations, the latter being either public or private bodies. But it is difficult to know to what extent censorship indeed occurred, or if stories were changed or discarded as a more routinely editorial decision instead, as journalists are not prone to question editorial decisions or orders received. Contrary to Hughes (2006) arguments,

this research did not find journalists to be generally aggressive; rather they seem unwilling to test the boundaries of their freedom. In fact, journalists do not defend their professional autonomy when they believe themselves to be the victims of censorship; instead they are content to know somebody else is responsible for it.

Moreover, even though journalists claim to be free to choose their own topics, they seem to avoid conflict by steering clear of stories that possibly will be at odds with the editorial line. Another possibility is that journalists do not need to challenge editorial lines to do their job, as all that is expected of them is to regurgitate what public officials have made public in the first place, hence the over reliance on quotes or ‘statementitis’, as they call it. A middle management official at the press office of the Ministry of Interior described the activities of the journalists allocated to the beat as “harvesting”: “they collect all the press materials we produce, releases, statements and the like, and from that they produce their copy”. A direct contact to elite figures was therefore not necessary. As a matter of fact, she pointed, it was not uncommon to find the material produced by the Ministry, such as videos or photographs, used by broadcast news or the print media. So, even though journalists do not find themselves constricted by untouchable subjects and claim to be free to choose their own topics, they only work within the boundaries of their editorial line and officialdom. And as noted in the previous chapter, they define themselves as being oppressed, censored and disadvantaged by government, despite their evidence to the contrary, and it appears that the profession as a whole still exhibits a kind of victim mentality that restrains their ability to act assertively, while at the same time, still expecting favours from the government in the form of advertisement expenditure. In other words, there is a prevalent clientelistic mentality amongst journalists.

Fromson (1996) and Lawson (2002) argue that competition has led to greater freedom of the press, and mention several cases in which media owners have pursued financial independence from the government, thus breaking the traditionally clientelistic relationship that has characterised the Mexican media. However, this view fails to acknowledge that there is still a great deal of newspapers and news magazines all over

Mexico, increased competition and financial independence of countless cases of media organisations has become the exception, not the rule in the Mexican press. Broadcast media is different altogether, as it is dominated by the duopoly of Televisa and TV Azteca, and the legislation is still favourable to them, as new competitors have been prevented from joining the industry. The evidence of this study suggests that the effect of these situations on journalists has been the need to comply with the requests and orders they receive from their superiors, which are usually unquestioned or debated. In effect, journalists justify and validate the editorial lines they receive by regarding them as something natural and acceptable, even in cases when they are asked to cover a story they do not consider newsworthy themselves, that carries an implausible argument or which funding seems originally devious: “in the end, you produce a journalistic piece”, claimed a journalist after having to cover a story out of the blue with all expenses paid, “there’s no way she’d ever have a chance of winning the elections, but she was in the cover nonetheless” said another about a story of a PRD hopeful for the Mexico City government, who did not even become a candidate, but who had an issue of the magazine he works for dedicated to her.

But just as journalists tend to defend their own media organisation, they are prone to criticise other ones, even if what they criticise of them is what they defend of their own. A clear example is in regards of government advertising, while it is condemned that the purchase of advertising declined for some media organisations, such as Proceso or Canal 40 -while the channel existed-, journalists see that as an obstacle to press freedom, but they regard it as a sign of co-optation when those favoured by government advertisements are Televisa and TV Azteca. Another case is that of newspaper La Jornada, which many journalists acknowledge as a spokesperson of the PRD party, yet the journalists who work at it defend it as a free newspaper, although in other parts of the interview they expressed their concerns about its position in regards of the PRD. In 2000 Hallin wrote “The new independent papers were for the most part started as journalistic more than business enterprises. Proceso and La Jornada were founded by journalists who scraped together enough financing to survive; their motivation was to have a public voice and to democratize Mexico’s press, not to build commercial media

empires.” (Hallin, 2000, 107). Similarly, Lawson (2002, 91) says that “journalists with a different vision of their profession founded a series of independent publications: Proceso, El Financiero, La Jornada, Reforma, Siglo 21 and others” and argues that their popularity granted them financial independence that allowed them to resist official pressure. By the accounts of the interviewed journalists who work in these organisations, it is clear though, that nowadays even the news organisations that were born as journalistic rather than commercial have succumbed to clientelistic practices as they otherwise would struggle to survive from readership or private advertising alone. Journalists, therefore, are well aware of where the funding of their media comes from, be it from government advertising or links with political parties, and know that when their allegiance is required, they ought to follow suit. As Hallin (2000, 99) notes, “The press in Mexico has very limited circulation and, as in other regions without a mass circulation press –Southern Europe, for example- serves primarily as means of communication among political elites and activists. The difference between Mexico and, say Italy, is of course that in Mexico those elites have all belonged to the single, dominant party.” While the PRI party is no longer the single, dominant one, the media is still addressed to members of the power elite, the so-called ‘red circle’. Journalists are conscious of this, and even admit they expect to be read by those they write about. There are, however, a few cases in which journalists claim to write for the general public, yet they resent the lack of readership and end up concluding that those who read them belong to the ‘red circle’. So the civic journalism that Hughes claims to be so widespread in Mexican newsrooms was not found to be the case on the evidence of this study.

The suggestion therefore is that clientelism has shaped the way in which journalism is conducted: the way of gathering news, the conception of what is newsworthy, what topics ought to be covered and what is to be the body of the story. That is why other forms of journalism are known to journalists, but not carried out, such as investigative reporting or the exploration of alternative sources of information. Instead, journalists are constrained to officialdom and ‘statementitis’. The latter puts stress on the declarations and opinions of the power elite. Hence, journalists often seek to befriend politicians or feel compromised to their sources for the information they are granted. While this is

common to journalists in other countries, in the Mexican case it seriously damages their prospects of producing copy, as they are so reliant on quotes for their stories.

The claims about Mexican journalism becoming more professional, a 'fourth estate' or a 'watchdog', imply a notion of journalism as understood in the liberal or social responsibility model, also known as the Anglo-American model. Papathanassopoulos (2001, 507) argues that "The notion of journalistic professionalism, which forms the basis for journalists' claims of autonomy, is connected with the idea that journalists serve a public interest that transcends the interests of particular parties or owners of social groups". He goes on to wonder about the extent to which that model can be applied to other countries, more so those with a different political culture and development. The same can be asked about the Mexican case. "This is because journalism always reflects and embodies the historical processes within which it has developed and the contemporary social conditions within which it is made" (McNair, 1998, 64 in Papathanassopoulos, 2001, 507). Hallin (2000, 101) argues that "the liberal perspective is hardly adequate by itself to capture the complexity of media power in Mexico". The reason, he argues, is because the trend when analysing the media systems of the region "sees the problems of Latin American journalism as rooted in state intervention" (Hallin, 2000, 100), hence assuming that financial independence results in press freedom. But as noted above financial independence has a) not resulted in a more professional journalism and b) it has not been maintained for a long period of time, as many media organisations that originated as such have resorted to clientelistic relationships with different patrons.

Therefore, a better approach to understanding the Mexican media system would be to acknowledge its historical, cultural, political and economic context and development, and compare it with media systems that have undergone similar processes. Hallin and Mancini (2004, 46) argue that media systems develop in different ways, as influenced by the political, economic, social and cultural context in which they emerge. Of the three models these authors propose for the developed democracies of Western Europe and

North America, the Mexican case is closest to the Mediterranean or Pluralist Model, as countries in the region have a history of clientelism, similar to Mexico.

In the PRI dominated context of Mexican politics there was a trend towards reductionism of the Mexican media system in terms of its relationship with the ruling party. Now that the Mexican political arena has broadened, so has to be the way of analysing the media, without jumping to categorisations that merely situate the media system within the liberal model, or that try to understand changes as a linear transition towards the Anglo-American style of journalism. This is because, as noted above, clientelism has profoundly marked the journalistic practice, as well as the way in which the media organisations relate to political actors, which in turn have an impact on the political culture of newsrooms. And as noted by Fox (1994) clientelism, semi-clientelism and citizenship can coexist within the same context as they are not mutually exclusive.

In the past, journalists were considered a building block in the cooptation of the media, as they themselves were favoured by clientelistic arrangements in the form of bribes and pay-offs. This, in turn, led to self censorship and uncritical coverage of favoured political figures. Journalists claim that they are no longer the receivers of favours from public officials, yet the way they gather information and write their stories is no different in the present. This study suggests that this lack of change in journalistic practices can be explained through Hallin and Mancini's (2004, 33) notion of professionalisation. These authors argue professionalisation has three dimensions: autonomy, distinct professional norms and a public service orientation (ibid, 34-36). In their understanding, professionalisation of journalism is related to instrumentalisation of the media, in the sense that the more a media organisation is used as a political instrument, the lesser its level of professionalisation will be. Similarly, the more professional journalism is in a media system, the less political parallelism will manifest in that media system. "Where political parallelism is very high, with media organisations strongly linked to political organizations, and journalists deeply involved in party politics, professionalization is indeed likely to be low" (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, 38).

The concepts mentioned above: professionalisation, autonomy, public service orientation and political parallelism and instrumentalisation will be discussed in the next section. These concepts are closely related and many issues in regards of them overlap from one another.

Professionalisation

The notion of professionalisation is not necessarily related to formal training. For example, Hallin and Mancini (2004, 33-34) note that journalism degrees are less common at the most prestigious news organisations in the US, where they fit more closely their concept of professionalisation, while journalists in Spain tend to have more university degrees than German ones, yet the authors consider German journalism as more professionalized than that of Spain¹. Instead, what characterises professionalisation in journalism are the dimensions in regards of autonomy, professional norms and public service orientation. What defines journalism professionalisation is therefore how the field came into being. Borrowing on Bourdieu's field theory, Hallin and Mancini argue that "professionalization exists where journalism is developed as a distinct field with significant autonomy from other social fields, including the political field" (2004, 38).

As in the case of the Mediterranean model described by Hallin and Mancini (2004, 113), journalism in Mexico "has to a significant extent not been an autonomous institution, but has been ruled by external forces, principally from the worlds of politics and business". The vast majority of journalists interviewed in this study have a university education, mostly in areas related to journalism, such as communication sciences or social communication. Even the eldest members of the sample have university degrees, which suggests that the trend for the pursuit of higher education began several generations ago. However, this is no sign of an increasing professionalisation as understood by Hallin and Mancini (2004, 33).

¹ See Benson and Neveu (2005) for a different perspective on journalistic professionalisation also employing Bordieu's field theory and notion of habitus to discuss the influence of university education on journalistic practice.

One of the most salient aspects in which the lack of journalistic standards in the Mexican media system can be appreciated is in the issue of bribes, also known as “chayos”, “embutes” or “iguales”. For a start, whatever can be considered a bribe depends on definitions and definitions are subjective. The fact alone that there is no widespread consensus as to what constitutes a bribe is a sign of lack of professionalization, thus a manifestation of political clientelism. The confusion around what is and what is not a compromise to professional ethics is exploited both by members of the elite and media executives at the expense of journalists’ development. Some young journalists believe they were offered bribes as means to test their likeliness to accept them and be corrupted, while others note that their institutional reluctance to accept any sort of gift is seen as pedantic by other journalists, as in the case of those who have worked for Reforma. The almost paranoid position in regards of what could be considered a chayo also affects public institutions and their relation to journalists of the beat. As noted by the Ministry of Interior official interviewed in this study, the Ministry regularly conducts events outside the Capital, to the resentment of journalists of the beat, as their media organisations hardly ever pay for them to travel and cover such events. In such cases, stories are covered by local correspondents -the luxury of larger organisations- or sourced from news agencies. Yet, as noted by the officer, journalists feel left out and resentful towards the Ministry for not inviting them along, and ironically not towards their media for not paying their travel expenses. Around the time of the interview, an event was being organised outside Mexico City, and the Ministry offered to pay travel expenses for all the journalists of the beat, who the official described as being very excited about. The aim of bringing them over was a strategy to establish the status of the Ministry in relation to the other ministries present at the event. “The minister is more important than the governor (of the state in which the event took place), ...there were other ministries there, and their journalists could have covered the event, but we were the highest rank ministry” was the justification given by the official interviewed.

This illustrates a number of things: a) since the resentment in regards of travel expenses is directed at the source and not the media, journalists are putting themselves in the

position of receivers of favours and as victims should that not be the case, b) since media organisations are not seen as responsible for paying travel expenses, again the government is seen as repressive while the media is absolved, c) the smaller the media organisation, the more vulnerable it becomes to cooptation were a public institution to attempt to it, d) the media were used in this particular case for the interests of the Ministry, so instrumentalisation is still strong in current media-state relations.

Were journalists as a guild organised around a shared code of ethics and distinct professional norms (see Hallin and Mancini, 2004, 35-36) uncertainty around what constitutes a bribe would be avoided, hence it would be clearer to differentiate what are the obligations of both sources and media organisations when ensuring the professional coverage of news, and different methods of gathering information could be developed. While a former British journalist interviewed for this study noted it was normal and even expected of him to have drinks as an opportunity to chat to his sources, in Mexico that would be branded as corruption, once again restricting newsgathering activities to those laid out in the past that are still the norm in Mexican journalism, centred around officialdom.

Journalists in general complain about a lack of cooperation from their sources, as they are perceived as reluctant to share information. Yet one young journalist who has worked for the PRD government of Mexico City, as well as for the PAN federal government noted that her experience in public offices showed her that rather than reluctance to sharing information, it was more a case of a reluctance to organise information on the part of government officials. Her view was similar to that of the Ministry of Interior official, who noted that the Ministry does not even have a manual of processes and procedures or any sort of institutional guidance about people's roles within the organisation, which led to internal confusion and conflicts. However, she also noted that a lot of her work revolved around secrecy and an aim to maintain officials on message. Despite these perceived barriers, journalists talked about strategies to getting information, such as the so-called pavement interviews or sourcing information from lower ranking politicians and party members. Notably, though, is the fact that only six

journalists mentioned the use of the Federal Law on Transparency and Access to Public Information, which has been in effect since June 2003. In order to oversee the enforcement of such law, the Federal Institute of Access to Information was created. While this is an important tool to break from officialdom, it is one seldom used by journalists. This again, this study argues, demonstrates a lack of professionalisation of journalism, which leads to political parallelism, as quotes from official sources are still the information of choice for most Mexican journalists.

Public Interest

Theoretically, Western media systems are driven by democratic values, which stress the compromise that the media have with the citizenry. Therefore, the notion of public interest is directly linked to the liberal concept of social responsibility. However, the production of news is mostly concerned with those who make the news, and those who are protagonists of the news, therefore involving the relationship between the media and the government. Gans (1980, 249) argues that story selection and production is “a power struggle over what messages enter the symbolic arena”, where journalists have the power to determine which messages are presented, and a number of groups and organisations aim to get their messages across in the most favourable way. Sometimes those groups would resort to different sorts of pressure over journalists. Journalists, Gans (1980, 322) argues, insist that press freedom can be preserved only if journalists are detached from politics and be free to decide what is news. However, he notes, “because news has political implications, and because journalists choose the news in response to source power, they are unwittingly part of the political process” (Gans, 1980, 322). Similarly, Curran (2000, 121) argues that the watchdog role of the media is utopian as media systems are nowadays largely dedicated to entertainment. But regardless of its many criticisms, the media are, under the liberal notion, expected to serve a role of social responsibility. Its tasks are therefore described within a democracy as a political forum that would enable citizens to make political decisions (Street, 2000, 253), and secondly as an overseer the performance of those currently in office, put it in other words, to act upon as a check on the state (Curran, 2000, 121).

In spite of the assumed responsibilities of journalism described above, journalists perceive their roles differently even in the media systems of developed democracies. Their professional motives shape not only their newsgathering activities but also the compromise they feel in regards of their audiences. For example Kocher (1986, 62-63) notes that British journalists are convinced that their highest goal is to satisfy the public's need for information, and even dishonest research methods are justified when pursuing this goal while considering themselves neutral reporters of events. Conversely, she notes that German journalists disapprove of such practices and consider their function as a mirror of the public, "a spokesman for the underdog". Hence, she describes British journalists as bloodhounds hunting for news, but German ones as missionaries (Kocher, 1986, 63). Donsbach and Patterson (2004, 266) compared role perceptions of journalists in Western democracies in terms of critical, adversarial or supportive position they took in regards of political leaders and in terms of how advocate or neutral their reporting was. Their results reveal that even within a media system, there can be differences across the different media outlets, as for example, the British press is more active than the British broadcast journalism, but at the same time it is less neutral (ibid). Yet in countries such as Germany or the US such differences are insignificant, as journalists in those countries "have a shared conception of news. In other words, they have a common journalistic culture" (ibid, 267). This issue highlights two issues, firstly, that a shared code of values is relevant to the role perception of journalists, and secondly, that cultural and historical differences are reflected in the way journalists perceive and conduct their jobs.

Unlike journalists in established democracies, Mexican journalists in general feel detached from civic duties, contrary to Hughes arguments, by noting they are not meant to contribute to the formation of a political culture, since that is the duty of government, not the media. Nonetheless, they have high aspirations as to what journalism should do, such as becoming a tool for the improving of society and smooth transition to democracy. The matter of elite-oriented journalism is seen by some as a limitation, while others argue it is not their fault that "newspapers only reach one million people" or that "people barely read, ... Mexicans can't be bothered to think". Yet those ambitions are

faced with the pessimism about their profession shown throughout the interview, but at the same time, there is disengagement on the role of social responsibility of the media, which somehow exonerates the shortcomings of journalism. “We’re not the fourth state, and we should not play to be so. Journalism is very simple, we publish what is important for society, period. (...) Journalism doesn’t change anything, it doesn’t throw governments, it exhibits them. I don’t save the country every night, I just do my job”.

Autonomy

Hallin and Mancini (2004, 34-35) understand autonomy as the capability to decide over one’s own working process. In the case of journalism, autonomy is not an individual trait, but rather a collegial one, “in the sense that authority over journalists is exercised primarily by fellow journalists”. In this respect, Solosky argues, professionalisation allows journalists to avert management pressures without making them vulnerable within the news organisation (1989, 218-19). As noted in the literature, however, journalism in Mexico has traditionally been classified as passive and restricted. Nevertheless, Hughes (2006, 5) talks of a new trend of civic journalism revolutionising newsrooms in the Mexican media. Still, the accounts given in the interviews of this study reveal a different reality, which suggests that the political culture of newsrooms is well defined and subtly coerced. Since what is considered news is an exchange between members of the elite, and news are greatly influenced by the relationship each media organisation has with different officials, factions or parties, journalists simply play a role of employees of the media organisation, and are made to act as mouthpieces of official statements, thus not showing the traits of autonomy usually attributed to media systems of established democracies.

One of the aims of the PRI party when it was created was to bring together all factions of political tendencies. This left some gaps where flexibility was common in a way in which criticism from one faction to another was permitted just as long as the core values and flaws of the PRI party remained intact. Furthermore, it was in the interests of the PRI regime to simulate democracy and plurality, hence it sponsored media from different orientations. Government change, therefore, has impacted the media in this

respect in two ways. Firstly, without PRI sponsorship, some minority groups have become unrepresented in the media, including rather notably, the PRI party itself, since their official newspaper *El Nacional* no longer exists, other examples include the right bourgeoisie with *Novedades* and conservative Catholicism with *El Heraldo*. Secondly, nowadays publications reflect a more varied political spectrum, but political parallelism is still strong, hence advocacy journalism has not diminished in the new political context of Mexico.

Over the plethora of topics available to journalists, and alternative ways of gathering information beyond official sources, journalists still chose to give preference to topics determined by their superiors or those routinely accepted by their sources. Gans (1980, 251) suggests that self-censorship can be an unconscious reaction, so perhaps that explains why journalists believe themselves free, yet they do not challenge authority, traditional topics or ways of gathering information, thus limiting their autonomy.

Considering the little amount of autonomy that journalists actually have, it is no surprise they are so sceptical about the future, and how vulnerable they feel when presented with the possibility of an authoritarian political leader. And despite an overall criticism and disappointment at the first PAN administration, it is notable that the PAN presidential candidate was perceived as the one who presented the lowest risk to journalism, while both PRD and PRI candidates were seen with apprehension, and in some cases even fear.

Political Parallelism

It has already been established that Mexican journalists resort to officialdom as their main source of information. This is however, not uncommon in other media systems of more developed democracies. Several explanations have been suggested for this matter, one being that the work routines of journalism contain implicit biases, therefore congregating newsgathering activities where news are expected to happen (Cook, 1996, 474). Journalists engage in a transactional relationship with his sources in order to have access to information where sometimes deference is expected (Gans, 1980). Another

similar view is that by restricting the voices in the news to those of public officials it restricts diversity in the “volatile “marketplace of ideas”” (Bennet, 1990, 103), thus safeguarding the context in which media organisations operate. In this perspective, the selection of sources is regarded as routine professional decision making rather than censorship (ibid). However, in regards of the American media system, Cook (1996, 579) argues that even though political actors are the protagonists of news items, they do not always have control of the script, as journalists’ discretion when “crafting the final product” (ibid, 478) allows them a leeway of autonomy.

The difference between the use of official sources as described above and that which takes place in clientelistic media systems is that advocacy journalism is more prevalent in the latter because of a history of state paternalism. Hallin and Pappathnasopoulos (2002, 182) argue that “journalism in southern Europe and Latin America is not strongly developed as an autonomous institution, differentiated from other institutions –the family business, the political clique, the party- with a distinctive set of professional values and practices”. This manifests itself in different ways, such as 1) advocacy journalism as exemplified in Italy and Greece, where journalists are linked to political parties; 2) as low development of institutions of journalistic self-regulation; and to the extreme, 3) as corruption, as is the case of Mexico, Colombia and to a lesser level in other countries of both regions (ibid).

The opening of political competition as cause and consequence of PRI debilitation resulted in wider political pluralism, the one hegemonic party system has been replaced by a three party system. Yet, in regards of the relationship with the media, alongside traditional clientelistic practices, new clientelist practices have emerged, as now all three parties have sought allies in the media. This broadening of clientelism has hindered the development of a new conception of journalism that would embrace the notions of autonomy and public service. While other authors have argued that greater commercial competition led some media organisations to greater independence from the government, it is also likely that media organisations were ill prepared to fend for themselves in an open market and resorted instead to the favours of a greater political market. Therefore,

political patronage is still pivotal to the financing of the media, despite greater political pluralism. And as argued earlier, post PRI there was no rearrangement in the media market, especially the print media. Despite a few newspapers ceasing to exist or changing hands, the overall number of newspapers available in the country has not altered a great deal, while circulation figures have, in many cases, decreased (MPM, 2006, WPA, 2007). In other words, what grew was the market of political patrons, not the ability of media management to perform as competitive businesses.

Benavides (2000, 90) notes that Mexican newspapers never had the incentive to increase circulation figures, unlike the American or European press, since clientelism ensured advertising revenue, regardless of readership. Added to this issue, he observes, is the fact that illiteracy is still high amid the Mexican population. The data from the interviews of this study is in line with Benavides argument, as journalists were more inclined to write for the so called red-circle, to which the educated elite belongs, and indeed the group that constitutes the main source of media advertisement, rather than for the general public, hence not pursuing greater circulation, but instead aiming to maintain the source of advertisement. Circulation figures in Mexico are hard to obtain, as media organisations are not transparent with such information, and there is no regulatory body that monitors the media in this regard. Historically, circulation figures have always been low compared to those of other countries. According to UNESCO (2008) circulation per thousand people in Mexico is only 92.43 copies. In most developed democracies the number rises into several hundreds, for example, 408 for the UK, 375 for Germany, 263 for the US, and 719 for Norway to name but a few (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, 23). While worldwide circulation figures are on decline, the quantity for Mexico is still well below the average for developed countries in year 2000, which amounted to 226 per 1000 people (UNESCO, 2000). Hallin and Mancini (2004, 97) argue that “it seems unlikely that any country that did not develop mass circulation newspapers in the late nineteenth century ever will have them”. In spite of the fact that Mexico falls into this category, according to the World Association of Newspapers, there were 180 broadsheets and 120 tabloids in Mexico in 2006 (WAN, 2007), yet Mexico is sixth in the world in regards of the number of paid for dailies (ibid).

Similarly to countries in the Mediterranean, there is a strong tradition of commentary-oriented journalism in Mexico. In fact, twelve out of the 35 journalists interviewed in this study wrote editorial features or opinion columns. Press in Mexico is highly politicized, when asked about who they wrote for, as previously mentioned, journalists said they address the so called-red circle, but also worth mentioning, a few talked about a common practice in Mexican newspapers which consists in political gossip columns of unidentified authorship. Indeed, one journalist said that in the newspaper he worked for they tried to steer clear of that practice, but that competition on that front was strong from other newspapers and in the end they had to succumb to it. One peculiar characteristic of such types of columns is that, some journalists noted, they consist of ciphered messages that only those in the know, i.e. politicians, understand, as sometimes not even they did. This reveals not just the lack of attachment to the liberal ideals of journalism, but also a high degree of instrumentalisation of the media.

Papatheodorou and Machin (2003, 34) argue that the Spanish and Greek press lagged behind that of other countries of Eastern Europe because they never developed “the mass markets that could render newspapers financially and politically independent from the state”. And while other countries had already developed a consumer oriented press, “Spanish and Greek newspapers maintained a close resemblance to political pamphlets” (ibid). This was the case, they argue, because both countries have a large, dispersed rural population, high illiteracy rates, a history of control of the press and a predominance of radio as a source of news. All these characteristics are also present in Mexico. Another similarity comes in regards of ownership. These authors describe newspapers as political rather than economic enterprises, in the hands of powerful families with close ties to political party leadership (ibid, 35). Newspaper ownership in Mexico is highly concentrated, as mentioned earlier, the WAN (2007) lists the existence of around 300 newspapers in Mexico, yet ownership falls into the hands of six main corporations.

The close connection between the press and party politics in the media systems of Spain and Greece, Papatheodorou and Machin argue, results in journalistic practices that seek

to “promote political party practices and discourses that have often had little relevance to actual issues emerging in the social sphere” (2003, 35). Journalists interviewed in this study often made similar remarks, especially those who expressed frustration at not being able to addressing the people. As mentioned earlier, Mexican journalists suffer from low morale. Their uncertainty and vulnerability, this study argues, stems from a lack of autonomy, which is related to political parallelism, as media organisations are still largely dependent on political patrons for their financing, so advocacy journalism is very common. As one newspaper director very bluntly put it “you don’t bite the hand that feeds you”. One very clear example of how advocacy journalism manifests in Mexico comes from the account of a journalist from La Jornada, who mentioned she once was told “The left is a movement, and La Jornada is part of it”. So journalists follow the editorial line that is instructed to them, and routinely take part in the making of news they do not personally agree with or which they know are derived from personal compromises of the media owner.

Other manifestations of political parallelism found in this study are in regards of bans and access to information. As argued in the previous chapters, journalists tend to be welcomed by politicians whom their media organisation favours, while shun by those the media is not friendly with. When a prominent political figure decides to eschew a particular journalist or media organisation, those of less ranking to the executor follow suit, turning the matter into an institutional one. Conversely, when a low hierarchy official attempts to ban a journalist or media organisation, the decision can be quickly reverted by his superiors if they do not agree to it. Similarly, in regards of access to information or lack of it, journalists put emphasis on the media organisation as the key factor to being granted information. By doing so, they conformed to the news organisation as part of their identity, sometimes in detriment to their individuality. These issues show that political parallelism has a direct impact into the individual performance of journalists and how their professional autonomy is not regarded as a personal matter but one that concerns the organisation that employs them.

Conclusion

Without the power to change the way in which journalism is done, journalists' unhappiness stems from the feeling that they are subjected to the compromises their superiors engage in, and by those they have to agree to themselves as a consequence. Journalists voiced many explanations as of what are the limitations to the Mexican media system. Laziness and lack of ethics of journalists, news limited by 'media owners or the powers that be', political lack of openness, societal matters of taste and, notably, environmental risks, such as those posed by organised crime and drug traffic. Some believe that better organisation within the guild would improve matters, others that a cultural change is needed in the population so that they begin to demand more of media and politicians alike. Quite a few favour being dynamic and didactic in their stories, others would like the chance to do investigative reporting, while some think that is not the role of the media to contribute to the formation of a political culture in society. There are, however, in between the overall voices of vulnerability and disappointment, some perceptions of optimism. There are those who believe journalism has made great improvements, that financial independence exists, that professionalisation has made an impact on newsmaking or that politicians have at best changed themselves or at worst, have had their power –and finances- curtailed. As long as journalists and media organisations do not fully break free from their clientelistic relationships with political power, it is unlikely that they will ever perform a role as a watchdog or fourth estate, nor that they will reach a mass public.

Drug traffic

Despite an increasing number of physical attacks against journalists, there is no literature exploring the risks to press freedom from drug traffic in Mexico. There is, however, an evident anxiety about the dangers of reporting drug related stories amongst the journalists interviewed in this study. In fact, in 2006 Reporters Sans Frontiers (2007) labelled Mexico as the most dangerous Latin American country for journalists. The matter of drug traffic deserves academic attention on its own. The following paragraphs will offer an explanation as of why the problem of drug traffic is so relevant in the

Mexican case as, it will argue, it was yet another piece in the puzzle that was the PRI party dominance.

The political transition in Mexico has had direct implications in how drug traffickers operate. The experience in other countries in transition from clientelistic systems that are also troubled with drug traffic suggests that the vacuum of power left behind by clientelistic politics in the process of becoming more democratic, has been filled by drug lords, who set new clientelistic relationships with groups of society accustomed to receiving favours, as has happened in Colombia, Brazil and Jamaica (see Sives, 2002, 66-89; Arias, 2006, 427). Furthermore, in countries in which drug traffic is more than a marginal macroeconomic role, as is the case of Mexico, Brazil or China, Geffray (2001, 421) suggests that the involvement of drug traffic with civil servants is more pervasive.

In the specific case of Mexico, Geffray (2001, 423) argues that the widespread perception is that with such a de facto powerful state, the emergence of autonomous and spontaneous drug traffickers was unlikely, yet it was precisely because of the extended powers of the one-state party system that allowed the development of drug traffic in Mexico. Drug traffickers were faced with a strong power structure and had to surrender a substantial amount of their earnings in order to ensure their own safety. "In other words, State representatives enjoyed, for decades, sufficient power and self confidence to deal with drug traffickers and spare them from the severity of the law if they agreed to hand over a share of their illegal profits in return." (Geffray, 2001, 423).

The phenomenon of drug traffic in Mexico is thus, intrinsically linked with politics, and fluctuations in drug traffic can be traced to power shifts in party politics. Astorga (2001; 430) notes that "it is no accident that the higher level of violence connected with drug trafficking in the 1990s have been observed primarily in states where the political opposition has gained power". This has happened because the debilitation of the PRI party machinery weakened the overall ability of the federal government to restrain violence while new local governments inherited corrupted police corporations (ibid).

The effect has then been an increasing, but not complete, independence of drug traffickers, and with it, an increase in violence (ibid, 430).

Both PAN presidents Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderon have made the fight against drug traffic a priority in their administrations, however the violence related to drug traffic has significantly increased since the PAN took office, and journalism has been affected by it. So much so that during the Fox administration there was a record number of journalists murdered, surpassing the figures set in more coercive PRI administrations (CEPET, 2006), and most murders were drug related. So while political violence against journalism has decreased, duress coming from organised crime and drug traffic has grown, resulting in new causes for self-censorship. Three journalists referred to acts of repression against themselves in relation to drug traffic, 28 noted that drug traffic is a dangerous topic to talk about and a further 10 mentioned it as a subject that is increasingly becoming off-limits to the press. Some journalists mentioned tactics to report drug traffic related stories, such as the use of pseudonyms, but others mentioned acts of self censorship, which in fact sometimes became editorial lines, especially for provincial papers in the north of the country. In particular, many journalists referred to the case of newspaper “El Manana” of Nuevo Laredo, where, as one journalist put it, “self-censorship became a contractual obligation”. And since drug traffic is to a great deal linked with official authority (three journalists related it to the army, and two more to politics) there is a risk of a further chilling effect in regards to political coverage, since, as noted before, journalists in Mexico are not particularly assertive. As one journalist interviewed put it “the line is so thin it gets lost. You never know when an investigation on a fraud or a political matter can turn into drug trafficking, or when an investigation on drug trafficking turns into a political matter, or about paedophilia, or people trafficking, or weapons trafficking”. To a certain point, actually, there is comfort in reporting politics, but fear and anxiety when covering drug traffic, one journalist noted that the risk when covering politics is libel, but when it comes to drug traffic is essentially death.

Levy and Bruhn (2001, 119) argue that reporting on drug trafficking and corruption is difficult in any country, but more so in Mexico, as drug traffic activities “lie near the heart of the political system”. So it can be argued that the cracks that opened the political system in Mexico resulted in one level in pluralism and democratisation, but conversely, also in empowerment of drug and criminal gangs, and consequent coverage of both matters. Even though drug trafficking is not new in Mexico, the ability to cover it openly is to a certain point, as during the PRI regime era it was yet another topic that largely escaped informed analysis because of its close links with the government. Furthermore, while journalists and drug lords alike were granted protection from political patrons in the past, nowadays traffickers resort to greater violence, while journalists have ended up defenceless, as the government has not stepped in to ensure their protection, and media organisations do not grant it either, this being a regular concern and complaint from the journalists interviewed in this study. However, by the end of his tenure, President Vicente Fox appointed a special prosecutor for crimes against journalists in February 2006 (CPJ, 2007), while press cases relating to drugs and organised crime were handled by a deputy prosecutor from the General Attorney’s crime division (ibid). In this regard, the Committee to Protect Journalists (2007) argues that journalists are sceptical given the dysfunctional and overburdened Mexican criminal justice system, yet that it reflects that the federal government acknowledged attacks on the press as a national issue, and one that had to be dealt with nationwide action. This fact itself represents a change from the past, as during PRI times crimes attacks on the press were systematically swept under the carpet. Yet it is understandable that precisely because of that past, journalists feel vulnerable and unconvinced, hence play it safe and are aware of ‘how far they can go’.

After analysing the interviews conducted with a sample of 35 Mexican journalists, this chapter has argued that a culture of clientelism is still deeply embedded in the way the Mexican media system operates. Clientelism is manifest in journalists’ work routines in many ways, they are regularly instructed to write in favour or against the media’s political allies and foes, this results in reprimands or self-censure, thus further limiting journalists autonomy. Furthermore, journalists admit to writing to a small elite and

adhere to quotes for the body of their stories. Saliently, journalists lack shared values and understandings about their own profession. Whilst this study focuses on the role perceptions of a sample of mainly press journalists with experience of covering political beats, it must be acknowledged that, precisely because of the narrow focus of the sample, there is a limitation as to how the findings could represent the whole of the Mexican journalist population. The overall limitations of this research are presented in the concluding chapter.

The following two chapters will analyse changes in the Mexican media system from the PRI regime to the more recent PAN party administrations through a different methodological approach. They will focus on a content analysis of two samples of newspaper items from two different periods in time, one dating from 1968, during the PRI party administration of Gustavo Diaz Ordaz, and another one from 2004, during the first PAN party administration, led by Vicente Fox.

Chapter 7

Content analysis, part 1: 1968

The previous three chapters have studied changes in the Mexican media system through the analysis of interviews with Mexican journalists with an experience of covering political beats. This chapter and the one that follows will approach the matter of transformations in the Mexican media system from a different angle. They will focus on a content analysis of two samples of newspaper items in regards to two civic movements, one that occurred at the height of the PRI regime in 1968, and a more recent one from 2004, during the first PAN party administration.

There is a long tradition of social movements in Mexico, although few have become of nationwide importance. Most were restricted to the demands of the particular group involved, such as the railroad workers, doctors, indigenous groups, etc. (See Stevens, 1975; Shapira, 1977; Hellman, 1994; Loaeza, 2005). As noted in previous chapters, coverage in the Mexican media is characterised by officialdom, so it was considered relevant to find out how social movements were reported in the Mexican press. Would the media give voice to the people's demands or would it see them through the guise of political leaders? Would the movements be regarded as legitimate or as reactionary? How would politicians react to people's requests and how would the media report on them?

The literature regarding press coverage in Mexico usually revolves around the question of whether or not there was criticism of the government in the media during the PRI regime. The general assumption being that because of the traditionally restricted or co-opted relationship between the government and the media, criticism of the government would be scarce. In this regard, for example, Monsivais notes that "throughout the 20th Century, censorship is the great instrument of the (political) power. It minimises or annuls freedom of expression (...) and minimises criticism, considering it as a gift from the government" (2003, 156). Contrary to this assumption, however, there were claims

that criticism was possible and indeed encouraged by the government, just as long as it avoided discussing the president or the core features of the PRI machinery, such as corruption, electoral fraud, and so on (see Lawson, 2002; Adler, 1993). The findings of such analysis are not conclusive, either because the kind of criticism noted above has been overstated (see Adler's criticism of Montgomery in Adler, 1993), or because the sample is not representative of the variety of views and levels of criticism allowed in the Mexican press (such as Brewster, 2002).

As noted above, the aim of this part of the study is to analyse how social movements are covered by the press. Going back to the original question of this research, which aims to elucidate whether or not the Mexican media system has changed as a consequence of government transition, it is hypothesised that should that be the case, there would be considerable differences in the coverage of social movements in Mexico in two moments in history. The literature tends to indicate that during PRI times, due to the clientelistic nature of media-state relations in Mexico, the press sourced stories from the political elite, and news content was aimed towards that same group. Recent studies, however, have suggested that a new trend in the Mexican press aimed to give voice to civilian and opposition voices while being critical of the government, thus moving towards democratisation of the news media. Hence, it was expected that the 1968 sample would give ample coverage to PRI party and governmental voices and stances, with little regard to what the protesters had to say, while the 2004 sample would be less concerned with official statements and express civilian concerns. Therefore, two samples were studied. The first one, the student movement of 1968 during the administration of PRI president Gustavo Diaz Ordaz, and the second, the 'mega-demonstration' against insecurity and delinquency of 2004, during the first PAN administration of Vicente Fox.

Both this and the next chapter will argue that officialdom has been prevalent in Mexican journalism throughout time, despite it being manifest in a different fashion in each period sampled; in 1968 by adopting the official line and de-legitimising the movement, and in 2004 by covering the events through political perspectives while neglecting the

civilian voices that prompted them. And thus, this analysis argues, newspaper coverage of civic movements revolves around official notions of it. It will also assert that political pluralism has resulted in a lesser chance of civilian voices being featured in the press, since contending official voices take priority in news reporting. Finally, it will dispute arguments put forward by other authors who suggest that an increased presence of varied political voices in the press are signs of assertiveness and democratisation in Mexican journalism.

This part of the study is divided in two chapters. The present one will briefly describe the sampling carried out for the content analysis and will describe the context in which both the events sampled took place. It will then move to present the results of the analysis of the sample corresponding to 1968. The next chapter will look at the results of the 2004 sample and will offer a comparison of both samples, as well as a conclusion of the content analysis of both periods studied.

Methodology

According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005, 1278), “The goal of content analysis is “to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, p. 314)”. In their study of media bias, Adkins Covert, et. al. (2007, 691) review a variety of literature and methods for understanding media bias. Amongst them, they highlight the use, in content analysis, of aiming to find out who is quoted/given voice in news coverage. A perception of bias in such an instance, would point towards an “ideological imbalance in the selection of sources (Croteau and Hoynes, 1994), reliance on government and other officials (Brown, et. a.l., 1987, Reese, Grant and Danielian, 1994; Sigal, 1973), and dependence on key spokespersons and experts (Salwen, 1995; Steele, 1995; Welsh, et.al., 1997)” (ibid). Another strategy in media content analysis relies on studying the language in terms of the tone of the news when presenting contending views, and the frequency with which “selected evaluative terms or phrases are employed” (Adkins Covert, et.al. (2007, 691), as well as the

frequency of positive, neutral or negative statements appear in the items analysed. These two points, balance of voices featured in news items, plus frequency of evaluative terms or phrases utilised in news items, were adopted as the central issues studied in the content analysis carried out in this study.

The aim of this study is to elucidate similarities and differences in the current make up of Mexican media-state relations as compared with the way they occurred during the PRI regime, through the use of notions of political clientelism as signifiers of continuity or transition to democracy. In this research, content analysis is used as a research method for the interpretation of the content of the text data in newspaper items. As pointed in previous chapters, in recent years other studies have adopted political clientelism as a theoretical framework to study media systems in transition (Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Hallin and Papathanassopoulos, 2002; Roudakova, 2007; Lee, et. al., 2007). While they do not usually employ content analysis for their studies, as noted above, this type of research methodology can be employed to survey imbalances in the sources selected as well as the tone and frequency of terminology utilised in texts. For these reasons, content analysis was considered a suitable research tool to explore manifestations of political clientelism in newspaper coverage. Chapter one established that throughout the PRI regime, scholars perceived the mass media in Mexico as either allied or co-opted or both, by the government. Latter studies argued that Mexican politics had experienced a transition towards democracy and as a result, the mass media was 'opening' by becoming more plural, assertive and confrontational towards the government. This raises several questions as to how coverage of news items would be different from one period to another. Would stories during the PRI regime primarily feature official voices in its items? Would criticisms of the government be featured at all in the press? Would critical voices against the government or the president be presented in the news? If they were, would the people or groups expressing such criticisms be portrayed favourably? Would all these situations be different under the PAN party government?

For this reason, it was considered necessary to analyse news items from two historical periods, one period from the PRI regime, and another one from the PAN party administration. The samples revolve around two civic movements, the 1968 student movement and the 2004 'mega-demonstration' against insecurity and crime. Due to their very nature, civic movements would offer a suitable example of events in which the government is being criticised by its people. In turn, this would offer a valuable opportunity to explore the way in which the media react to these situations, either by adhering to official stances, as would be typical of a clientelistic system, or by presenting a plurality of views, as would be expected from a more democratic press. More information about the civic movements studied and the samples used is presented later in this and the following chapters, along with a discussion on the limitations of using civic movements as a sample for newspaper analysis¹.

The coding schedules for both samples presented in Appendix five. A pilot data collection tool was formed based on the aims of the content analysis, which were in turn informed from the literature reviewed, both in terms of the Mexican mass media, and political clientelism. The coding schedule was developed before the content was examined and evolved as the content analysis was carried out, through the incorporation of new emerging themes. The pilot sample was reanalysed after these themes emerged. The initial pilot on the content analysis was carried out in October 2005, by taking 6 news items from three national newspapers about the 2004 mega-demonstration gathered online. The coding schedule was modified and codes incorporated as the analysis of one news item moved on to the next one until a final version was achieved. The pilot news items were analysed again using this version of the coding schedule to make sure the codes sufficed the analysis. The aim at this point was not to achieve results on the items analysed, but to attain a working version of the coding schedule. This version was then altered with the aim to draft a comparable version for the 1968 sample. The first three days spent at the National Archives in Mexico in November 2005

¹ The final chapter discusses the limitations of the overall research presented in this thesis.

were utilised in polishing off the 1968 version of the coding schedule. The process was repeated again when working on a final coding schedule for the 2004 sample.

For each of the events selected, an average of 300 news items were sampled. These corresponded to a four week period for each sample, covering the two weeks prior to the main event, and the two weeks that followed it. Items were taken randomly from two newspapers for every sample, so in total over 600 items from four newspapers were analysed. The newspapers were selected according to the perceived significance of each of them. The two newspapers chosen for the 1968 sample were *Excelsior* and *El Universal*, while the two newspapers that correspond to the 2004 sample were *Reforma* and *La Jornada*.

El Universal and *Excelsior* are the two oldest newspapers in Mexico. Founded in 1916 and 1917 respectively, they precede the creation of the PRI party. Of *El Universal*, Carreno (2000) notes that it was created “with all the support of the victorious group of future president Venustiano Carranza, and at the service of their interests. The dangerous liaisons of this newspaper with (political) power are present since those first years up until now”. On the other hand, *Excelsior* was created as an independent newspaper, yet, Carreno (2000) notes that during the Cardenas administration (1934-1940) a union led movement expelled the owner and converted the organisation into a cooperative, thus transforming *Excelsior* in the 1940’s into what Monsivais (2003, 152) argues, was the archetype of the Mexican press, as it propagated gossip in its columns, sourced from and addressed to the political elite. The concerns of its director, Rodrigo de Llano were to “never let down the President of the Republic, to combat the subversives and not to inform more than necessary” (ibid). The common reader was thus largely neglected. Nevertheless, Monsivais believes that Julio Scherer attempted to open up *Excelsior* when he took over in the summer of 1968 (2003, 170), and argues that “those who sought trustworthy accounts of the (student) movement read *Excelsior*, *Siempre!* or *Por Que?*” (Monsivais, 1993, in Brewster, 2002, 173). Therefore, it was believed the choice of these newspapers would offer an insight into press coverage during what has been

acknowledged as the most repressive PRI party administration, that of Gustavo Diaz Ordaz (1964-1970), both from the perspective of a newspaper that according to the literature had always been partisan to the government (El Universal), and one that some suggest was a pioneer to the opening of journalism in Mexico (Excelsior).

The main event for the 1968 sample was defined as the demonstration of the 2nd of October at the Tlatelolco Plaza in Mexico City. News items were gathered from the 17th of September until the 15th of October of 1968. A total of 319 items were collected for this sample, 150 from Excelsior, of which 91 were for September and 59 were for October; and 169 items from newspaper El Universal, 95 and 74 for September and October respectively (see Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 Items of the 1968 sample

		Month		Total
		September	October	
Name of newspaper	Excelsior	91	59	150
	El Universal	95	74	169
Total		186	133	319

Lawson (2002, 91) notes that since the 1970's "journalists with a different vision of their profession founded a series of independent publications" that, thanks to financial independence were enabled to "better resist official pressures". Two of said publications were Reforma and La Jornada. Moreover, magazine Etcetera (2003) identifies both Reforma and La Jornada as two of the most important dailies in Mexico.

Reforma is a sister publication to newspaper El Norte, from Monterrey, owned by Alejandro Junco de la Vega, and both publications had been successful at resisting official pressure. El Norte had to find alternative sources of newsprint, thus breaking the tradition of reliance on the government-led PIPSA monopoly, an action that was followed by Reforma. Similarly, Reforma broke the mould by seeking alternative distribution networks when the union of newspaper salesmen refused to dispense the paper. Both strategies aimed to bypass government control but resulted in a competitive

advantage in the newspaper market, as soon other newspapers had to adopt similar tactics. La Jornada, but mostly Reforma are regularly regarded as examples of financially independent media in Mexico. Since its creation in 1993, Reforma has been characterised by a critical type of journalism and aggressive marketing strategies. Riva Palacio (1998, 116) describes it as “one of the few publications in Mexico City that chose independence from the government”.

On the other hand, La Jornada emerged from a line of journalists-founded media outlets that date back to Scherer's Excelsior in the 1970's that include the newsmagazine Proceso and newspaper Unomasuno, both also acknowledged as critical and independent media upon their creation (see Llawson, 2002, 84-85). Levario (2003) notes that La Jornada is an “obligatory referent to the democratic transition of the country”, since it was “a project that emerged at against tide to the old mechanisms of cooptation and controls that shaped Mexican presidencialismo” (ibid). Some of the aims of La Jornada, according to its editorial constitutional guidelines were to “convey in its pages the motions of society, the day to day and anonymous reality of peoples and sectors. A daily that will give voice to those that do not have one. A modern and plural newspaper...” (in Levario, 2003). La Jornada thus presented itself as the paper of the underdogs, a daily prone to sympathising with popular movements and the left, so in the late 1980's lent its support to the group that was later to become the PRD, and since the 1990's has given prominent coverage to the Zapatista movement in Chiapas. However, these newspapers are not without their critics. Of Reforma, Levario (1999) notes “it prefers to sell doing as if it was informing” and others disapprove of La Jornada's bias towards the PRD. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this research, it was believed both newspapers could offer an insight into press coverage in the new political context of Mexico, as they were media organisations traditionally critical of the PRI party, so it would be noteworthy to see how they fare in the new PAN administration.

The main event for the 2004 sample was defined as the demonstration of the 27th of June at the Zocalo in Mexico City. So news items were gathered from the 12th of June until

the 12th of July of 2004. A total of 303 items were collected for this sample, 214 corresponding to Reforma, of which 150 were for June and 64 were for July; and 89 items correspond to newspaper La Jornada, 64 for June and 25 for July.

Table 7.2 Items of the 2004 sample

		Month		Total
		June	July	
Newspaper	Reforma	150	64	214
	La Jornada	64	25	89
Total		214	89	303

The events of each of both samples selected will be described in the next two sections. An analysis of the coverage of both samples will be presented next. This analysis will be followed by a comparison of the coverage of the two samples that will discuss its similarities and differences and their implications to changes in Mexican journalism.

Student movement, 1968

The first sample of this study analyses the coverage of the student movement of 1968 in Mexico. Watts (2001, 161) notes in relation to the occurrences around the world in the 1960s “the events of the era, and of 1968 in particular, *were* a disruption, a derangement of the complacent bourgeois dream of ‘unproblematic production, of everyday life as the bureaucratic society’”. Student movements emerged throughout the world in 1968. There were upheavals in Japan, France, Germany, India, Greece, the US and Mexico. 1968 was also the year in which Mexico was to hold the Olympic Games, the first time they would ever take place in a developing country. For this matter, the government invested over 140 million dollars, as it aimed to prove that Mexico was a developed, modern, stable and democratic nation (Berggren, 2006, 53). The government, however, was well aware of the student turmoil abroad, it commissioned its ambassadors serving in countries that saw student rebellions to report on the events (Preston and Dillon, 2004, 80). Furthermore, fearing attempts to disrupt the Games, the Mexican military requested from the Pentagon military radios, gunpowder and mortar fuses as well as riot control training material (Doyle, 2003). This was done well before any conflict emerged in

Mexico. Perhaps because the government was preparing to react against student upheavals should they ever occur, they overreacted to student related brawls, thus turning it all into a self fulfilling prophecy.

The first reported incident occurred on July 22nd, when members of 'Los Aranos' and 'Los Ciudadelos', two youth gangs, fought against students of two Polytechnic vocational schools at La Ciudadela plaza in Mexico City centre during a football match (Preston and Dillon, 2004, 63; Monsivais, 2002, 171; Monsivais, 2003, 174). The following day, the scuffle re-ignited and the 'granaderos', or riot police, were called in to control the situation. The granaderos broke into the vocational schools throwing tear gas and "beating teachers and students alike" (Preston and Dillon, 2004, 64). Yet the students fought back and confronted the riot police for over three hours. There were several detainees, with most released in just a few hours, but the indignation was rife. Berggren argues that "The conflict itself did not start the protests, but rather the way the police reacted to this conflict" (2006, 54). A demonstration to protest against the aggression of the riot police was organised for the 26th of July. That day, however, the protestors ran into another demonstration in support of the Cuban revolution. The riot police appeared again and a new confrontation took place. The conflict quickly escalated with further protests and an increased presence of the riot police. More schools and higher education institutions got involved, and as a result, the army proceeded to take over the facilities of such institutions.

On the 30th of July the Chancellor of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), Javier Barros Sierra, flew the Mexican flag at half mast claiming that the autonomy of the university was under threat. The following day, he led a peaceful student protest through the city centre². Some days later the National Strike Council

² U.S. secret documents argue that Barros Sierra was working under instructions of the Mexican government, whose aim was to turn the movement into a more moderate one by encouraging criticism from the Chancellor. (see Doyle, 2003)

(CNH), representing the UNAM, the National Polytechnic (IPN) and others, appeared and made six demands (Monsivais, 2002, 175):

- Freedom for political detainees³
- Removal from office of Generals Luis Cueto and Raul Mendiola and Lt. Armando Frias (Police Chief, Sub-Boss and Riot Police Leader).
- Disbanding of the riot police force, direct instrument for repression, and no formation of similar bodies.
- Compensation to the families of the deceased and injured that were victims since the 26th of July onwards.
- Cessation of the acts of repression by the authorities through the police, the riot police and the army.
- Derogation of articles 145 and 145bis of the Penal Code in regards of social dissolution.

The protests continued throughout August and on the 18th of September, the army took over the UNAM's University City (CU), the largest university campus in Latin America. Barros Sierra objected to the army intervention by submitting his resignation four days later. This was rejected so he continued in the post. The army left CU on the 30th of September, yet more student demonstrations were scheduled for the coming days. On the 2nd of October another demonstration was planned at the Plaza of Three Cultures. Students equipped the large balcony on the third floor of the 'Chihuahua' housing complex building with speakers. The building faces the large open plaza, adjacent to the Foreign Affairs Ministry building and the ancient ruins of Tlatelolco. Several thousand people are said to have attended the demonstration that evening⁴. Witness accounts declare that shortly after six o'clock, a flare was seen in the air, and shooting started flowing from snipers located at the Chihuahua building towards the army positions in the ground at the Plaza, the army responded by firing against the crowds. It is believed that the snipers belonged to the security agents 'Olympia Battalion', though there are

³ The CNH acknowledged imprisoned students as political detainees.

⁴ Actual figures are uncertain as they change from one source to another, even if they are by the same author, i.e. in *Tiempo de Saber*, Monsivais claims there were between 6 and 7 thousand (2003, 180) but in *Parte de Guerra*, he says there were between 5 and 6 thousand (2002, 263). Harris (2005, 483) claims there were 10,000 people.

claims that students were also involved in the shooting⁵. The shooting lasted several hours, and the precise death toll is unknown, calculations vary from 20 to several hundreds⁶. Around 2000 people were detained, some of whom were not released until 1971. Ten days later, the Olympic Games were inaugurated in Mexico with not much further ado.

The events of the 2nd of October 1968 in Tlatelolco have become an icon of Mexican modern history. For some it signifies the struggles of the Left, to others it is seen as the first step towards democratisation in Mexico or the emergence of a civil society, whereas for some it represents the first cracks of the PRI regime. As noted earlier, it remains controversial to attempt to describe the facts surrounding the events of 1968 or indeed its ideological implications. This analysis however will focus on the coverage of the events, and how they reveal the underlying relationship between the government and the media, thus providing a glimpse into the Mexican media system at the time.

Mega-demonstration against insecurity, 2004

The second sample of this study looks into the movement that prompted the ‘mega-demonstration’ against insecurity and delinquency in 2004. The incidence of crime in Mexico had been reported to be on the increase since the 1980’s. The following decade kidnapping was acknowledged as a growing “industry” targeting not only the wealthy, but people from across the entire social spectrum. The rising crime was met with impunity and corruption. One famous case was that of the so-called “Mochaorejas” or “ear-cutter”, Daniel Arizmendi, a kidnapper who, as his nickname indicates, used to mutilate his victims. The ‘ear-cutter’ was said to be protected by Morelos governor.

⁵ The truth of the development of the events that evening has been controversial ever since. The official version of events, as per declarations of the Ministry of Defence at the time, General M. Garcia Barragan was that the army was attacked and they acted in response. Other version is that there was a mix up between the Olympia Battalion and the Army who ended up firing each other, yet there also are claims, mostly downplayed though, that some students had taken hold of weapons and used them against the army that night.

⁶ A special prosecution into the case said in 2002 that the evidence indicated that probably 38 people died at Tlatelolco. (AP Worldstream, 2007).

Then President Ernesto Zedillo intervened by ordering the Army to take over in the tackling of abductions, the 'ear-cutter' being a prime target. One of Arizmendi's victims was Raul Nava, who was kidnapped and murdered. Nava's mother, Josefina Ricano organised a group of citizens with the aim not to remain passive in the face of the rising crime wave (MUCD, 2007). The group called for a silent demonstration the 29th of November of 1997 and later organised into an NGO called Mexico United Against Delinquency (MUCD, Mexico Unido Contra la Delinuencia).

Despite a few very high-profile cases in which kidnappers were caught, including Arizmendi, the crime wave did not diminish and during the administration of Vicente Fox, Mexico became the second place in the world in number of kidnappings, after Colombia (Presidencia de la Republica, 2004). Many cases became prominent in mid 2004; the bodies of Vicente and Sebastian Gutierrez were found with a shot through the head just eight days after being abducted in May. The 19th of that month, Lizbeth Salinas: a 26 year old economist was kidnapped after taking a taxi from outside her office at the Federal Institute of Access to Information (IFAI), a few hours later she was left to die in a street a few miles away. Her murder prompted more than 150 graduates from the university Tecnologico de Monterrey, where she studied, to sign a letter asking President Fox to do something to curb the rising crime.

Later that month, as a protest to the growing incidence of 'express' kidnappings and robberies committed inside the Perisur shopping centre, people from the nearby middle class neighbourhood areas of San Jeronimo and Pedregal called for a boycott of the shopping centre by asking people not to shop there between the 7th and the 13th of June, demanding for better security in the complex (Madrigal, 2004). On the 28th of May, Maria E. Moreira, president of MUCD, representing hers and other NGOs and civic groups demanded of President Fox, Mexico City Mayor Lopez Obrador, as well as the governors from all other states in Mexico, to take actions to tackle organised delinquency across the country. Five days later those same organisations called for a

march to protest against crime and insecurity to take place on the 27th of June in the centre of Mexico City.

The organisations that called for the rally produced a document entitled “Let’s Rescue Mexico” in which they laid 10 basic demands, which were subdivided in 87 specific requests. A summary of their petitions were (Morales, 2004):

1. Request the consent of the victim when considering filing criminal prosecutions, otherwise, to deem by-passing the victim as an act of impunity.
2. Exemplary punishment to public ministers who release from captivity those under suspicion without verifying if they are re-offenders or if there are arrest warrants against them.
3. The implementation of open oral trials with a jury.
4. The professionalisation of the police force and the provision of adequate technology to prevent crime and enforce the law.
5. Periodic evaluation of the law enforcement bodies of the Public Ministry and the Ministry Police.
6. The reduction in the legal age for prosecution for the crime of kidnap to 15 years of age. The minimum sentence should be no less than 35 years in prison for less severe kidnapping offences, with a maximum term of no less than 50 years for more serious instances.
7. Amendments to the law so that a kidnapping committed by two or more people to be considered organised crime.
8. The creation of the National Institute for the Prevention of Crime as an autonomous body of citizen participation.
9. To guarantee the protection and confidentiality of the accusers in order to avoid reprisals from criminals.
10. Create the figure of an Ombudsman of Society as an autonomous judicial entity, as well as an encouragement towards promoting a culture of legality in all levels of education.

As the date of the demonstration approached, further crime incidents became prominent, including that of Juan Roberto and Guillermo Cummings, who were murdered when their car was stolen in Tlalnepantla, Mexico State on the 12th of June. On the 16th of June Spanish Ambassador to Mexico Cristina Barrios said she was concerned about security in Mexico, as in the previous three months eight Spanish citizens had been abducted in Mexico, five of whom were murdered. Other ambassadors expressed their anxiety, including those from Canada, Israel and Japan. Then on the 22nd of June, Francisco Ortiz a journalist of the weekly ‘Zeta’ of Tijuana, Baja California, was also murdered. Public outrage was on the rise and demonstrations were organised all over the

country, while victims of crime from other states travelled to take part in the one in Mexico City, including relatives of the 'Dead of Juarez' (Muertas de Juarez), murdered women from the northern city of Juarez.

Throughout the development of the events detailed above, people from across the political spectrum gave their opinion in regards of the demonstration that was being organised. In late March, PAN party President Vicente Fox had submitted a bill to Congress that proposed to modify the security system in Mexico, so he welcomed the citizens' demands for increased security and made several calls for the congressional approval of the bill. On the other hand, however, Mexico City Mayor, Andres M. Lopez from the PRD party made several declarations against the demonstrators, claiming that they were organised by former PRI party president Carlos Salinas, that the organisers belonged to the ultra-right group 'El Yunque', that President Fox was behind the demonstration and that it was all part of a plot to de-stabilise his government and to leave him out as a presidential contender for the coming elections of 2006.

Furthermore, there were accusations from all quarters, when President Fox said he was concerned about the high levels of crime in Mexico City, PRD leader Leonel Godoy said the state of Baja California was more dangerous, citing the recent murder of journalist Francisco Ortiz, noting that it was a state ruled by the PAN party for the last 15 years. Similarly, Lopez Obrador denied the accusations made by the Spanish ambassador saying he had no data about such occurrences, and that her claims were meant to create a false impression of insecurity in the capital. In the same way, however, there were also several declarations about how different governments were taking on board the calls from the people, about decreasing crime incidence and how measures were being taken to improve security.

About 250,000 people participated in the demonstration, and the leading non-government organisations met a few days later with the Minister of Interior Santiago Creel. And in the days that followed President Fox, Lopez Obrador, state governors,

party leaders and ministers in general made further declarations about how they were listening to the demands of the citizens. The high levels of participation that the demonstration gathered were considered a sign of an active civil society and an indication of a growing democratic culture. There were attempts to link the demonstration to the events of 1968, calling it an 'historical' event. However crime levels in Mexico have continued to rise since, which is why new President Felipe Calderon has made the role of the army even more prevalent in the tackling of crime. This study will analyse how the events leading to the 'mega-demonstration' of 2004 were reported in order to elucidate the perceived similarities and differences to the coverage of the occurrences of the 1968 sample, and their implications to the Mexican media system.

It must be acknowledged that the nature of both events sampled here is in many ways very different, and that indeed they reflected the different realities of the era in which they occurred. However, both events are similar in that they were originated by members of the middle classes demanding a better performance from the government, in 1968 by requesting the end of repression and a fairer treatment, and in 2004 by asking for better policing and tackling of crime. The aim of this analysis is therefore not focused on the events per se, but rather the coverage of them and the way in which the reporting reflected such civilian requests. At the same time, the analysis should tell us something about the nature of Mexican journalism in critical periods.

Coverage of Tlatelolco, 1968

There were protest movements throughout the world in the 1960's. Gitlin (1980) and Halloran, et. al (1970) studied those occurring in the United States and the United Kingdom respectively. Both studies concur that the media's focus tends towards the negative aspects of a demonstration, such as acts of violence committed. This happens because, at their very nature, protest movements challenge the prevailing state of affairs. In confronting what is regarded as normality, protest movements constitute at the same

time a disruption of that normality. The media, at the same time, tend to consider newsworthy any event that is a deviation of normality, and events are framed accordingly. About the American student movement, Gitlin (1980, 24) notes “the media and the movement needed each other. The media needed stories, preferring the dramatic; the movement needed publicity for recruitment, for support, and for political effect.” In London, the tendency of the coverage was to suggest that student demonstrations were violent (Halloran, et. al., 1970, 139). When this was not the case, the media focused on events that were disruptive –as evidence to potential violence-, or justified lack of violence as a result of good policing or “ineptly led marchers” (ibid, 140). That the demonstration was conceptualised as violent meant that events that contradicted such a notion were ignored, dismissed or counter-pointed (ibid, 141).

In accounts of the Mexican media, there is no consensus as to how the press reported on the events of the student movement of 1968. On the one hand, there are authors who imply that the media acted in support of the government, while others have noted that there was an emerging criticism, mostly attributed to newspaper *Excelsior* under the leadership of Julio Scherer. Nevertheless, it has been noted that at the time the press in general was not capable of producing adequate coverage of events, as it was largely unaccustomed to gather data outside of official sources and leaks, or to interpret social movements that demanded change in the government. Some of these views are presented in the following paragraphs.

The words of poet Rosario Castellanos are usually referred to when discussing the coverage of the events of the 2nd of October 1968. In her “Memorial of Tlatelolco” she wrote:

“The Plaza was swept in the morning; the newspaper’s main news was the weather. And in the television, in the radio and the cinema, there was no change of schedule, no announcement, not a minute of silence in the banquet (because the banquet went on)” (Castellanos, in Perez G, 2000, 122)

Monsivais notes that as events developed during the student movement, the Mexican press lacked the capacity to report on urban social rebellion in the Capital and in the world of higher education; “There are no investigative reportages, it is not possible to verify the number of casualties, public officials do not grant interviews (...) The press subjects itself to the ‘discipline of the State’ and the ‘Cold War’ mexicanises.”, by which the author means the press acted as if Mexico was a contender in the fight against world communism (Monsivais, 2003, 180-181).

Zocalo Magazine (2002) argues in regards of the coverage of the 1968 massacre that

“It was difficult for the media to break from the traditional schemes that conceived journalism as part of the apparatus of ideological and political control of the PRI State. In the media there was no consistency in the criticism of the regime and its excesses. And when there were mild criticisms, they were always accompanied with reprimands to the students because of their excesses. So, the excesses that were to be condemned were those of the students, and the excesses that were necessary, were those of the (political) power”.

Brewster (2002, 186) argues that explicit orders were given to the media on the 3rd of October 1968, asking editors to protect Mexico’s reputation, yet she also argues that coverage of the movement in newspaper Excelsior was fair and balanced before the massacre and that after 2nd of October, it resorted to “inference rather than emphasis to voice criticism of the government’s actions”.

Drawn from previous studies some preliminary assumptions of the 1968 sample were that:

- Newspapers would favour official voices over non official ones
- Criticism of the student movement would be intense
- Support for the actions of the government would be high
- The President would be constantly featured in newspaper items
- The student movement would be portrayed in a negative fashion
- Excelsior would be more critical in its views than El Universal
- Criticisms of the government would decrease after the 2nd of October

While it would not be unexpected to find the movement framed negatively, as in the studies carried out by Gitlin and Halloran et. al., the assumptions outlined above, as noted in the literature of the Mexican media system, would represent signs of a media system that is supportive of the government due to an underlying clientelistic relationship. But also of a media that is heavily controlled by the government, not just by co-optation, but also by coercion, where official censorship is not required, as self censorship is enough to keep controversial subjects at bay. The next paragraphs will analyse whether or not such assumptions are correct and will discuss the reasons for the perceived concurrences or discrepancies found. The differences, therefore, between the negative coverage that the student movement received in Mexico and that reported in the US and Britain will be discussed later in this section.

As shown in Table 7.3, there were 319 items in the sample relating to the student movement in 1968. Of those, 150 were in newspaper Excelsior and 169 in newspaper El Universal.

Table 7.3 1968 sample by type of article

		News story	Column	Opinion feature	Other	Editorial	Total
September	Excelsior	39	7	38	0	7	91
	El Universal	67	7	14	2	5	95
	Total	106	14	52	2	12	186
October	Excelsior	27	4	25	1	2	59
	El Universal	52	0	20	0	2	74
	Total	79	4	45	1	4	133
TOTAL		185	18	97	3	16	319

First to be examined are the voices featured⁷ in the newspaper items. As Table 7.4⁸ shows, official voices, comprising the Government, the Army and Law Enforcement representatives as well as the PRI party, were heavily featured on both newspapers, yet non official voices, being those of the students, university staff and other civilians

⁷ Featured refers to being present in the news items in question.

⁸ This table considers all voices present in the 319 items of the sample. Of them, 19 included five voices, 7 had four, 29 contained three, 44 had two and 119 had one; 101 items featured no voices.

exceed the number of official voices. The initial impression is that students' demands and views were voiced in the media, thus supporting the arguments that the press was opening up beyond officialdom.

Table 7.4 Main themes of newspaper items

Table 7.4 Voices featured in newspaper items

	Excelsior	EI Universal	Total
Government	41	32	73
Army/Law enforcement	14	20	34
PRI party	5	8	13
Other party	15	7	22
University staff/representatives	34	31	65
Students	36	65	101
Other civilians	19	33	52
Foreigners/other	28	29	57
Total	192	225	417

Table 7.5 shows the main theme of the items analysed. It illustrates that the events of the movement revolved around depictions of the student movement itself, and the actions of those involved, but not as such about what the movement was demanding. In other words, emphasis was given to the description of actions of the student movement, such as decisions to go on a strike, the taking over of buses, even acts of petty crime attributed to the students, but their requests, which were laid in a petition of six points, where students demanded amongst others the autonomy of the university, the end of repression by the riot police and freedom to political prisoners; as well as an informed analysis of why they were demanding such things were largely neglected. Instead, a lot of attention is given to the violence that occurred during events held by the student movement, and actions of the government in regards of the movement.

In both papers, criticisms of the government supersede those statements in favour of it as a main theme of the news items, yet it will be noted later that overall support of government actions was high in the sample. It is however notable that the President was not featured as largely as was expected. A possible explanation could be that the media were being protective of his figure by not linking him to the events, and when he was

referred to, it was usually as a conciliatory voice, following his state of the nation speech when he called for Mexico to be seen as a nation of peace in the forthcoming Olympic Games.

Table 7.5 Main theme of news item, 1968

	Name of newspaper		Total
	Excelsior	El Universal	
Description of a speech/demonstration /demands by student movement	4	9	13
Violence occurred during events of student movement	27	34	61
Actions of government regarding student movement	28	24	52
Actions or description of student movement	49	36	85
Declarations of president or government officials	9	7	16
Impact of student movement on nationalism	15	12	27
Statement in support of government	2	7	9
Statement in support of student movement	2	2	4
Statement in support of the president	0	3	3
Criticism of the student movement	6	25	31
Criticism of the government	8	10	18
Total	150	169	319

Table 7.6 shows that criticism of the students is high, as the words used to describe the movement tend towards the negative. It is salient, however that the second most used description of the student movement in newspaper Excelsior was ‘fairly motivated’ while it was only the fifth most used description in El Universal, which again supports the notion that at that time Excelsior was opening up more than its contemporaries. The way the movement was described will be returned to later in this chapter.

Table 7.6 How is the student movement described?

	El Universal	Excelsior	Total	Percentage
Delinquency/illegal/violent	51	51	102	20.77
Anti-nationalist/anti-constitutional/anti-revolutionary	29	12	41	8.35
Fairly motivated	26	52	78	15.89
Communist/of subversive ideology	45	33	78	15.89
Unreasonable	16	17	33	6.72
Not based on student interest	52	53	105	21.38
Anarchy/disorder/chaotic	24	12	36	7.33
Pacifist or peaceful	11	7	18	3.67
Total	254	237	491	100.00

The previous two tables suggest that even though voices of those involved in the student movement were featured prominently, their actions were not portrayed in a positive light. Monsivais' allegation that the Cold War was being 'mexicanised' is reflected in the 78 mentions in which the movement was portrayed as subversive or communist, which was in line with the government's claims that radicals had infiltrated the student groups with an intent to disrupt the forthcoming Olympic Games. However, an interest to 'protect Mexico's reputation', as Brewster (2002) claims the press was commanded to do, is not clear from the scarce portrayal of the movement as anti-nationalist (only 8% of mentions). Furthermore, this also shows that the student movement was not seen as a threat to the Mexican political system, nor that as such the student movement was challenging central characteristics of the Mexican government, like the legal frame set up by the constitution, the revolutionary ideals and nationalistic values, thus calling for a change in either of them, as later reinterpretations of the 1968 movement have suggested. What is clear, however, is the intent to make the student movement appear violent and illegal (20.77% of mentions) and not based on student concerns or interests (21.38%), so overall that the students and those involved in the movement are reduced to violent criminals whose demands are not relevant to university life. This can be seen in the following headlines and quotes⁹:

- "They (the army) found inside the schools a whole arsenal of Molotov bombs, rifles, machine guns, handguns of all calibres, bullets and blunt weapons."ⁱ
- "Students of the IPN (National Polytechnic Institute) stole a coffin" 23rd Sept, 1968, El Universal
- "They seize and burn ten buses"ⁱⁱ
- "Isolated shootings; burnt vehicles"ⁱⁱⁱ
- "Six polytechnic students who trained in Veracruz the war of guerrillas detained"^{iv}
- "2 businesses robbed during the battle"^v
- "The 'dynamiting' students denounce their partners"^{vi}, a news item about students who confessed on exploding dynamite in the sewers of one main avenue in Mexico City
- "The (General Attorneys Office) consigned another 54 agitators"^{vii}

⁹ Quotes from news items and/or their headlines will be included in this and the following chapter simply as means to illustrate the numerical data presented throughout these sections and to exemplify the arguments put forward in the news items analysed.

Overall, the movement is recognised as one constituted by students (53% of the whole sample), yet there are notable differences from September to October, as shown in Table 7.7. During September, ‘students’ were noted to comprise 60% of the participants of the movement, but that figure decreased to 45% in October. The presence of ‘academics’ also decreased in the same period, while that of ‘agitators’, but mostly of ‘foreigners’, increased significantly (21% to 24% and 2% to 11% respectively). This corresponds with the official version of events, as it was claimed that foreigners and agitators had infiltrated the student groups with a plan to de-stabilise the country in the forthcoming Olympic games (see Monsivais, 2002, 264-270, Preston and Dillon, 2004, 73-74; Berggren, 2006, 59; Doyle, 2003).

Table 7.7 Who is noted to take part in the student movement?

		Students	Other Civil Groups	Foreigners	Intellectuals	Academics	Politicians	Agitators	Total
September	Excelsior	79	2	2	0	24	2	19	128
	El Universal	76	2	3	0	8	4	34	127
	Total	155	4	5	0	32	6	53	255
October	Excelsior	46	6	11	2	8	8	27	108
	El Universal	53	3	13	1	5	10	27	112
	Total	99	9	24	3	13	18	54	220

The latter situation is also evident in the adjectives used when referring to the participants of the movement. Most of the adjectives used tended towards the negative, and throughout the sample, the most used adjective was ‘subversive or communist’, a term which was applied 54 times in Excelsior and 45 times in El Universal (see Table 7.8). Interestingly, the second most used adjective in Excelsior was ‘concerned’, used 34 times to describe the students, but of those mentions, more than half correspond to September. This indicates that support for the students decreased the following month.

Table 7.8 What adjectives are used to describe the participants? (when used)

		Mediocre/ Inept	Failed/ Unsuccessful	False	Subversive	Vulgar	Imprudent/ Arrogant	Concerned	Total
Excelsior	Students	0	1	10	27	3	23	34	98
	Other Civil Groups	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Foreigners	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	5
	Intellectuals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Academics	2	1	1	2	0	3	3	12
	Politicians	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	4
	Agitators	0	0	0	20	0	0	0	20
	Total	4	3	11	54	4	27	37	140
El Universal	Students	1	0	10	24	6	12	5	58
	Other Civil Groups	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Foreigners	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
	Intellectuals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Academics	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
	Politicians	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	4
	Agitators	0	0	0	15	0	0	0	15
	Total	1	2	10	45	7	12	5	82

Table 7.9 shows how the government was described. Contrary to the assumptions initially made, there is a remarkable amount of criticism, albeit to a much lesser extent than that of the students. In fact, “excessive use of force” is almost a la par with “fair or constitutional” as a description of government actions. Criticism is more present in Excelsior than El Universal, the latter being more likely to portray government’s actions as a reestablishment of order than the former, and Excelsior more prone to consider the government as negligent or intransigent than El Universal. Some examples of praise to the government’s actions can be seen in the following quotes:

- “It was a magnificent labour of the authorities to find out the instigators of the conjure against the government, said yesterday the academic from the Faculty of Medicine of UNAM, Dr. Manuel Mateor Fournier”^{viii}
- “...In this world there is not a single perfect government. But it is better to have a government –with mistakes- that goes on improving every day, democratic, economic, social, cultural and morally, than being under the communist dictatorship”^{ix}

Table 7.9 Words or phrases used to describe government actions.

	Excelsior	El Universal	Total	Percentage
Repression	15	10	25	9.54
Fair/Constitutional	43	30	73	27.86
Excessive Use of Force	42	27	69	26.34
Reestablishment of Order	11	40	51	19.47
Negligent/Intransigent	27	5	32	12.21
Anti-Constitutional/Anti-Nationalist/Unfair	6	6	12	4.58
Total	144	118	262	100.00

However, harsher descriptions of government actions, those suggesting repression or illegality through anti-constitutionality, are not so apparent, even though “repression” was a word used twice by the students’ National Strike Committee in its six point document. That repression was used to describe government’s actions in less than 10% of times also shows how little attention was given to students’ demands. As noted earlier, Excelsior reported the government’s actions as excessive use of force in 42 items, almost just as many times it noted the government to be fair and constitutional, and a similar situation occurs in El Universal (see Figure 7.1). The figures for labels of repression or anti-constitutionalism are also comparable in both newspapers. So the higher level of criticism from Excelsior reported in the literature is not entirely demonstrated by the evidence of this sample, since it suggests that criticism was not of a harsh type, as it did not question core features of the government’s use of force or the legality of its actions. Rather, this evidence is in line with the arguments of a media that was critical of the government but one that did not argue for a different type of governing (see Monsivais, 2003, 169). The latter can be seen in the opinion feature by Daniel Cosío in Excelsior, on the 27th of September. This item initially looks like a criticism of the government, but the author’s argument is not that another type of government is possible, and indeed makes no reference to other political parties. Instead, he notes that the existing government has to adopt a different approach:

“... in the country there are two public opinions. One, the official, which applauds all its acts because it is tied to it. The other is an opinion that is disorganised, indifferent, sceptical even, but free. This is precisely why

the Government has to seduce it, and for that there is but one way: the simple, honest and intelligent word, and, above all, the kind action.”^x

Then the author moves on to say that both the government and university authorities have been erratic in the handling of the conflict.

Figure 7.1 Words used to describe government’s actions, 1968

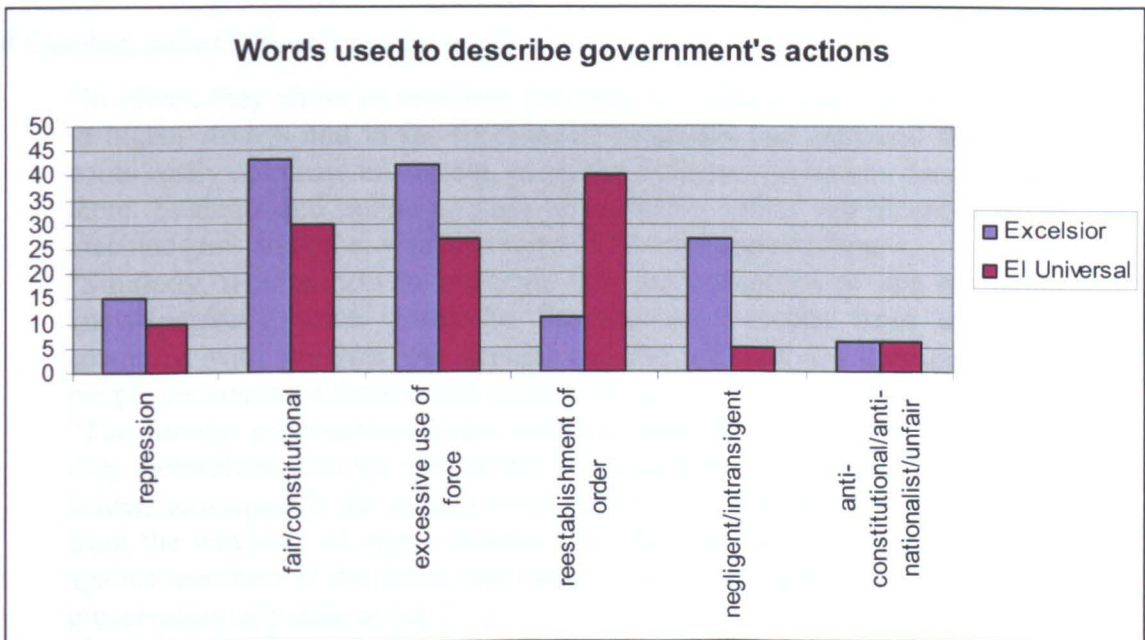


Figure 7.2 shows that throughout the sample the position of the newspaper articles analysed was more likely to be favourable of the government than to the student movement. Although the difference is much more evident in El Universal, it is also quite noticeable how the amount of items favourable to the student movement significantly decreased from September to October in newspaper Excelsior. It is possible to argue that the army repression of the 2nd of October demonstration showed that the student movement was becoming more than just a nuisance to the government, hence becoming an issue off-limits to press criticism. Indeed, support for government’s actions is clear from the Excelsior editorial of the day after the Tlatelolco massacre, entitled “Bloody Tlatelolco”:

“If well it’s true that the behaviour of the students –and of a great number of teachers- surpassed at times the limits of sense and reached insolence and thoughtless challenge, overestimating their own strengths, it is no less true that the response to such excess has not been prudent or adequate. The overkill of arrogance –that even led to the demanding of the President of the Republic to present himself at the Zocalo to dialogue with the dissatisfied the very same day he had to address his state of the nation- was typical of puerile and proud adolescents.”^{xi}

Similarly, El Universal expressed its support of the government in its Editorial of the 4th of October, called “Disorder technique”:

“In effect, they chose to celebrate this rally in a place where snipers, posed in higher storeys and in the rooftops of buildings that surround the plaza, could easily dominate the terrain, using the firearms and bombs concentrated there. Students and public opinion alike find it rather significant that the machine guns and other weapons were of Russian manufacture.

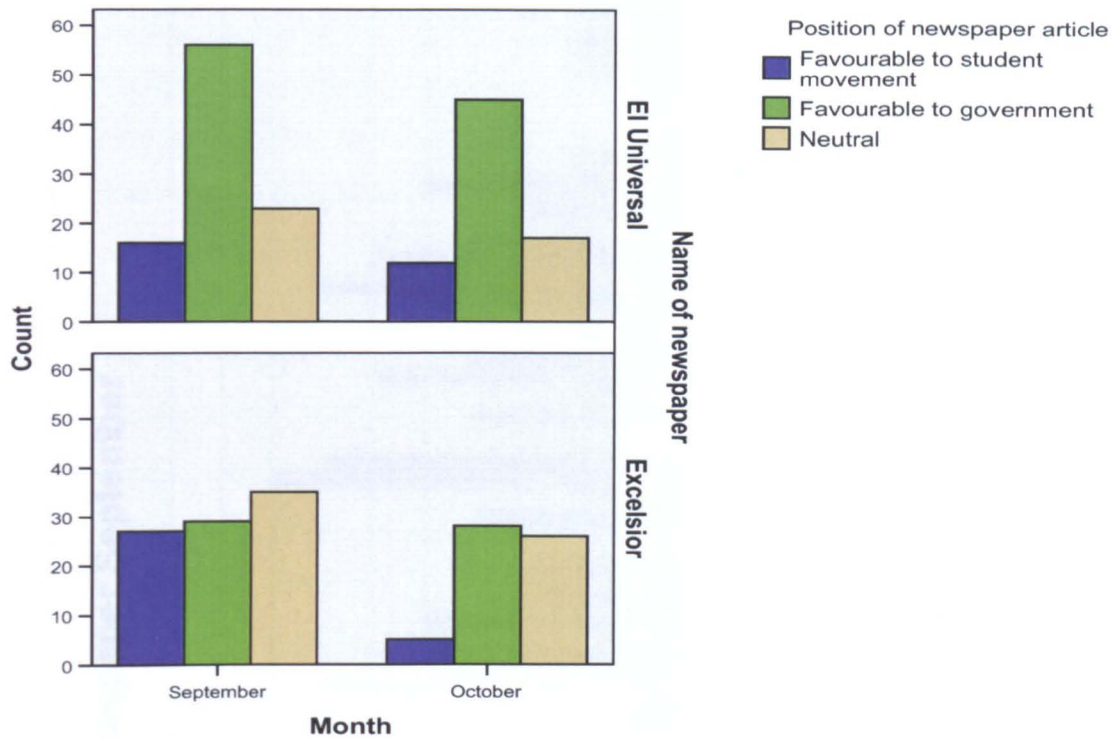
“Similarly, it is evident to everyone that the instigators of this encounter knew perfectly what would be the untoward results from attacking, cowardly, with firearms, the general and the officials that approached the people concentrated there to ask them to leave.

“The foreign provocateurs knew perfectly that the very moment in which they themselves shed the first of the Mexican blood by injuring the military leader, consequently the critical event would come into being; more so since, from the windows of upper storeys, the other provocateurs began to shoot against members of the Army that came to fulfil their duty to watch over the preservation of public order. (...)

“Mexico cries for the death and the blood of his children: students, soldiers or civilian, who were victims of this tragic event provoked by foreigners, by fanatic demagogues and by poor dreamers. At the same time it supports the attitude of those who accomplish their mission to repress this maddening conjure.”^{xii}

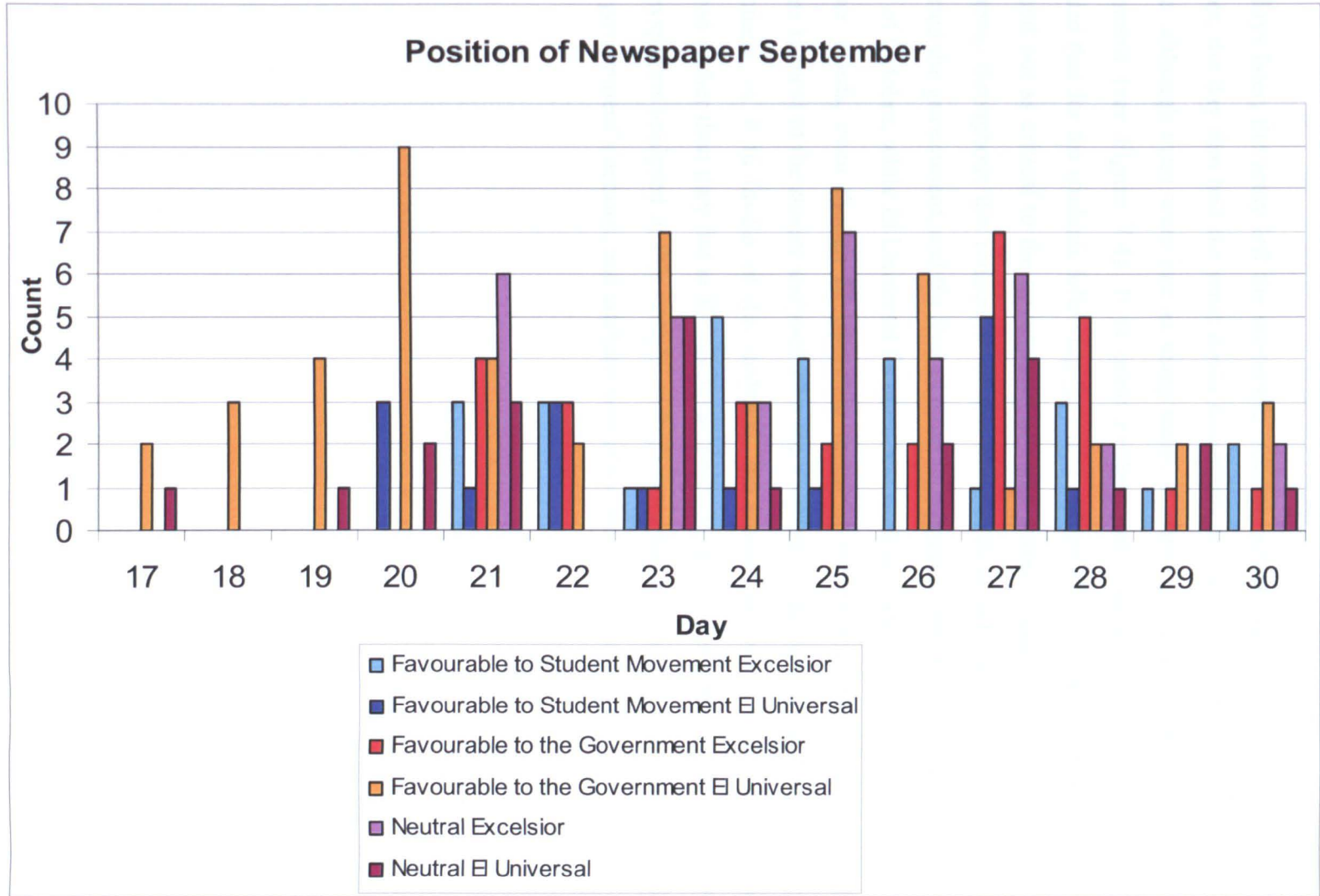
The latter extracts show the opinion that the shooting in Tlatelolco was something the students brought on to themselves. Excelsior notes that the actions of the government were imprudent, yet it does not call them repressive or extreme. El Universal, on the other hand, notes that repression was the right thing to do, therefore, not something for the government to be reproached.

Figure 7.2 Position of newspaper articles in regards of demonstration, 1968



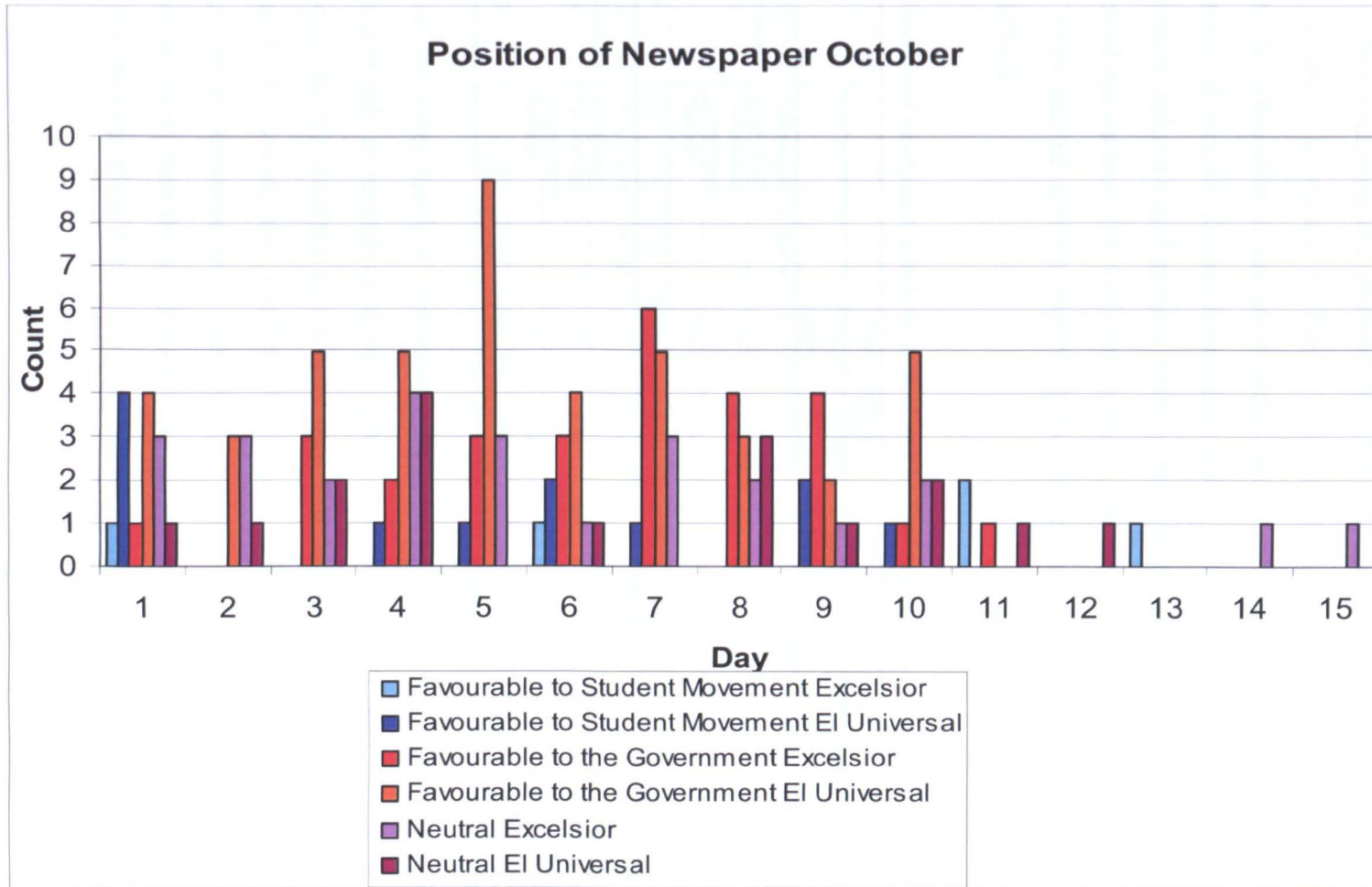
The latter observations are more salient when looking at the position of newspaper items day by day. Throughout the four weeks analysed both newspapers were prone to being favourable to the government rather than the student movement, more so El Universal than Excelsior. Only in four days of the sample during September did Excelsior favour the students rather than the government (24, 25, 26 and 30th of September), a situation which only occurred once in El Universal (27th of September). These dates coincide with the resignation of the University's Chancellor Javier Barros Sierra on the 22nd of September, who did so as a protest to the Army's takeover of the university campus (on the 18th of September). Barros Sierra's declarations appeared in several news items, which granted him favourable coverage and explaining the rise of criticisms of the government in the following days, as several opinion features called for his abdication to be rejected and urged for the army's withdrawal from the university campus. The chancellor's resignation was not accepted and he withdrew it on the 26th.

Figure 7.3 Position of newspaper articles.



Four days later, the army left the university campus, which was reported on the 1st of October, the day that had the most items favourable to the students for the rest of the sample, although there were just as many items in either newspaper that favoured the government (see Figure 7.4). It is quite evident how support for the government exceeded that for the students following the events of the 2nd of October. Excelsior does not stand out as critical to the government as some authors suggest, furthermore, only four items throughout the remainder of the sample favoured the students, while 27 supported the government, and the first of those in support of the students appeared until the 6th of October, while El Universal favoured the students twice the previous two days. In other words, even though El Universal favoured the government rather than the students in most of the stories analysed after the Tlatelolco massacre (33 in favour of the government vs. 8 in favour of the students), the stories that supported the students appeared earlier than they did in Excelsior. So assertiveness is not perceived in either of the newspapers analysed in this sample, as both were just as prone to express approval of the government's actions, and attribute acts of violence elsewhere.

Figure 7.4 Position of newspaper articles,



A high level of commentary oriented journalism in the Mexican media system is noticeable when analysing the position taken in the newspaper items by the type of article in question, as shown in Table 7.10 and Table 7.11. El Universal had the tendency to be favourable to the government throughout the period of the sample and across all types of articles. During September, that is, prior to the massacre, it dedicated a few editorials, columns and opinion feature items to the movement, but they hardly ever supported the students. By October, however, the number of columns and editorials decreased while that of opinion features grew substantially, along with disapproval of student's actions.

Table 7.10 Position of newspaper article by type of article, September

Name of newspaper			Type of article					Total
			News story	Column	Opinion feature	Other	Editorial	
Excelsior	Position of newspaper article	Favourable to student movement	9	2	15	0	1	27
		Favourable to government	17	2	8	0	2	29
		Neutral	13	3	15	0	4	35
	Total		39	7	38	0	7	91
El Universal	Position of newspaper article	Favourable to student movement	14	1	1	0	0	16
		Favourable to government	38	5	8	1	4	56
		Neutral	15	1	5	1	1	23
	Total		67	7	14	2	5	95

Excelsior on the other hand, is comparably different to El Universal, but only during September, and only in regards of opinion features, which were the only type of item in which support for the students was greater than that for the government. By October, similarly to El Universal, the number of columns and editorials decreased, yet the support for the government grew considerably. From having favoured the students nearly twice as much than the government the month before, in October only one item supported the students while twelve gave preference to the government.

Table 7.11 Position of newspaper article by type of article, October

Name of newspaper			Type of article					Total
			News story	Column	Opinion feature	Other	Editorial	
Excelsior	Position of newspaper article	Favourable to student movement	2	1	1	1	0	5
		Favourable to government	14	0	12	0	2	28
		Neutral	11	3	12	0	0	26
	Total		27	4	25	1	2	59
El Universal	Position of newspaper article	Favourable to student movement	10	0	2	0	0	12
		Favourable to government	30	0	13	0	2	45
		Neutral	12	0	5	0	0	17
	Total		52	0	20	0	2	74

Another reason why it is argued that the press took their cue from the government in the way information was treated in their coverage lies in the way they framed the event as subversive and/or communist. Some examples of this can be seen in the following quotes:

- When describing the ideology behind the student movement, the author refers to it as “the nucleus of red-totalitarian conspiracy, called “National Strike Council””^{xiii}
- In the column “Opinion”, the author regrets “the deep infiltration of agitators into our greatest house of studies that has turned the classrooms into centres of subversion and propaganda of groups of national extremists” who, the author claims, have close links with Cuba, China and the USSR.^{xiv}
- “That Mexico becomes the second Russian colony in the American continent, is what is pretended by the communist students, the agitators to the service of the USSR and Fidel Castro, and the traitors to the nation and the foreigners who cannot have any love for our country”.^{xv}
- In a news item quoting the declarations of student leader Socrates Campos, it is said that the student movement’s aim was to “transform the political structure of the country (...) to a communist type”^{xvi}

CIA documents declassified in 2003 in regards of the events in Mexico in 1968 reveal that the Mexican government over-played the presence of communist infiltration in the student movement, and it was later revealed that such intervention was not as significant as the government suggested (see Doyle, 2003). Nevertheless, reporting in both newspapers reflects the government’s line, especially after the events at the Tlatelolco Plaza. While in September the student movement was mostly portrayed as an act of

delinquency and violence, and it was also considered not to be based in student interests in both newspapers, the contemplation of it as 'communist' was not as important, being third in importance in El Universal, and especially in Excelsior, ranking in at number four. However, in October the labelling of the movement as 'not based in student interests' became the most used description in both newspapers, seconded by 'communist or of subversive ideology' (See Table 7.12). This shows that newspaper stories followed the official line, as further journalistic investigation would have revealed, as the CIA claims, that the communist presence was not as prominent.

Table 7.12 Words used to describe the student movement, 1968

Words used to describe the student movement	September		October	
	Excelsior	El Universal	Excelsior	El Universal
	%	%	%	%
Delinquency/illegal/violent	26.09	19.50	15.15	21.05
Anti-nationalist/anti-constitutional/anti-revolutionary	5.80	11.95	4.04	10.53
Fairly motivated	25.36	10.69	17.17	9.47
Communist/of subversive ideology	7.97	15.09	22.22	22.11
unreasonable	6.52	9.43	8.08	1.05
not based on student interest	18.84	17.61	27.27	25.26
Anarchy/disorder/chaotic	5.80	9.43	4.04	9.47
Pacifist	3.62	6.29	2.02	1.05

At the beginning of this analysis, based on the existing literature about the coverage of the events of 1968, some assumptions were presented. These suggested that newspapers would favour official over non official voices; that criticism of the student movement would be intense while support for the government would be prominent, especially after the events at the Tlatelolco Plaza; that the President would be constantly mentioned in newspaper items and that Excelsior would be more critical in its views than El Universal.

Of those assumptions, the first one did not hold true, as non official voices were featured to a greater amount than official voices, however, as the overall position of the newspaper item in regards of the demonstration shows, non official voices were not included in news items as means to validate their arguments, rather the opposite. Despite

incorporating more non-official than official voices, newspaper items tended to support the stance taken by the latter, hence the movement was framed as violent, criminal, not based in student interests and even subversive and communist rather than based on fair concerns and of a pacifist approach. Therefore, the assumptions regarding a high criticism of the student movement, the portrayal of the movement in a negative fashion and high support for government actions were all backed by the evidence of this analysis.

However, another issue that was expected to appear in the analysis, constant allusions to the President in newspaper items, did not occur in this sample (See Table 7.13). Of a total of 319 items, only 34 made reference to the president's actions¹⁰, and of those, only four did so in a negative way. For the most part, the president's actions are noted to be kind, courteous and considerate, or fair, adequate and constitutional. It is salient that the only paper to recognise the conduct of the president as excessive use of force was El Universal, even though in two of such occasions the president was also referred to as fair. The only negative portrayal of the President in Excelsior consisted in tagging him as negligent or intransigent.

Table 7.13 Words used to describe the President's actions

Month	Name of newspaper	Kind/ courteous/ considerate	Fair/ adequate/ constitutional	Reestablishment of order	Excessive use of force	Negligent/ intransigent	Total
September	Excelsior	6	3	1	0	0	10
	El Universal	6	6	1	2	0	15
October	Excelsior	4	1	1	0	1	7
	El Universal	0	4	0	1	0	5
Total		16	14	3	3	1	37

As noted in Table 7.14, forty items in the sample were also identified to denote a position -be it favourable, unfavourable or neutral- in regards of the president, whether or not they included references to his actions. In this case Excelsior was more likely to

¹⁰ Three of such items included more than one word or phrase to describe the actions of the president. The table shows all the descriptions, thus bringing them to a total of 37.

be critical of the president (four negative items against one for El Universal). But overall, the majority of items are favourable to the president with 77%, while only 12% are unfavourable and 10% are neutral. Some examples about the praise for the President can be seen in the following quotes:

- “The President Gustavo Diaz Ordaz has fulfilled his historic mission”^{xvii} said a news item that quoted the president of the National Confederation of Commerce, Francisco Cano.
- “...the attitude taken in this conflict by the Mexican President, Gustavo Diaz Ordaz, is exemplary for the high spirit of comprehension towards the youth. The example of measure, they added, stresses his great human quality and as a contemporary statistician, by offering all the facilities for the resolution of the student conflict.”^{xviii}, in a news item about the opinions of Mexican diplomats regarding the conflict.
- “...besides the just, clean and certain words of Mister President of the Republic, advisory for the most part. What other orientation have the students received? In effect, after the brilliant state of the nation of our First Magistrate before the (Honourable) Congress of the Union, the entire nation expected those in charge of the national education, the responsible of the formation of our youth to devolve and put in practice the brilliant presidential theory and with that, bring light and orientation to the juvenile spirits.”^{xix}

Table 7.14 Position regarding the President

Month	Newspaper	Position regarding the president			
		Favourable	Unfavourable	Neutral	Total
September	Excelsior	8	3	1	12
	El Universal	13	1	0	14
	Total	21	4	1	26
October	Excelsior	5	1	2	8
	El Universal	5	0	1	6
	Total	10	1	3	14

It is difficult to define the role Gustavo Diaz Ordaz played in the 1968 affair. As President of the Republic, a lot of the weight of the decisions to involve the army and to order the repression on the night of the 2nd of October has been attributed to him. Scherer (1995, 24) and Krauze (1997) in Braun (1997, 518), Brewster(2002) and Preston and Dillon (2002) argue that Diaz Ordaz was obsessed with the maintenance of order and the reaffirmation of his position of authority, furthermore, they consider him edgy and mistrustful. These personal traits, these authors believe, made Diaz Ordaz drive the

government in the manner in which events occurred. Loaeza (2005), however, believes that more than Diaz Ordaz, a paramount figure driving the events was Minister of Interior Luis Echeverria, whom, she believes, tricked the president into taking the decisions to bring in the army to deal with the students. In his state of the nation speech of the 1st of September that year, Diaz Ordaz addressed the student conflict and responded to all the points in their petition (Loaeza, 2005). The presidential concerns about the events, voiced in such an official manner, show that he was not just a figure in the background. Whatever role the president had in the occurrences of the student demonstration, what the two previous tables show is that references to the president decreased from September to October, be they positive or negative. This, it is suggested, supports the argument that the media were being protective of the president by not involving him with the events of the student movement, and by portraying him in a positive light whenever he was alluded to.

Coverage of protest movements in the 1960's around the world

That the student movement was framed negatively is not uncommon to how coverage of demonstrations occurs in other media systems, as noted at the beginning of this section. The student movements in London and the US emerged with a different agenda to that in Mexico, and this difference is worth stressing, as it influenced the movement as it developed.

Both British and American movements demonstrated against the Vietnam War. In the case of the London movement, Halloran, et. al. argue that the press was adamant in portraying the demonstration as an act of violence, despite evidence to the contrary. This adherence to pre-established frames, the authors believe, constitute a hindrance to what news coverage in a democratic country ought to be like. Furthermore, the authors argue, this type of coverage may incite rather than discourage violence (Halloran et. al., 1970, 315).

Fahlenbrach et. al. (2007, 5) argue that the student movements of the 1960's received media coverage in an unprecedented way. The advent of television and visual press were indeed favoured by the images provided by the events of the student movement: "it didn't take long before the mass media realized that there was money to be made from the students' visual-symbolic taboo-breaking in the public sphere". The events as a disruption of normality and a potential of violence, however, made them score high in newsworthiness, and were, therefore, granted a large amount of coverage throughout the media systems in which student movements emerged.

Halloran et. al. (1970) also note that the news angles taken by the press were an effect of a "chain reaction", since the papers that had not originally covered the events of the student movement, resorted to the angles previously set by newspapers that gave the movement more continuous coverage. Therefore, alternative angles were not developed and the coverage was too narrowly focused on a narrative that ended up not corresponding to the events: violent behaviour of demonstrators. The authors believe that the available news space of each newspaper was relevant to news coverage in two ways. On the one hand, it played a part on how the amount attention given to the movement varied from one paper to another. And on the other, it explains the subsequent "chain reaction" that led towards the stressing of some news angles and the rejection of others. Moreover, both Fahlenbrach et. al. (2007) and Gitlin (1980) note that a symbiotic relationship developed between protestors and the media in the 1960's.

"Though unintended at first, the mass media provided a forum for protest events which helped mobilize a wide front of sympathizers and ensured that the goals of the movement would be etched into the collective memory of society for many years to come". (Fahlenbrach et. al., 2007, 5)

Gitlin (1980) notes that the attention that the media provided to the student movement in the U.S. served as a catalyst to its organisation and its self-definition. Despite the generalised negative framing the movement was subjected to, one important observation the author makes was that some of the messages the protestors wanted to send were indeed covered by the media (Gitlin, 1980, 242-46).

We can therefore begin to see some of the many differences between the way in which the student movement developed in Mexico and the way it was covered. The student movement in Mexico emerged as a response to government over-reaction to a student related brawl. While British and American students protested against the Vietnam War, the Mexican students requests focused on the unfair treatment they claimed to have received from the government.

The petition by the National Strike Council requested an open dialogue with the government, a point that was stressed throughout time, as evidenced by hand outs and leaflets of the time obtained for this study. In the hand-outs, students complain about the media coverage they have received and reiterate their respect for the national institutions and their call for dialogue. They also account the repression which they claim the government exercised upon them.

The suggestion is that, unlike the Western movements, the biased media attention given to the Mexican protestors deterred the students from developing into a more profound movement, as their requests revolved around the exact same points throughout time. The movement got more adherents as time went by, yet, as evidenced in the leaflets, their requests did not change. Lack of media attention may be a cause for this, as the leaflets constantly refer to being ignored or misrepresented in the news. To put it differently, a great deal of effort of the students was devoted to spread the message that they were not violent, or communists, that the media was misrepresenting them and that all they wanted was dialogue with the president. So much effort was expended on this that they did not elaborate on what exactly they intended, or how they wanted that to occur.

While the coverage of the demonstrations both in Britain and the U.S. and in Mexico followed a pattern of newsworthiness, they did so within the context of the traditional news values of each media system. In either context, they were big stories that merited big coverage. However in Mexico the reporting was carried out in adherence to the official lines promoted by the government. The change towards greater support for the

government and more criticism of the students after the events of the 2nd of October suggest that this was the case. So unlike the U.S. and Britain, the requests of the students were not articulated in the Mexican press.

Furthermore, the labelling of the student movement as “communist” reflects the reaction of the government as projected in light of student movements elsewhere, but does not necessarily correspond to the actual demands and causes of the Mexican movement. While it is likely that the Mexican student movement of 1968 was influenced by events abroad, including aspects that link it to a left wing ideology, the petitions of the demonstrators, as regularly accounted in the leaflets, reveal that their main concern was to be granted dialogue with the president, for the government to cease acts of repression and to counter the image made of them by the media.

Conclusion

The content analysis of the 1968 sample suggests that the press was highly supportive of the government and that the civic movement was framed in a negative light, both by regarding it as puerile and criminal, and through the adoption of the official line, which called it subversive and communist. Alternative lines of enquiry were not present in newspaper items, thus bias, rather than fairness, characterised journalism at the time. This, the literature suggests, happened because the media at the time were controlled if not co-opted by the semi-authoritarian PRI regime. However, some authors suggest the media in Mexico have become more open and critical of the government as journalistic values have become more widespread in recent times, alongside general trends in the Mexican political system that point towards a transition to democracy. The following chapter will analyse whether or not press coverage had changed significantly during the first PAN party administration by studying a sample from a civic movement of 2004. The chapter will go on to present a comparison of both samples and an overall conclusion.

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- ⁱ In El Universal, 24th September, 1968, “The Army took over the IPN”, no author, main news item.
- ⁱⁱ In Excelsior, 25th September, 1968, by Payan, V.
- ⁱⁱⁱ In Excelsior, 26th September, 1968, by Payan, V.
- ^{iv} In Excelsior, 2nd October, 1968, no author.
- ^v In El Universal, 4th October, 1968, no author.
- ^{vi} In El Universal, 9th October, 1968, by Cano, L.
- ^{vii} In El Universal, 24th September, 1968, no author.
- ^{viii} In El Universal, 7th October, 1968, “Eulogy to the government”, no author.
- ^{ix} In El Universal, 5th October 1968, “Opinion...”, by Perez S., J.
- ^x In Excelsior, 27th September, 1968, “The seven acts of a tragedy” by Cosio, D.
- ^{xi} In Excelsior, 3rd October, 1968, “Bloody Tlatelolco”, Editorial.
- ^{xii} In El Universal, 4th of October, 1968, “Disorder technique”, Editorial.
- ^{xiii} In El Universal, 2nd October, 1968, “The Chancellor and the Conflict” by Del Toro, L
- ^{xiv} In El Universal, 24th September, 1968, “Opinion” by Kramsky, J.
- ^{xv} In El Universal, 8th October, 1968 “Mexico, Russian colony”, by Ponce de Leon, S.
- ^{xvi} In Excelsior, 6th October, 1968, “Revelations of the [student] movement”, no author.
- ^{xvii} In El Universal, 7th October, 1968, “Campos Lemus marked the “beginning of the end of the problem”-CANACO”, no author.
- ^{xviii} In El Universal, 23rd September, 1968, “Diplomats regret events”, no author.
- ^{xix} In Excelsior, 21st September, 1968, “Order is equilibrium” by Noriega, A.

Chapter 8

Content analysis, part 2: 2004

The previous chapter presented the analysis of the 1968 sample, corresponding to the student movement in Mexico City, during the PRI party administration of Gustavo Diaz Ordaz. It argued that newspaper coverage was biased in favour of the government, and that despite prominently featuring civilian voices, the framing of the items corresponded to official stances in regards to the events. The current chapter will present the results of the analysis of the sample corresponding to the mega-demonstration against insecurity and delinquency, which took place in June 2004, during the first PAN party administration under the leadership of President Vicente Fox. The chapter will go on to compare both samples, and will conclude with a general overview of the coverage of civic movements in the Mexican press.

Coverage of the Mega-demonstration 2004

As noted earlier, the literature suggests that Reforma and La Jornada are newspapers that despite their ideological tendencies, one to the right, the other to the left, are generally portrayed as examples of media organisations that strive for fairness, independence and critical journalism. Both Hughes (2006) and Lawson (2002) argue that, to a varying degree, both these newspapers display plurality, autonomy and assertiveness in their coverage of events. This, they argue, is achieved by portraying a variety of voices, recurring to different sources for information and challenging official lines.

Based on those notions some preliminary assumptions about the 2004 sample were that¹:

- News items would feature different, at times even opposing, views and positions in regards of the issues covered
- Newspapers would give a balanced presence to both official and non official voices
- The movement would be portrayed in a balanced way

¹ Even though both Hughes (2006) and Lawson (2002) note that the transformation of the Mexican media system have not been uniform across all media outlets, their overall assessment is that Reforma and La Jornada are examples of media organisations that have achieved such characteristics, hence the assumptions presented here were made accordingly.

- However, political tendencies would be distinctive, as Reforma would be prone to adopt the position taken by right wing politicians and groups that benefit from neoliberal policies (i.e. business and commercial organisations), and
- La Jornada would adopt the position of leaders from the PRD and supporters of the left.
- Society's demands would be prominently discussed in an informed manner in regards to its legitimacy, and they would be accepted and/or criticised accordingly to how they fit in with the views of prominent politicians.

These assumptions would be representative of a media system that has undergone a process of democratisation and performs the role of a fourth estate or a watchdog, as defined in the liberal model of media systems. It would mean for the Mexican case that clientelistic networks have been left behind and co-optation and coercion have been eliminated through the institution of an open market, where media outlets compete for readership rather than political patronage, and civic goals have overcome subservience in journalism practice. The following paragraphs will analyse whether or not the evidence of this study concurs with the latter assumptions.

Firstly the voices featured in the newspaper items will be examined. As Table 8.1² suggests, a much more varied set of voices is present in the 2004 sample than in that of 1968. The latter would suggest that, as Lawson and Hughes argue, the press has opened up in Mexico to include the views of opposition and civilian figures. Despite the voices of members of the civil society being included 74 times and those of NGO's 73 times, comprising 19.7% of all voices included in the newspaper items, they only rank in third place as the majority of voices featured belong to government or party representatives. Indeed the most frequently referred to individual was Mexico City Mayor Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, who was featured 97 times, and along with the Government of Mexico City (GDF³, mentioned 81 times), which he leads, was the most prominent voice in the whole sample (23.7%). Second to it were the voices corresponding to President Fox (88 mentions) and the Federal Government (61 mentions), amounting to 19.9%.

² This table considers all voices featured in the 303 items of the sample. Of them, 51 included five voices, 40 had four, 51 contained three, 53 had two and 70 had one; 36 items featured no voices.

³ GDF, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Federal District Government (Mexico City)

Table 8.1 Voices featured in newspaper item, 2004

	Newspaper						TOTAL
	Reforma	La Jornada	Total June	Reforma	La Jornada	Total July	(indicates rank)
PRI Party Member	10	3	13	12	3	15	28
PAN Party Member	8	5	13	8	2	10	23
PRD Party Member	13	9	22	12	3	15	37
Other Party	0	0	0	3	2	5	5
Civil Society/Member Of The Public	58	3	61	13	0	13	(5) 74
NGO	39	16	55	14	4	18	(6) 73
Government Official	19	5	24	14	5	19	43
Other	39	24	63	7	6	13	(4) 76
President Fox	34	16	50	24	14	38	(2) 88
Member Of Federal Government	24	14	38	11	12	23	61
AMLO	44	25	69	22	6	28	(1) 97
Member Of Mexico City Government	40	25	65	11	5	16	(3) 81
Academic/Researcher.Intellectual/Author	11	2	13	10	8	18	31
Religious Leader	4	3	7	0	0	0	7
Business/Commercial Organisation Representative	10	9	19	2	3	5	24
TOTAL	353	159	512	163	73	236	748

Even though the 2004 sample referred to a civilian initiated movement, news items were dominated by the coverage of parties and politicians. As shown in Table 8.2, themes that revolved around political implications and/or interests affected by the demonstration dominate both newspapers, as the most frequent topic was the demonstration as political conflict between parties and/or local and federal governments or references to whom was behind the demonstration. This is clear in the following headlines:

- “Since last October there has been a campaign to disparage [his] administration, [Lopez Obrador] says. The GDF is tired of the attacks against it, responds Lopez Obrador”ⁱ,
- “The attack against Lopez Obrador reignites; The Ministry of Interior orders him to shut up. The Federal government takes part in favour of tomorrow’s demonstration”ⁱⁱ
- “I won’t get into polemics with Fox, says Batiz”⁴ⁱⁱⁱ

⁴ Bernardo Batiz, Attorney General of the Government of the Federal District

- “The levels (of crime) are higher in BC, Yucatan and Morelos, where AN governs: Marti Batres⁵. They refute Fox: Mexico City does not have the first place in criminality”^{iv}
- “AN denies fear of Lopez Obrador”^v
- “Lopez Obrador denies kidnappings of Spaniards”^{vi}
- “We won’t let ourselves [be beaten]: Marti Batres”^{vii}
- “They [GDF] accept demands, they refer them to Fox”^{viii}

Second in importance was the political response to public demands, followed by issues in regards of crime incidence. It is in fifth place that the demands of the demonstrators are featured, preceded by descriptions of the demonstration and its organisation.

Table 8.2 Themes of newspaper items, 2004

Themes of newspaper items	June			July			TOTAL		
	Reforma	La Jornada	Total June	Reforma	La Jornada	Total July	Total Sample	Total Reforma	Total La Jornada
Political response to public demands	28	16	44	30	6	36	80	58	22
Demonstration as political conflict/ Leadership of demonstration	56	58	114	3	3	6	120	59	61
Support of AMLO/GDF/Left	14	2	16	10	2	12	28	24	4
A criticism of Fox/Fed Gov/PAN/Right	4	3	7	6	3	9	16	10	6
Levels of crime/crime incidence/social causes of crime	25	17	42	9	7	16	58	34	24
Poor government tackling of crime/incompetence/corruption/impunity	25	5	30	13	6	19	49	38	11
Organisation/description of demonstration/behaviour of demonstrators	41	8	49	2	1	3	52	43	9
Demands of demonstrators	29	13	42	6	2	8	50	35	15
Security measures during demonstration	10	1	11	0	0	0	11	10	1
An opinion in favour of demonstration	26	5	31	9	0	9	40	35	5
An opinion against demonstration	5	5	10	2	2	4	14	7	7
Other	0	6	6	12	5	17	23	12	11
Total	263	139	402	102	37	139	541	365	176

During the first half of the sample Reforma seemed more concerned about people’s demands and the description of the movement that organised the demonstration than La Jornada. The latter on the other hand was mostly focused in portraying the movement as a product of politicisation and as a political conflict. However it is notable how themes that focus on the demonstration significantly decrease in both papers during the following month, as both newspapers also take a more moderate approach towards

⁵ Marti Batres, Sub-Minister of Government of the Federal district

framing the event as a political conflict. The most referred theme in June for both Reforma and La Jornada was coverage of the “Demonstration as a political conflict” with 56 and 58 mentions respectively, but these drop to just three mentions in each paper for July. La Jornada paid significantly less attention to the demonstration in July and the most frequently referred themes were in terms of crime incidence and political response to public demands. Reforma shows the same trend, although it still granted the subject a great deal of attention, but notably the fourth theme in relevance consisted of criticisms of Mexico City Mayor Andres M. Lopez. In other words, even though Reforma was apparently more sympathetic to public demands, after the demonstration it became more evident that its coverage was just as politicised as that of La Jornada. This is further evidenced by the drop of civilian voices featured in news items from June to July, as was shown in Table 8.1.

Table 8.3 Who is noted to endorse the demonstration? 2004

	June			July			TOTAL
	Reforma	La Jornada	Total	Reforma	La Jornada	Total	
Upper classes	26	7	33	2	3	5	38
Lower classes	6	3	9	0	0	0	9
Both upper and lower classes	1	2	3	6	3	9	12
Right/ultrairight/Yunque/private interests	32	30	62	7	4	11	73
PRI	0	1	1	0	1	1	2
PAN	5	10	15	0	1	1	16
Politicians in general/public officials	6	3	9	0	1	1	10
The media	11	6	17	3	4	7	24
President/Federal government	10	7	17	2	1	3	20
Left	3	0	3	1	0	1	4
Civic organisations	21	0	21	11	3	14	35
Foreigners	1	0	1	2	0	2	3
Business/commercial organisations	8	1	9	0	1	1	10
Other	5	1	6	0	1	1	7
Total	135	71	206	34	23	57	263

The political stances of both leaders and newspapers were reflected in the way the events were framed, including how those who endorsed the demonstrations were described (see Table 8.3). Prior to the demonstration, both newspapers acknowledge that the movement was mainly led by the upper classes, but more so Reforma than la

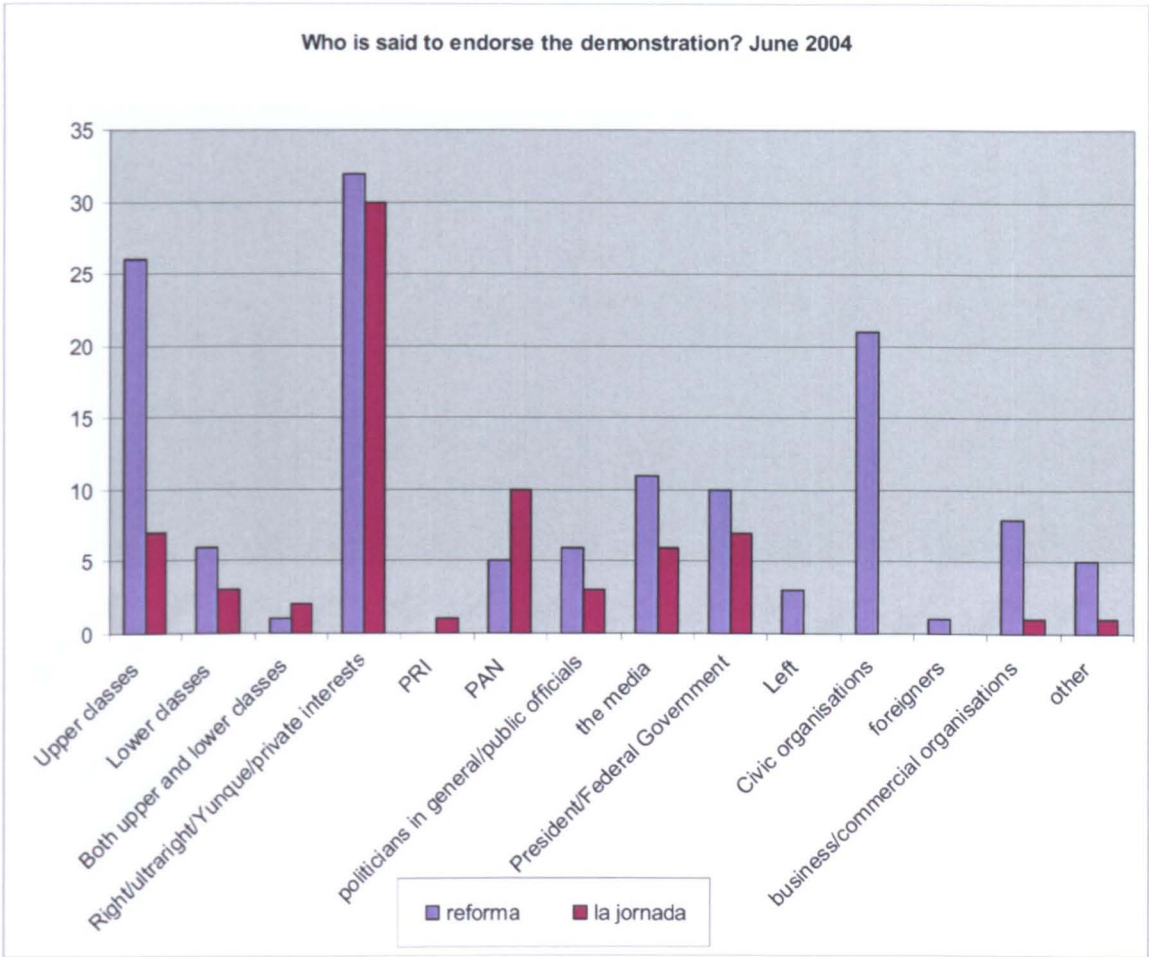
Jornada. However, the most frequently used description referred to words used by Mexico City Mayor Andres Manuel Lopez O., who claimed the demonstration was being organised by groups of the right, such as El Yunque, a so called ultra-right sect. Other terms he used were picked up by both newspapers, as Lopez O. also claimed that the PAN party, the Federal Government, the media and members of the PRI were behind the demonstration. This again shows how the coverage mostly revolved around the figure of Lopez Obrador rather than the movement itself. For example, a news item in Reforma from the 28th of June entitled ‘He de-legitimises the march’ by M. Duran describes the declarations of Mexico City Mayor: “For Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, Sunday’s citizen mobilisation against insecurity was a product of the tabloid media, the manipulation of the right, and the opportunism of the Federal Government”. And one item from La Jornada by Fazio, C. on the 21st June notes that

‘the mega-demonstration counts, besides, with the support of the National Action Party, the cardinal Norberto Rivera and groups of the catholic ultra-right, and forms part of the “agenda” of Televisa and other opinion leaders of the mass media. (...) In Mexico, the transit to the current empty democracy has gone hand in hand with privatisation and the deregulation of the economy (...) Security has been transformed into a merchandise (...) there’s a dynamic interconnection between neoliberalism, corruption-violence, privatisation of the (in)security, “irregular” economy, informal economy, criminal sector.”.

The latter quote shows that not only did the journalist of La Jornada validate the claims of Lopez Obrador, but makes them his own and builds up an argument based on them as well as general notions of left ideology, while the item in Reforma simply relays Lopez’s claims.

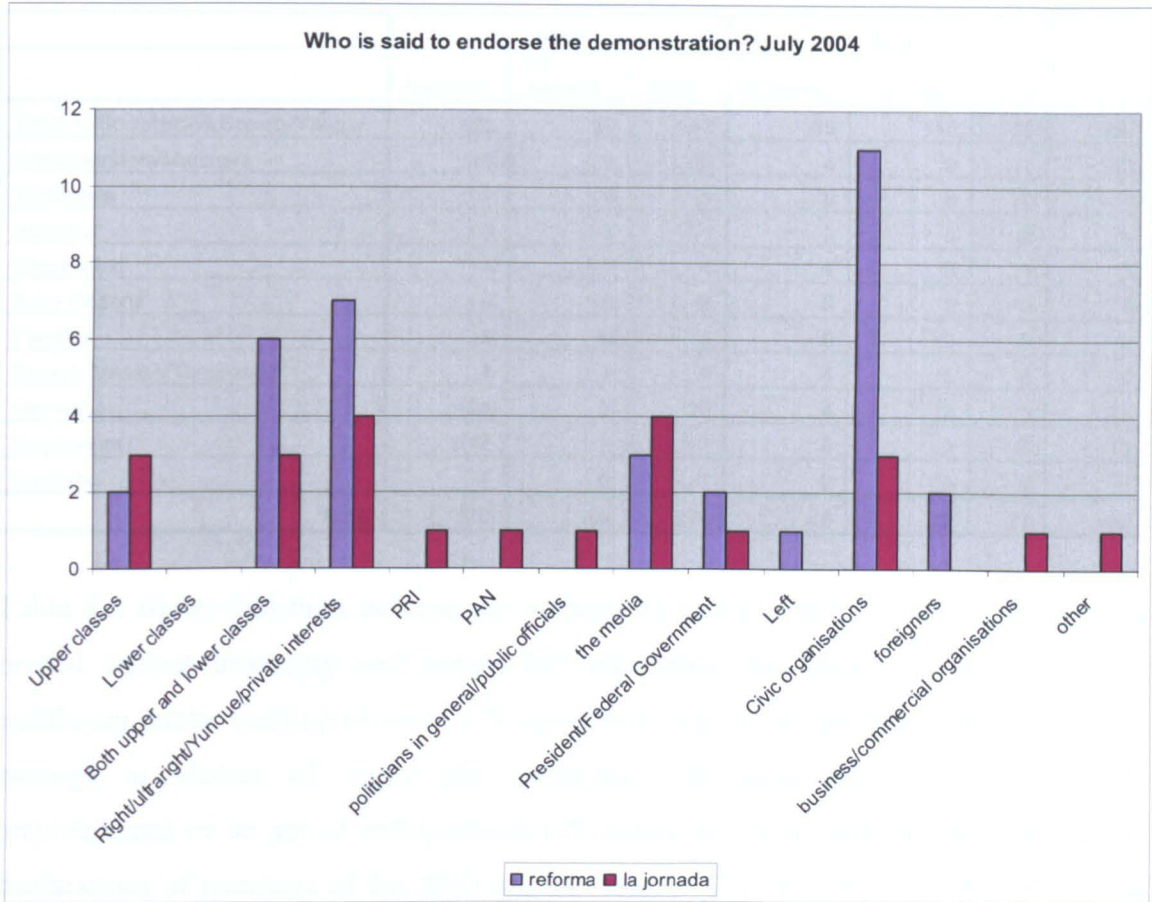
Reforma appears more varied in regards of who it reported to endorse the demonstration, conferring importance not just to upper classes as already mentioned, but also to civic groups. La Jornada mostly concentrated on Lopez Obrador’s discourse, as for example there were no mentions of civic organisations as endorsers of the rally (see Figure 8.1), rather it focused on groups that the Mexico City Mayor identified as backing the demonstration (such as the PAN, the media, the right and the Federal Government).

Figure 8.1 Who is said to endorse the demonstration? June 2004



By July, the situation is completely different, as both newspapers became more moderate, which indeed reflects the changing discourses of political figures. The movement was portrayed in 9 occasions as one of both upper and lower classes against 5 mentions of just upper classes, compared to three and 33 respectively to the previous month. Both papers still pick up on the declarations made by Lopez Obrador, who by then had actually changed his stance, but from 32 mentions in Reforma, and 30 in La Jornada about the rally being organised by the right and/or El Yunque in June, by July there were only 7 and 4 mentions respectively. And notably, La Jornada now observed that civic organisations were endorsing the demonstration (see Figure 8.2).

Figure 8.2 Who is said to endorse the demonstration? July 2004



The words used to describe the demonstrators also carry some connotations about the framing of the stories. Reforma attempted to mark the event as a nationalist matter, one of communities, neighbours, Mexicans, and most of all, citizens, as some items even suggested that the demonstration showed Mexico as a true democracy. La Jornada, on the other hand, while still acknowledging that citizens or society/civil society took part in the demonstration, also used on five occasions a term used by Lopez Obrador to describe those who were taking part in the rally, as “fake citizens”. By July the wording concentrated mainly in describing protestors as citizens or civil society in both papers, with no more references to families or neighbours in Reforma (see Table 8.4).

Table 8.4 How are the demonstrators described? 2004

	June			July			TOTAL
	Reforma	La Jornada	Total	Reforma	La Jornada	Total	
Citizens/Society/Civil Society/People	108	39	147	36	17	53	200
Demonstrators/Marchers	16	9	25	4	3	7	32
Extremists	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Activists	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
Dissatisfied	3	1	4	1	0	1	5
Fake Citizens	0	5	5	0	0	0	5
Families	4	0	4	0	0	0	4
Crowds/Masses/Thousands	4	1	5	4	0	4	9
Mexicans	23	2	25	4	2	6	31
Neighbours	12	1	13	0	0	0	13
Pacifists	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	172	59	231	49	22	71	302

Table 8.5 shows that both newspapers portray the focus of the demonstration to be a protest against insecurity and crime (257 mentions), but also as a protest against inefficient public tackling of crime (29 mentions), or as a call for peace and justice or a homage to victims of crime (30 mentions), but most saliently, as politically manufactured or an act of manipulation (74 mentions). The latter again feeds on the declarations of members of the PRD and the Mexico City Government. As relevant as the descriptions, however, is the lack of them. After the demonstration, newspapers were less prone to describe what the demonstration was about. While in June Reforma included descriptions of what was the focus of the demonstration in 136 out of 150 items and likewise did La Jornada in 57 out of 64 items; in July of 64 items that corresponded to Reforma, 21 items did not have a single description about what was the focus of the demonstration, and so did La Jornada in 10 out of 25 items. In other words, the event was used as a referent not to talk about the movement itself, rather to discuss other issues.

Table 8.5 What is noted to be the focus of the demonstration? 2004⁶

JUNE	Reforma	La Jornada	Total
Against insecurity/Crime	148	52	200
Against inefficient public tackling of crime	19	5	24
For Peace/Justice/Against violence/Homage to victims	20	7	27
Politically manufactured/Act of manipulation	25	32	57
Total July	212	96	308
JULY	Reforma	La Jornada	
Against insecurity/Crime	42	15	57
Against inefficient public tackling of crime	4	1	5
For Peace/Justice/Against violence/Homage to victims	1	2	3
Politically manufactured/Act of manipulation	10	7	17
Total June	57	25	82
TOTAL	269	121	390

Table 8.6 shows the position that political actors had in regards of the demonstration during June. The most frequently referred official voices in either newspaper were those of Mexico City Government and the Federal Government, more so the former than the latter. Other than the PRI, PAN and PRD, other parties were not mentioned at all. More than half of the positions of the actors fall into Can't tell/Non applicable, yet it is notable that, leaving those aside, out of 47 references to the Mexico City Government in Reforma, 37 portray an unfavourable position, and two a favourable one, the rest being neutral, and from the 15 mentions of the Federal Government, 11 are favourable, 2 unfavourable and 2 neutral. In that newspaper only 8 more items portray voices that were unfavourable to the demonstration apart from the 37 that refer to the Mexico City Government. In La Jornada the positions are more 'either-or', as the Federal Government is noted to have had a favourable position nine times and never neither unfavourable nor neutral, and the Mexico City Government was never noted to be favourable to the demonstration, 11 times unfavourable and nine times neutral, and never favourable.

⁶ This tables notes the mentions of each description. Out of 303 items, 251 had depictions about the focus of the demonstration, of those, 143 had one description, 73 had two, 23 had three, 9 items had four and three had five descriptions.

Table 8.6 Position of actors voiced in news item in regards of demonstration, June 2004⁷

	JUNE	Position				Total
		Favourable	Unfavourable	Neutral	Cant Tell/N.A.	
	Newspaper					
Reforma	PRI	1	1	2	4	8
	PAN	2	1	0	5	8
	PRD	2	4	3	3	12
	Other party	0	0	0	0	0
	Federal Government	11	2	2	41	56
	Mexico City Government	2	37	8	42	89
	Other government	10	0	0	9	19
	Total	28	45	15	104	192
La Jornada	PRI	2	0	0	2	4
	PAN	2	0	0	3	5
	PRD	1	3	2	2	8
	Other party	0	0	0	0	0
	Federal Government	9	0	0	21	30
	Mexico City Government	0	11	9	30	50
	Other government	0	1	0	3	4
	Total	14	15	11	61	101
	TOTAL	42	60	26	165	293

In July other parties receive attention, but only slightly, three times in Reforma, and twice in La Jornada and all five times their stance in regards of the demonstration falls into the category ‘Can’t tell/N.A.’. However, by July most of the stances fall into that category in either newspaper, 134 out of 166 throughout the sample. Nineteen items portrayed a voice that was unfavourable to the demonstration, and all correspond to representatives of the Mexico City Government. Ten items show voices that were favourable to the demonstration, of those 7 correspond to the Federal Government, two to the PRI party and one to other local government. (see Table 8.7)

7 Of the 214 items in June, 129 carried one or more political voices whose positions in regards of the demonstration are portrayed in the table.

Table 8.7 Position of political actors voiced in news item in regards of demonstration, July 2004⁸

	JULY	Position				Total
	Newspaper	Favourable	Unfavourable	Neutral	Cant Tell/N.A.	
Reforma	PRI	2	0	0	10	12
	PAN	0	0	0	15	15
	PRD	0	0	0	8	8
	Other party	0	0	0	3	3
	Federal Government	4	0	1	32	37
	Mexico City Government	0	16	1	17	34
	Other government	0	0	0	4	4
	Total	6	16	2	89	113
La Jornada	PRI	0	0	0	3	3
	PAN	0	0	0	3	3
	PRD	0	0	0	2	2
	Other party	0	0	0	2	2
	Federal Government	3	0	0	25	28
	Mexico City Government	0	3	1	8	12
	Other government	1	0	0	2	3
	Total	4	3	1	45	53
TOTAL		10	19	3	134	166

Table 8.8 shows that despite the position that politicians and party members portrayed in the items, newspaper pieces had distinct tendencies. In other words, while both the previous tables show that the overall position of the Mexico City Government was not favourable to the demonstration and the Federal Government was supportive of it, this table also shows that Reforma was more prone to be favourable to the demonstration, even when quoting those who expressed unfavourable views about it, thus contradicting them. And La Jornada was prone to be unfavourable to the demonstration, thus validating the stances of those who condemned it.

⁸ Of the 89 items in July, 73 carried one or more political voices whose positions in regards of the demonstration are portrayed in the table.

Table 8.8 Crosstabulation: Voices featured in news items by Position of newspaper item in regards to demonstration, June 2004

Newspaper	Voice featured in news item	Position of newspaper article				Total
		Favourable	Unfavourable	Neutral	Cant Tell/N.A.	
Reforma	PRI	6	0	0	2	8
	PAN	4	0	0	4	8
	PRD	6	2	4	0	12
	Other party	0	0	0	0	0
	Federal Government	35	1	5	15	56
	Mexico City Government	44	12	8	25	89
	Other government	16	0	0	3	19
	Total	111	15	17	49	192
La Jornada	PRI	0	2	2	0	4
	PAN	1	1	2	1	5
	PRD	0	5	3	0	8
	Other party					0
	Federal Government	5	11	4	10	30
	Mexico City Government	4	21	15	10	50
	Other government	0	2	0	2	4
	Total	10	42	26	23	101
TOTAL		121	57	43	72	293

The same occurs during July, as Reforma is still more likely to be favourable to the demonstration, even when giving voice to political leaders who condemned it. Yet La Jornada is much less prone to being negative in regards to the demonstration, as compared with the previous month, and indeed its attention moves towards the Federal Government, while references to the Mexico City Government diminished (see Table 8.9).

Table 8.9 Crosstabulation: Voices featured in news items by Position of newspaper item in regards to demonstration, July 2004

Newspaper	Voice featured in news item	Position of newspaper article				Total
		Favourable	Unfavourable	Neutral	Cant Tell/N.A.	
Reforma	PRI	4	0	0	8	12
	PAN	0	0	0	15	15
	PRD	0	0	2	6	8
	Other party	0	0	0	3	3
	Federal Government	17	2	2	16	37
	Mexico City Government	14	2	6	12	34
	Other government	0	0	0	4	4
	Total	35	4	10	64	113
La Jornada	PRI	0	0	1	2	3
	PAN	0	0	2	1	3
	PRD	0	0	1	1	2
	Other party	0	0	1	1	2
	Federal Government	7	4	5	12	28
	Mexico City Government	1	1	9	1	12
	Other government	1	0	0	2	3
	Total	9	5	19	20	53
TOTAL	44	9	29	84	166	

Overall, items in the 2004 portray the movement not so much as an event with relevance for civil society, rather as an occurrence with political implications, most notably in regards of the Mexico City Mayor, and his imminent presidential candidacy in the next elections. It is even more salient that the official announcement of presidential candidates was more than one year away by the time of the demonstration, and that federal elections were to take place until July 2006. Yet the stances and framing of news items were in terms of a political contestation, and of electoral implications.

Many news items in La Jornada embraced the discourse of Lopez Obrador and professed it as its own. One example comes from the item by Hernandez Navarro, on the 22nd of June, where he says

“authoritarianism is the vocation of those who today call to ‘Rescue Mexico’. It’s no coincidence that the clandestine ultra-right organisation El Yunque, firmly set in Los Pinos, plays such an important role in the organisation of the demonstration. (...) Joining in the campaign against

Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, Cristina Barrios, the ambassador of the kingdom of Spain in Mexico, assured on the 18th of June, without offering any proof, that eight Spanish citizens had been kidnapped and five murdered in the Capital.”

Other items not just adopt the stance and discourse of Lopez Obrador, but also make calls to join him. An opinion feature by Delgado O., on the 1st July notes

“hundreds of thousands of demonstrators [were] called by the economic powers (...) there was, of course, a special addressee: the chief of government of the Federal District (...) there were many and different marches, but all can be used to justify pro-coup actions against some leaders (...) that’s what we have to oppose to, just like the chief of government of the Federal District did”.

The line is blurred between objective news and political propaganda. Not only do items in La Jornada take the same stance as Lopez Obrador, they construct a Marxist, anti-capitalist discourse. In a column by Velazquez, M. on the 16th June he notes

“Curious thing –we’ll make it clear so nobody can claim to be fooled– it’s the same people that in no way accelerate investment in the country to create jobs, it is them who are in favour of private and religious education, it’s the people who do not protest to avoid that our natural resources be sold. Its them who want you, who do not have a job, who knows that your children are in ever worsening conditions in their education, because there’s no investors in state education, who knows that the health services are no longer any good, because the bosses would rather invest in the stock market than in new jobs, they want you, who knows all that, to go and gross the files of those noise-makers”.

As the date of the demonstration approached, the discourse changed, and that was reflected in the news items. On the 23rd June Ramirez, Romero and Llanos wrote in an item entitled “Take part as citizens, recommended the PRD to the militants that wish to take part” a quote by Leonel Godoy, the PRD national leader who said that “it is a good idea to protest against insecurity”. Yet the discourse is still adamant on blaming neo-liberalism on causing social inequality, and therefore crime: “The end problem is the amount of poor people that neo-liberalism has generated. There is a correlation between the increase in poverty and indexes on criminality”

The change of direction is pretty clear after the demonstration. The main news item of the 28th of June notes that “The complaint of thousands overcame the organisers”, meaning that ‘the people’ surpassed the ‘interests’ of the organisers. Yet there was still an aim to ridicule the protestors of higher classes and use a language and connotations of a class divide: “What’s next? What’s next? –a young man with sunglasses asks another after singing the first verse of the National Anthem, after not getting an answer, he started shouting “Mexico, Mexico” and many followed him on”; ““We’re gonna stay at the Starbucks, it’s in front of a park, what’s the name? ah yeah, they say it’s called the Alameda, We’ll see you there, look for the Sheraton’ –blonde girl talking on her mobile phone”^{ix}.

Even the editorial joins in to celebrate the demonstration. Entitled “The society in the streets”, it claims that

“in a surprising manner, the demonstrations against insecurity organised here and in other cities of the country, surpassed in expectations and purposes its callers and organisers, and became clamorous expressions of a society that is exasperated by criminality (...) yesterday’s demonstration is an important step towards a national conscientiousness of the extent of criminality”

Although it goes on to make arguments against neo-liberalism “Delinquency is also (...) the take over of the oil and energy industries by a ruling group that is adamant to sell them to foreign private interests...”.

So for La Jornada, demonstrators were manipulated by all sorts of powers, be they political or economic, and their only aim was to disparage Lopez Obrador as if trying to organise a sort of ‘coup d’etat and leave him out of the presidential contest in 2006. Furthermore, the organisers of the demonstration were to blame for the rising crime as they adhered to the right wing ideology that embraces neo-liberalism, which is the cause of social inequality in the country.

Reforma, on the other hand embraced the demonstration, and even promoted it. Several headlines illustrate this:

- “The demonstration: shall we go or not?”, in a column by G. Dehesa, 17th June, who concludes by saying “with no labels, no discourses and by mere citizen disposition we have to go”
- “Everyone to the Angel [the roundabout where protestors will set foot]” 22nd June by Toledo A.
- “Get set for the demonstration” 26th June, no author, the information contained in this item was just a list of recommendations about what to do to take part in the rally (i.e. type of clothing, where to park, weather forecast, security, etc.)
- “March to demand” 24th June Canales, E.

And once the demonstration had taken place, it was often regarded as a historic event with big implications to the Mexican democracy: “Yesterday’s demonstration was a historic symbol of the democratic times that the country is in”^x; “The gigantic march of the past Sunday in the Federal District was no doubt the biggest in history”^{xi}; “[the demonstration represents] early manifestations of a true democracy (..) free citizens, not dragged ones, ordinary people that love their country, Mexicans”^{xii}

Reforma articulates the discourse of Lopez Obrador, but just to criticise it:

- “[Lopez O.] tries to make [the demonstration] up as ‘another plot’ against the political project called Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador”^{xiii};
- “Is it a demonstration of the right? Yes. And also of the left, the centre, the socialdemocrats, the ultras, the liberals, the Gnostics, of all those who know that a kidnapper does not ask ideologies”^{xiv};
- “[Lopez O.] ha[s] made a big mistake by disregarding the demonstration as ‘a plot of the ultraright’ (...) [he] is now on the defensive for not joining in this crusade against crime”^{xv};
- “GDF blames neoliberalism”^{xvi}.
- “Poor Andres Manuel if he thinks that the citizens from Mexico or Spain trust him enough so as to denounce, to him or his people, each and every kidnap. If there was trust in the authorities, we would not have a problem with kidnaps”^{xvii}
- “a great deal of our political life is reduced to commenting on what a senseless tabasqueno⁹ blabbers every morning”^{xviii}

There are also items in Reforma that pose as human interest stories, but that appear more as propaganda. An item from the 26th of June, with no author, reads as follows:

“Sergio assumes his commitment. Sergio lives in a neighborhood to the north of the Federal District and so far he’s never been to a

⁹ ‘Tabasqueno’ means someone from the state of Tabasco, thus referring to Lopez O.

demonstration, if anything, he has suffered the negative effects of the mobilisations: the congestions and road chaos. Now he is ready to walk by Paseo de la Reforma and demand actions against violent crime in Mexico City. Like him, there are many ‘newbies’ that seek information and details about tomorrow’s citizen demonstration and who gather rounds of friends and family to assist in groups”^{xix}

Another item by Fregoso, B. from the 4th of July portrays alleged conversations heard at a public plaza some days after the demonstration:

“-and did you also go to the demonstration? –[teenager] asked amused to Andres who’s 6 years old. –No, because I’m very little. But mummy and daddy went and when I have these years I will also march against the evil ones- he said while he opened both palms of his hands to show the number 10.”^{xx}

And just like La Jornada mocked the ‘well off’ participants in the demonstration, Reforma ridicules the discourse of Lopez Obrador: “But the demonstration is (...) a product [of] the manipulation of a group of *meanies*, the ultraright, the ‘*black hand*’”^{xxi}

And in an opinion feature, Loaeza addresses Lopez Obrador:

“As a consequence, and according to you, I’m also dying to get a political gain out of this whole situation, I am a tabloidiser, victim of the right, I work for the federal government, and if that was not enough, I naturally form part of the *complot*¹⁰ to disparage you”^{xxii}

And also in an opinion feature, Shabot notes:

“Behind the hundreds of thousands of dissatisfied and the heterogeneity of the participants to the demonstration, was the right, Salinas and all those evil entities willing to damage the ray of hope that Lopez Obrador pretends to represent. The messianism of the illuminated chief of government of the capital ended up contradicting the very interests of its own party...”^{xxiii}

In short, for Reforma, the demonstration was a historic event that showed how democratic and active the civil society had become in Mexico, but also a way to show the incompetence and messianic airs of Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, who is not a

¹⁰ By writing ‘complot’ instead of ‘complot’ (plot) she makes reference to the thick Tabasco accent of Lopez Obrador, who pronounces the word without the ending ‘t’.

fitting plausible presidential candidate, as he does not understand the needs of the citizens he claims to lead.

Both newspapers resorted to quoting or mentioning official figures as their main source of information, and both did so not primarily to inform about the movement, but rather to relay the stances that political leaders had in regards of the demonstration and how these fitted with their ideology and agenda. The exhaustive use of quotations was noted by the journalists interviewed in this study as one of their most considerable shortcomings. A close look into how news items are written shows where their concern comes from. To give but two examples, in a news item from *La Jornada* from the 14th of June, the only voice featured is that of Mexico City Mayor Andres Lopez; in 18 sentences there are 20 words that mean he 'said', 'noted', 'pointed', 'assured', 'declared' and other synonyms. And one item from *Reforma* from the 25th of June, the only voice present is that of President Fox, and in 12 sentences there are as many words to indicate he 'said' something^{xxiv}.

Analysis of the 2004 sample showed that news items were dominated by coverage of events in terms of their political implications. Throughout the sample both newspapers evidence different manifestations of political parallelism. For the most, newspapers focus on the two opposing parties and governments of the PAN and PRD and marginally on the PRI, but other opposition parties and civilian voices are largely neglected. News were seldom defined in terms of issues that affected civil society, instead they focused on party politics and political contestation, even though federal elections were more than two years away. The focus on the political elite became more evident after the demonstration had occurred, as the presence of civilian voices significantly decreased in the last two weeks of the sample. The aim was hence not to report on the events of the civic movement or the concerns that propitiated it, rather to voice what politicians and parties thought of it and how it could impact on their agendas.

Clientelism and political parallelism in a media system

The findings of this content analysis are in line with the evidence of the interviews carried out in chapters three, four and five of this study, which suggested that journalism is closely attached to officialdom, as events of the 2004 sample were for the most regarded as a sign of conflict between the Federal and Mexico City governments rather than as a civic movement. Mexican journalists have an inclination to reporting news just as long as events are worth commenting by public officials and opinion pieces based their arguments on the assertion or rejection of statements expressed by politicians, most considerably Vicente Fox and Andres M. Lopez. This also confirms arguments set up through the interviews, as journalists admitted to using statements of public officials as their main source of information when writing stories. The fact that both politicians were at odds with each other only contributed to the increased coverage of events and their declarations fuelled news content for several days on.

As noted by Hallin and Mancini (2004), a strong adherence to political views is a sign of political parallelism, which is a characteristic of clientelistic media systems. Other media systems in transition also report high levels of political clientelism and political parallelism, as has been the case in Spain, Italy and Greece (see Hallin and Papathanassopoulos, 2002; Hallin, 2000; Papathanassopoulos, 2001; Papatheodorou and Machin, 2003). In this respect, it is also possible to draw similarities between the Mexican media system and that of Shanghai, as Lee et. al. (2007, 24) argue, the Chinese regime was transformed from coercive to instrumental, where the media are managed to serve as “profit-making propaganda units”. In this context, Lee et. al. observe, “Media monopolies or oligopolies are granted exclusive economic privileges in exchange for political loyalty” (2007, 24), and this patron-client relationship leaves little room for the development of professionalisation of journalism. Furthermore, these authors note that political fanaticism in the Shanghai press after 1949 was not natural or spontaneous, rather, it “was fully orchestrated by one power faction against another” (ibid, 38). Similarly, the different tendencies voiced in the Mexican media respond to a manifestation of political parallelism, as each newspaper reflects the views of the official voices it supports.

But the democratic transition process also has consequences in regards to clientelism in terms of the financing of the press. In this respect, the Mexican press also resembles that of the media systems of Greece and Spain, who have also seen political changes from authoritarian regimes. Papatheodorou and Machin (2003, 36) argue that after the dictatorships of both Spain and Greece the dependence of the press on political power deepened: “The close ties between newspapers and political power have been reinforced further through the financial dependence of both the national and regional press upon the government or their affiliated political parties for their survival”. In other words, financial dependence on the state and political parties has fostered clientelistic ties between the press and political patrons after the fall of authoritarian regimes. The journalists interviewed in this study acknowledged that they had an attitude towards allied political parties of ‘do not bite the hand that feeds you’, this echoes the observations made by Altschull in regards to Greek journalism: “the content of the news media inevitably reflects the interests of those who pay the bills” (1997, 259 in Papathanassopoulos, 2001, 519).

However, political parallelism is not exclusive to clientelistic media systems, in fact, political parallelism manifests itself differently in other media systems and in so doing, it conveys other aspects of journalistic values, most notably, the adherence to objectivity in news reporting. Hallin and Mancini (2004) categorise media systems of the developed capitalist democracies of Western Europe and North America into three different models, the Mediterranean Model, which comprises the media systems of Italy, Portugal, Spain, Greece and France; the Democratic Corporatist Model, that includes Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland; and the Liberal Model, which includes Britain, United States, Canada and Ireland. In the terms set out by Hallin and Mancini (2004) internal pluralism in the newsroom is evident when newspapers report the full range of views of political parties, yet in Mexico the opposite happens. External pluralism is paralleled by the press, thus advocacy is manifest in news coverage, which is not uncommon in Mediterranean media systems, which, similar to Mexico, have a strong history of clientelism. In contrast,

media systems of the Liberal Model are more likely to reject advocacy journalism and thus are less prone to parallel political views, with the exception of British journalism, which is a particular case (see Hallin and Mancini, 2004, 214).

Similarly to the press in the Democratic Corporatist Model, in which content analysis has suggested that “newspapers are still more critical of parties the more the political views of these parties, as expressed in left-right terms, are different from their own” (Van der Eijk, 2000, 329, in Hallin and Mancini, 2004, 183), the Mexican press adopts the left vs. right discourses of the political parties they support and/or criticise. However, the main difference between media systems in the Democratic Corporatist Model and those in the Mediterranean Model, to which Mexico bears more similarities, consists in the differentiation between commentary and information. Journalists in the former have, to a varying degree, adopted the notion of “more “objective” styles of reporting” (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, 183); whereas in Mediterranean media systems information and commentary are mixed and “Political orientations are manifested more in patterns of selection and emphasis in news reporting than in explicit commentary” (ibid). Furthermore, Papatheodorou and Machin (2003, 35) note of the press in Spain and Greece that “a close connection between the press and party politics has given rise to an ethos far removed from principles such as ‘objectivity’ and ‘balance’”. Similar to the Mediterranean press, there is a strong tradition of commentary journalism in the Mexican press, as noted by this content analysis, the body of news items carried distinct ideological connotations, which reflected the political orientations the newspapers supported.

News reporting in media systems that correspond to the Liberal model implies little personal opinion in news coverage and an adherence to “fact-centered discourse”, in clear contrast to media systems in the other two models devised by Hallin and Mancini (2004, 207). This factual orientation is often associated with political neutrality, a free market and a free press, although an absolute lack of political parallelism or indeed political orientation is arguable (see Hallin and Mancini, 2004, 208-216), which the authors note is a suggestion that commercial competition does not eliminate political

parallelism. Nevertheless, the main difference to stress out in regards to political parallelism in news reporting in the Liberal media systems consists of the notion of professionalisation, which requires of journalists to adhere to the practice of “objectivity”, this notion implies journalistic routines to place emphasis on the interests of the audience (ibid, 227). In Mexico, however, as noted by the journalists interviewed in this study, the press is aimed to the so-called “red circle”, thus a widespread audience is not the target of news coverage, which in turn means that a “catch-all” type of journalism devoid of political tendencies, as it is argued characterises most Liberal media systems, would not be commercially viable in Mexico, as the income of Mexican newspapers depends largely on political and government advertising rather than circulation.

As noted in chapter five, political parallelism is closely related to professionalisation and autonomy in journalism. The following section of this chapter will compare the 1968 and the 2004 samples and discuss the implications of the news coverage in relation to autonomy and assertiveness of Mexican journalism. The chapter will then discuss how the findings of this content analysis relate to the literature in regards to democratisation of Mexican journalism.

Both Samples Compared

Autonomy and assertiveness in coverage

One of the questions initially put forward in this chapter was to what extent official and civilian voices are featured in the press. In order to assess the presence of official voices against civilian voices in both samples, variables were recoded into two groups, the first one referring to official voices, the second one corresponding to civilian voices¹¹, then items were classified into those which featured only official voices, only civilian voices or both types of voices. This recoding would permit an easier comparison in between both samples as of how regularly official and non official voices were present in the

¹¹ ‘other’ types of voices were not considered in this re-coding.

events' reporting. A crosstabulation of the types of voices featured and the overall position of the news items that featured them would also show whether or not the newspaper adhered to official stances or not. Were newspapers to challenge the position of the official voices they featured, it is argued, it would constitute a sign of assertiveness and autonomy, whereas a prominent inclusion of official voices or the adherence to official stances in regards to the respective social movements in question, would be an indication of a journalism constrained by officialdom. From the 1968 sample, of the 319 items analysed, 190 gave voice to either official or civilian voices, of them there were 95 items which featured exclusively civilian voices, compared to 59 that had only official voices, and only 36 which included both types of voices (see Table 8.10).

Table 8.10 Type of voices featured in item by newspaper, 1968 sample

Month			Types of voices featured in item			Total
			Both types of voices	Only Official Voices	Only Non Official Voices	
September	Name of newspaper	Excelsior	12	14	15	41
		El Universal	9	21	35	65
	Total		21	35	50	106
October	Name of newspaper	Excelsior	7	9	19	35
		El Universal	8	15	26	49
	Total		15	24	45	84
TOTAL			36	59	95	190

As noted earlier, the high presence of civilian voices did not result in a more informed analysis of the student movement or indeed a positive reaction towards it, as during the sample the tendency was to have a position favourable to the government rather than the student movement. So, as argued earlier, lack of assertiveness is present in the 1968 sample through a significant validation of the official position. This is more evident in the following tables. Excelsior had a more balanced coverage during September, as both the types of voices featured and the position of the articles are fairly even-handed. Yet in October the situation clearly changes: non-official voices are featured more frequently than official ones (19 against 9), yet items are four times more likely to be favourable to the government than to the student movement (16 against 4), however neutral items are still in a considerable number compared to the other two. Throughout the period there

was only one item which exclusively featured official voices but that was favourable to the student movement. This further demonstrates that Excelsior did not contravene the government by challenging the official stance, thus assertiveness and autonomy were not exercised as expected from the literature favourable to that newspaper.

Table 8.11 Position of newspaper article by type of voice, Excelsior, 1968

Excelsior			Types of voices featured in item			Total
Month			Both types of voices	Only Official Voices	Only Non Official Voices	
September	Position of newspaper article	Favourable to student movement	3	1	8	12
		Favourable to government	4	8	1	13
		Neutral	5	5	6	16
	Total		12	14	15	41
October	Position of newspaper article	Favourable to student movement	1	0	3	4
		Favourable to government	3	5	8	16
		Neutral	3	4	8	15
	Total		7	9	19	35

El Universal was favourable to the government throughout the sample, even though, same as Excelsior, non official voices were more prominent than official ones. And there are no cases in which only official voices were featured that were favourable to the student movement. So again, the government was not challenged by this newspaper, rather the movement was de-legitimised, regardless of who was given voice in the news coverage.

And as for voicing the people before the government, this was not reflected either by the amount of items that featured both types of voices together. Excelsior was more prone to do so (25% of items) than El Universal (17%), yet even when civilian and official voices appeared in the same item, the trend was to be favourable to the government.

Table 8.12 Position of newspaper article by type of voice, El Universal, 1968

El Universal			Types of voices featured in item			Total
Month			Both types of voices	Only Official Voices	Only Non Official Voices	
September	Position of newspaper article	Favourable to student movement	1	0	10	11
		Favourable to government	4	19	15	38
		Neutral	4	2	10	16
	Total		9	21	35	65
October	Position of newspaper article	Favourable to student movement	1	0	6	7
		Favourable to government	6	11	14	31
		Neutral	1	4	6	11
	Total		8	15	26	49

In the 2004 sample, officialdom is even more evident. The following table¹² shows that of the 303 items analysed, 174 gave voice to either official or civilian voices, of them there were 30 items which featured exclusively civilian voices, compared to 119 that had only official voices, and only 25 which included both types of voices. In other words, news items were more than three times as likely to include exclusively official voices (68%) than civilian voices (17%), and less than three in every twenty items featured both types of voices (14%).

Table 8.13 Type of voices featured in newspaper article by newspaper, 2004 sample

Month			Type of Voices			Total
			Only official voices	Only non official voices	Both type of voices	
June	Newspaper	Reforma	55	26	14	95
		La Jornada	29	3	4	36
	Total		84	29	18	131
July	Newspaper	Reforma	24	1	5	30
		La Jornada	11	0	2	13
	Total		35	1	7	43
TOTAL			119	30	25	174

As noted earlier, the position of both newspapers was rather distinct throughout the sample. Reforma was always more prone to be favourable to the movement, while La Jornada was critical of it, and the event was indeed covered as a conflict between the

¹² Only items in which a position regarding the movement was identified were included, so those that fell into 'N.A./Can't tell' are not incorporated in the table.

local and federal governments of the PRD and PAN parties. Of the news items that featured either an official, civilian or both types of voices, newspaper Reforma was favourable to the demonstration 75% of the times during June and 70% during July, the number of unfavourable items was steady at 10% in both months, and neutral items ranged from 13% in June to 20% in July. So the presence or absence of civilian voices made no difference to the stance of the newspaper in regards of the demonstration. Furthermore, there was only one item that exclusively featured civilian voices during July out of 30 items corresponding to that month, compared to 26 items the previous month.

Table 8.14 Position of newspaper article by type of voice, Reforma, 2004

Reforma			Type of Voices			
Month			Only official voices	Only non official voices	Both type of voices	Total
June	Position Regarding Demonstration	Favourable	41	19	12	72
		Unfavourable	7	2	1	10
		Neutral	7	5	1	13
	Total		55	26	14	95
July	Position Regarding Demonstration	Favourable	16	1	4	21
		Unfavourable	3	0	0	3
		Neutral	5	0	1	6
	Total		24	1	5	30
TOTAL			79	27	19	125

So, regardless of who was given voice in the coverage, the tendency of Reforma was to be favourable to the movement. Rather than avowing its assertiveness, it is suggested that the predisposition to be favourable to the movement responded to other motives, such as the de-legitimation of political leaders who were critical of the movement, and not to advance civic movements. Otherwise civilian voices would have been more prominent in the coverage, either on their own or together with official voices in the same item; and mark a clear distinction in the ratio of official versus non official voices in comparison to La Jornada. The following table shows that La Jornada was also much more prone to include official voices than civilian ones. During June items including exclusively official voices comprised 80%, and 84% throughout July. Same as Reforma, there was a drop in the number of items that only included non official voices in July, although they were never prominent, as there were only three such items right through

the sample, all corresponding to June. What is most significant about La Jornada is that prior to the ‘mega-demonstration’ on June 27th, the tendency was to be critical of the movement, which was also the stance of Lopez Obrador, the mayor of Mexico City, so during June 55% of the items were unfavourable. However, after the event, Lopez Obrador toned down his criticisms, and so did La Jornada, out of 13 items, four were favourable, three were unfavourable and six were neutral.

Table 8.15 Position of newspaper article by type of voice, La Jornada, 2004

La Jornada			Type of Voices			
Month			Only official voices	Only non official voices	Both type of voices	Total
June	Position Regarding Demonstration	Favourable	7	0	0	7
		Unfavourable	15	3	2	20
		Neutral	7	0	2	9
	Total		29	3	4	36
July	Position Regarding Demonstration	Favourable	3	0	1	4
		Unfavourable	2	0	1	3
		Neutral	6	0	0	6
	Total		11	0	2	13
TOTAL			40	3	6	49

The significant coverage that Reforma gave to the matter is also salient, as of the items that featured any type of official or civilian voice, 125 corresponded to that newspaper, compared to just 49 by La Jornada. This also suggests that La Jornada did not want to give importance to the issue, while Reforma was rather insisting in doing so, and such behaviour also shows the stance of both.

In 1968 the student movement was perceived by the government as a communist threat, and newspapers followed the official line by portraying it as a movement that was not based on student interests and in which foreigners and communist agitators were taking part. Similarly, in 2004 Mexico City Mayor Andres M. Lopez considered the movement as a right-wing motivated plot to thwart his political career in view of the 2006 presidential elections and newspapers reacted accordingly, La Jornada by adopting the same stance, and Reforma by criticising it. Notably, however, President Fox made calls for the movement to be taken as justification for the Congress to approve a bill submitted by him in March that year in regards to public security, but newspapers did

not follow up on that line as much as they did with the statements made by Lopez, the focus was in regards of the conflicting views of both leaders and their parties.

Loyalty to official discourses in news reporting is noted by Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002) as a characteristic of clientelism, and a practice that discourages journalistic autonomy. Furthermore, Lee et.al (2007, 28) argue that “In a clientelistic network, the patron sets political and economic goals for the clients to accomplish often at the expense of professional goals”. And as noted by Hallin and Mancini (2004), clientelism dampens the professionalisation of journalism. The news items analysed in both these samples reflect the observations of the above authors in regards of how a culture of clientelism affects news coverage, as information was blurred with opinion and advocacy rather than fact-oriented information made for the body of news items. These suggestions have direct implications on what other authors have argued in regards to democratisation of the Mexican media, which will be further discussed in the conclusion of this chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to show how coverage of civic movements had changed from the times of the PRI regime, during the government of Gustavo Diaz Ordaz to the first PAN administration of Vicente Fox. It argued that officialdom prevailed in the Mexican media system despite changes in government, as press coverage of both samples revolved around what official figures made of the events. It pointed out that political parallelism is manifest in both samples, while noting that political pluralism has not resulted in media coverage more prone to give voice to non-official figures.

Political parallelism is evident in both samples, with the only difference that the one-party system of 1968 had been transformed into a tri-party system in 2004, but newspapers were just as likely to adopt political standpoints in either period. The sample of 1968 was not as politically plural as that of 2004, but then again that only reflects a different political reality, as then other parties lacked presence and importance, yet news

did not focus on likely electoral results. In other words, in 1968 the press was not concerned about who was to become the next presidential candidate, thus non-political events had a better chance of being covered for what they were. The 1968 events were always unmistakably regarded as a student movement, influenced by 'communists' and 'agitators', but a student movement nonetheless. However in 2004 the framing ranged from a civic or NGO movement, an ultra-right sect or business-economic elite group to a politically motivated mobilisation which aimed to challenge the political future of certain public officials.

The content of news items did not aim to inform the public about the events and demands of the demonstrators, rather to feed the political elite with the stances that each of these political cliques held in regards of the demonstrators. In other words, news items carried the interpretations that public officials made of the movements, but the demands made by either movement did not emerge as themes in the samples analysed. So despite the apparent plurality of voices that each sample carried, 1968 by giving precedence to civilian voices and 2004 by featuring a wide variety of official and non-official voices, the actual concerns behind each movement did not find space in the press, as their demands were never informed in newspaper items. Rather, what was portrayed were 'second-hand' views of what the demands were in the first place or indeed as of who were considered to be behind each movement. In the 2004 sample this was expressed in the light of contending political stances of the capital and Federal governments. This, in turn, explains why most of the information that fuelled newspaper items came from statements of members of the political elite.

The most significant difference between both samples is that in 1968 the both newspapers unanimously supported the government and criticised the student movement, while in the 2004 sample one newspaper supported the movement and the other one criticised it. However, closer analysis into the 2004 sample shows that the focus of news items was not so much the movement itself, but the political implications of it, so support and criticism of the movement translated into support or criticism of certain political figures.

While there were some instances of criticism of the government in 1968, it was mostly of a lenient sort, and it significantly decreased after the events of the Tlatelolco Plaza, when the government would have been in greater need of legitimisation¹³, which furthers the argument of political parallelism being characteristic of the Mexican media system at the time. Criticism of the government in the 2004 sample also followed patterns of political parallelism, as each newspaper displayed their stances, usually in regards of the Mexico City Mayor, expressing approval or condemnation to his declarations in regards of the movement. In either case, rhetoric, rather than concrete actions, was the subject of discussion of newspaper content.

In terms of how this study relates to the literature, the evidence of this analysis does not support the arguments that claim that Excelsior was in 1968 a pioneer of the opening of Mexican journalism. Rather it conforms to counter claims that suggest that media in Mexico at the time was partisan to the government and, as Riva Palacio (2004, 70) put it “When the Mexican student movement burst by the end of July 1968, students’ demands did not find an outlet. Even in Excelsior itself, its director Julio Scherer Garcia refused to print their information and would tell off many of its leaders”. Or as Levario (2001) put it “it’s enough to look at the pages of newspapers of the time to comprehend that, in regards to the news coverage, there were no evident differences between Excelsior and other newspapers, not on such circumstances neither on other similar situations, like the massacre of the 10th of June of 1971”. Furthermore, Riva Palacio (2004, 71) argues that “Scherer’s Excelsior did not cease to be very close to the government”, an argument which is supported by Levario (2001) as he notes that up until the last day of government of President Diaz Ordaz, Excelsior gave him favourable coverage.

¹³ Some authors argue that the government was in a ‘rush’ to end the student movement for the forthcoming Olympic Games, which began just 10 days after the demonstration in the Tlatelolco Plaza, while at the same time cover up the massacre, and thus, give the impression that Mexico was a stable country. The coverage of events after the massacre celebrates the government’s actions and often claim that the point of the movement was to destabilise the country in view of the impending Olympics.

As for media coverage in recent times, both Hughes (2006, 58) and Lawson (2002, 70) measure media opening in the press in terms of how prominently PRI party figures were featured in news items, suggesting any non-PRI party presence is a sign of journalistic assertiveness and democratisation. However, the evidence of this study suggests that this is an over simplistic assumption, and that while it is significant that PRI figures dominated the political agenda in the past, their absence in news items does not signify a change in journalistic practices. While it is true that political opposition voices hardly ever appeared in news items, non official voices were more likely to be featured in the press than those of the PRI and the government when reporting civic movements in the 1968 sample. Yet in modern times voices that do not have a political weight are less likely to be articulated in the press. Furthermore, the most prominent voices identified in the sample of 2004 were those of the three main parties, PAN, PRD and PRI, the latter being slightly more significant than the rest of the opposition parties. In other words, the disappearance of PRI party voices in the press cannot be considered a sign of media opening, as when other parties have obtained government positions they too gain the eminence that once was granted to the one-state party, but that does not necessarily change the elite-oriented nature of journalism or indeed open up the media to non-official voices. So, media coverage appears nowadays more democratic only in comparison to the patterns that took place during the PRI era. But the assumption that political plurality in the press reflects core changes in the media system that imply a notion of democratisation appears ill founded. Similarly is the assumption that criticism of the Federal government indicates independence of the media organisation, as this study proposes that local and opposition governments are just as likely to engage in clientelistic relationships with media organisations. So, contrary to Hughes' (2006, 238) assertions, the findings of this study offer support to the notion of a media system that has diversified its clientelistic networks rather than advanced democratisation, as expressed in chapter five.

The following chapter will present the overall conclusions of this study, as well as its limitations and it will also discuss areas of further research.

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- ⁱ In *La Jornada*, 14th June, 2004, by Ramirez, B.
- ⁱⁱ In *La Jornada*, 26th June, 2004, Newsdesk
- ⁱⁱⁱ In *La Jornada*, 26th June, 2004 by Salgado, A.
- ^{iv} In *La Jornada*, 26th June, 2004, Bolanos, A.
- ^v In *Reforma*, 19th June 2004, by Nunez, E. “AN” refers to National Action (Party)
- ^{vi} In *Reforma*, 19th June 2004, by Bordon, A.
- ^{vii} In *Reforma*, 26th June 2004, by Bordon, A.
- ^{viii} In *Reforma* 28th June 2004, by Sierra A.
- ^{ix} In *La Jornada*, 28th June 2004, by Romero, G. Gomez, B. and Llanos, R.
- ^x In *Reforma*, 28th June, 2004, “10 Dias” by Sandoval, R.
- ^{xi} In *Reforma*, 4th July 2004, “Después de la marcha” by Granados M.A.
- ^{xii} In *Reforma*, 9th July 2004, “Y después del 27 de Junio” by Fernández, P.
- ^{xiii} In *Reforma*, 22nd June 2004, “Todos al Ángel” by Toledo, C.
- ^{xiv} In *Reforma*, 22nd June 2004, “Templo Mayor” by Bartolomé F.
- ^{xv} In *Reforma*, 28th June 2004, “La rebelión de la clase media” by Oppenheimer, A.
- ^{xvi} In *Reforma*, 29th June 2004, “GDF culpa al neoliberalismo” by Duran, M., and Pavón, C.
- ^{xvii} In *Reforma*, 24th June 2004, “Marchar para exigir” by Canales, E.
- ^{xviii} In *Reforma*, 3rd July 2004, “Las presiones y el ruido” by Ruiz, R. ‘Tabasqueno’ means someone from the state of Tabasco, thus referring to Lopez O.
- ^{xix} In *Reforma*, 26th June 2004, “Asume Sergio compromiso”, no author
- ^{xx} In *Reforma*, 4th July 2004, “Enciende a la gente la marcha” by Fregoso, B.
- ^{xxi} In *Reforma*, 29th June 2004, “De manos negras e ineptitudes” by Reyes, F.
- ^{xxii} In *Reforma*, 29th June 2004, “Totalmente... de derecha?” by Loaeza, G.
- ^{xxiii} In *Reforma*, 7th July 2004, “Los iluminados” by Shabot, E. ‘Ray of hope’ makes reference to the slogan the GDF used to promote itself.
- ^{xxiv} In *Reforma*, 25th June 2004, “Diseñan estrategias contra la delincuencia” by Hernandez, J.

Chapter 9

Concluding remarks

“One cannot study the content of the news alone to fully understand the power relationship between journalists and their political sources”
(Stromback and Nord, 2006, 156).

The joy that accompanied the results of the presidential elections in year 2000 was not replicated in 2006. PAN party candidate Felipe Calderon was declared victor by a margin of less than half a percentage point over his closest rival Andres Lopez from the PRD. The institutions that were praised six years earlier as facilitators in the so-called Mexican democratic transition came under attack by Lopez and his followers: there were claims of fraud that challenged the decisions of the Institute of Federal Elections, and the mass media was called biased and prejudiced against the PRD candidate. Lopez then went on to organise a two-month sit-in protest at the main square in Mexico City and proclaimed himself the “Legitimate President”, and the PRD rank followed his cues when trying to impede Calderon’s presidential inauguration in September that year. The idea of Mexico as an established democracy was compromised.

Scholars who had observed the transformations of politics and journalism in the decline of the PRI party rule asserted that Mexico was indeed heading towards greater democratisation. The Mexican media system was thought to be building its role as a fourth estate, and journalists were considered to be more proactive and professional than in previous generations. This research aimed to elucidate the extent to which those changes were permanent or just ephemeral, thus contributing to our understanding of media systems undergoing a process of democratic transition.

This study has looked at how the historical development of the Mexican political system has shaped the way in which journalism has been conducted in Mexico. It observed that the dynamics in which the media and the government relate to one another are of a clientelistic nature, where the media support the government in exchange for financial

and other favours. Through a review of the literature, this study aimed to elucidate how the Mexican media system has been understood throughout time. It noted that previous studies had taken the PRI party as a starting point when depicting the Mexican media. And after the defeat of the PRI party in the presidential elections of 2000, scholarship continued to revolve around the PRI party's role in the shaping of the Mexican media, this time by understanding lack of PRI party presence in news coverage as signs of media openness and growing freedom. This research challenged that notion by trying to understand changes in the media system as transformations in the clientelistic practices that have characterised journalism in the past. This was achieved through the examination of journalistic practices and role perceptions, and analysis of differences in news coverage of civic movements. The findings of such analyses show that while it is true that there have been transformations that point towards greater pluralism in politics, and this in turn is reflected in news contents, changes in the way in which journalism is conducted are not substantial. In other words, traits of political clientelism still shape the relationship between the media and the government and the day in day out journalistic activities. This means that politics are paralleled in the media, while journalistic professionalisation, understood not as a result of higher education qualifications but rather as manifestations of autonomy in the way journalists carry out their job, is very limited.

Clientelism has therefore shaped journalism in Mexico in many ways, which means that journalism is still limited from several quarters. Firstly, news are addressed to a tight-knit clique, therefore for journalists manoeuvring in such a small circle, personal liaisons and rapport are more relevant for career success, as falling from grace from a source allied to the media the journalist works for can damage the journalist's prospects. Secondly, the affiliations and sympathies of the media not only lead the stories that journalists are able to write about, but also the tone in which they are treated. Friendly sources are treated favourably and misconduct is reported only of unfriendly sources. While this study cannot assess censorship without a direct observation of routine practices in media organisations, it found that journalists believe it a common occurrence, although one that journalists are not prepared to stand up against. So

editorial censorship is something journalists accept as a trait of the trade. But perhaps more relevant is the widespread recognition of journalists of regular self-censure, which they admit as means to avoiding conflict with their superiors, or to evade frustration should they realise their story would be changed or dropped. All these issues constitute lack of professional autonomy, as journalists are content to give up decisions about their own working process. Thirdly, within this set of limitations, journalists are encouraged to act as spokespersons of political figures. Despite journalists being aware of notions of professional journalism, such as fairness, balance and objectivity, stories are formulaic, and adherence to quotes as the body of the news items is still the norm in press coverage. In this context, statements, rather than facts are most important for news making, thus this study challenges Hughes' (2006) claim that assertiveness has made up a new trend of civic journalism throughout Mexican newsrooms. Instead, the findings of this research concur with Benavides' (2000) assertion that the Mexican system rewards journalists that regurgitate press releases rather than those who carry out investigative journalism. Fourthly, while journalists consider journalism to be important in a democratic society, in general they feel detached from a notion of social responsibility.

In many ways Mexican journalism can be perceived not to be too different from journalism in other media systems. A part of the journalistic trade consists in overcoming official reluctance to the release of sensitive information, and absorbing the institutional culture of the news organisation, which in turn shapes what is considered newsworthy and the tone in which news are to be treated (Gitlin, 1980; Gans, 1980, Cook, 1996; also see Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" in Benson, 2006, 194). Furthermore, not unlike their counterparts in established democracies, Mexican journalists are apprehensive about editorial commands and have a little opinion of their readership (see Donsbach and Patterson, 1996; Donsbach and Klett, 1993; Soloski, 1989). However, what differentiates Mexican journalists from those of established democracies consists in the far-reaching influence of clientelism in routine practices. Journalism as a corps does not exhibit the traits necessary for democratic consolidation. In other words, the achievement of electoral democracy has changed the form in which journalism occurs in Mexico, but not the substance of its practices. Journalism is not

professional as it is not shielded by shared codes of practice. These, according to Soloski (1989) do not have to be formal or institutionalised, just a horizontal solidarity, as this ensures that the practice of journalism is ruled by the same conventions regardless of the media organisation in which a journalist works. In Mexico political parallelism impedes this from happening, as there is no differentiation between news reporting and party politics. Journalists therefore have to work within the boundaries of the compromises that their news organisations have established with political patrons, as these constitute the media's main source of income, as readership is generally low. This is not uncommon in other media systems that have been undergoing democratic transitions (see Sandbrook, 1996). This is so because electoral democracy is easier to fulfil than democratic consolidation, therefore a change of government has not equated a change of regime, which involves institutions in society, including the media and political parties, to adopt the procedures that facilitate "transparency, accountability and responsiveness of governance" (Sandbrook, 1996, 85). However, in a system in which political parties and politicians are still prone to wanting to influence the content of news coverage, and media owners and editors manage newsmaking with a political rationale, journalism has not achieved its cultural independence from politics. Therefore, professionalisation of journalism has not yet been realised, as journalists cannot decide over their everyday tasks, and news coverage is done over tried and tested formulas that bear little difference with those employed during the PRI regime.

Even in established democracies there are differences between the role perceptions of journalists and how they pursue professional autonomy. In the case of Sweden, Stromback and Nord (2006) note that "it is journalists who have the ultimate power over the framing and the content of the news stories". However, Esser (1998, 398) argues that there are two types of bias in journalism, personal and organisational: "The larger the editorial freedom and journalistic autonomy, the higher the probability that personal bias will have an impact on news media content. It is much lower if editorial control is tight". Organisational bias "is the overall tone of the paper's political coverage laid down by the editor and the management."(ibid). Therefore, organisational bias is dissimilar to editorial control. As Solosky (1989, 213) argues, professionalisation provides journalists

“with a power base that can be used to thwart heavy-handed interference by management in the professional activities of the news staff”, yet at the same time, professionalisation gives management a terrain for control and reward of journalists (ibid, 218). Management control of journalists also occurs through “the idiosyncratic news policies of individual news organizations” (Solosky, 1989, 218). In the case of Mexico, however, organisational orientations equate editorial controls. Therefore, Mexican journalists do not have the room for maneuver that professionalisation allows their counterparts in media systems of established democracies.

The way in which Mexican journalism can break free from clientelism is not clear. The scholarship on clientelism indicates that this type of social arrangement is pervasive and has the ability to recreate itself through societal periods of change. Nevertheless, in cases where opting out of the patron-client relationship proves more convenient for either party, clientelistic relationships cease to exist. The latter is usually achieved through the institutionalisation of democratic values, namely citizenship and the acceptance that civil rights are independent of tit-for-tat arrangements, and indeed, they are devalued by them (Taylor, 2004; Sandbrook, 1996; Sobrado, 2002).

Alternative ways out of clientelism are indeed by-products of it. When clientelistic networks become too large to generate palpable benefits for the clientele, the links between them and their patrons begin to break (Tarrow, 1967 in Lemarchand and Legg, 1972, 177). And the experience of clientelism in the post-Soviet Russian media suggests that both media and sources become more reluctant to enter into clientelistic relationships when there is a possibility the other party would break its part of the bargain, as has occurred when politicians do not have enough resources to honour promises made to media organisations (Roudakova, 2008). Yet it must be noted, this has occurred alongside a growing trend for “corporate ethics” in the Russian media (ibid), which echoes the claims by other authors that it is through the adherence to formalised patterns of behaviour that encourage professionalisation and autonomy, that clientelistic arrangements can be overcome.

Although the political context of Mexico is different now than it was a decade ago, this study argues that Media-state relations in Mexico continue to be defined by clientelistic relationships under the PAN party administrations of the 21st century, just as they were during the PRI regime. The patrons have changed, yet the practices remain unchallenged. The break up of the monopoly of power of the once mighty PRI party has been re-organised in a tri-party system where all three parties allocate resources arbitrarily and have therefore established new clienteles. So long as clientelism continues to define the journalist-source relationship, professionalisation and autonomy would remain weak on either side. Media outlets with no patronage would struggle for information and funding, while politicians who steer clear of sponsoring news outlets would struggle to have their messages voiced in the media. Furthermore, without a clear definition of roles, journalists and media organisations would continue to believe themselves entitled to a share of public funding –through government advertisement- and other favours, and ministries and parties that are selective in their advertisement expenditure will continue to be seen as enemies of freedom of expression.

Despite the overall negative scenario of Mexican journalism, there are a few signs that indicate that some journalists would like things to be different. Some would like the chance to carry out investigative journalism and break free from the ‘statementitis’ tradition. Others would prefer to write for wider audiences and not just for the so-called ‘red-circle’. Finally, amongst all the stories about journalists being passive and docile to editorial or external orders, there were a few examples of individuals who thought their professionalism was beyond that, and would rather be without a job than in a position of submission. While this is a quixotic reaction, it goes to show that not all journalists are willing to operate within the traditional parameters of the Mexican media system. Whether or not this attitude spreads to other members of the journalism corps remains to be seen. Therefore, the findings of this study do not add to the literature of an emerging ‘fourth estate’ in Mexican newsrooms, rather the evidence presented here contributes to a better understanding of the dynamics of journalist-source relationship and journalistic professional autonomy, all within the settings of both political clientelism and democratic transition.

And as for how journalism as an institution reflects the extent to which a democratic transition has occurred in Mexico, it can be argued that scholars who argued that was the case looked at the matter of democracy from a perspective that, according to Grugel (1999, 8), is flawed. Grugel (ibid) argues that democracy is often

“visualised as a set of procedures for government negotiated by and between political leaders. In seeing democracy in this way, the transition approach separates it from its essential meaning as rule by the people and conceptualizes it principally as the establishment of a set of governing institutions, the outcome of elite pacts, formally or otherwise. Its elitism consigns the mass of the people to a bystander role in the creation of new regimes”.

Similarly, understanding democratisation of Mexican journalism in the light of how news coverage gives attention to a variety of political parties oversimplifies the democratic transition process by focusing on the notion that it is institutions, rather than society as a whole, that shape what democracy is or should be like. This study aimed to understand journalism not only in relation to political sources, but also in regards to how civic movements are portrayed and to what extent civilian voices are articulated in the press. In so doing it found that the press looks at civic movements through the guise of official declarations, bearing little difference between coverage occurred during the PRI era and the more recent, allegedly more democratic, PAN administration of Vicente Fox. This goes to show that by not looking at more complex processes that are involved in democratic transition and consolidation, there is a risk of falling into clichés of what a democratic transition is like, namely that electoral democracy has an impact in other institutions of society, such as journalism. But as Grugel points out, elite political leaders can fulfil electoral democracy without really changing overlying authoritarian practices.

In regards to theoretical definitions of models of the press, the evidence of this study also contributes to the further undermining of the notion of the media as a watchdog within a democratic system. Adhering to the Anglo-American ideal does not contribute to our understanding of media systems in transition any more than it does in established

Western democracies. Rather, it raises more questions about how we can measure the traits of democracy in the practice and performance of journalism.

This study sought to understand to what extent transformations in Mexican politics resulted in changes of the Mexican media system. More to the point, how much, if at all, the clientelistic liaisons that characterised media-state relations during the authoritarian PRI regime differed from the allegedly more democratic panorama of Mexican politics post year 2000. The impact of democratisation, it was assumed, would have eroded such clientelistic practices. However, this study found that clientelism is still prevalent and deeply embedded in routine journalistic practices and psyche. As is characteristic in clientelistic systems, in Mexico, commentary and opinion are emphasised in news coverage, as media organisations aim to pursue particular party interests and advocate the factions of their political patrons. This in turn limits journalistic autonomy and professionalization, as journalists are compelled to work within the boundaries set by the media organisations that employ them. Therefore, the changes reported in the literature have not been widespread or permanent. While observations about clientelism may look at only one aspect of how democratisation occurs, it contributes to our understanding of how media systems in transition behave. In other words, our understanding of journalistic transformations should be looked at from below, rather than from above, as routine journalistic practices and perceptions may offer an alternative indication of how deeply embraced new democratic values are being adopted by those who make the news, as opposed to the assumption that changes in politics unambiguously modify journalism towards democratisation.

Limitations and recommendations for future research

Even though many journalists interviewed in the sample of this study had experience of working in the regions, there is a strong focus on Mexico City. While Mexico City is the place where the main government and media organisations concentrate, it would be relevant to review how the situations evidenced in this study replicate in other states. This would also offer a perspective of how differently, if at all, journalism has evolved from the days of the PRI regime to the present across the country. It would also highlight

how matters that are said to be limiting journalism nowadays as a new phenomenon, such as drug traffic and organised crime, are affecting journalists in the regions and their corresponding smaller media organisations.

Other studies that have tried to gauge changes in Mexican journalism have focused on the coverage of elections. As media systems with a clientelistic tradition are regularly noted to be over politicised, this study wanted to by-pass the political coverage and focus on the reporting of civic society by looking at events prompted by civilians. Therefore, the samples of the content analysis focused on societal movements. Other studies in the coverage of demonstrations have found that in such cases traditional news values tend to focus on the negative aspects of such events. While this study argued that there were different reasons why there was a prevalent negative coverage of the 1968 student movement, it also acknowledges that the inherent trend limits the conclusions that we can draw from how civilian voices are articulated in the press during demonstrations. It is therefore suggested that further studies on newspaper coverage of a variety of events is needed in order to further understand how the media relate to both politicians and citizenship and how this relationships fit within the democratic narrative.

Adler's 1993 study is still relevant as it is the only one that provides insider knowledge about how the political elite understand and utilise media coverage to their particular ends. There was an attempt to interview press and communications officers of the Ministry of Interior for this study. This proved an impossible task, and only one mid-management official was available to comment. Her views on journalist's activities and the mutual relationship between them and the Ministry are presented in chapter 6. However, a study that replicates Adler's research should also give some light into how the new tri-party system 'reads' the press and how press-government relations shape media coverage.

It is also important to further understand why the average Mexican citizen does not read the press. While the accepted notion that average income makes the regular purchase of newspapers prohibitive, as over 47% of the Mexican population is considered to

experience different levels of poverty (Szekely, 2005), it is relevant to acknowledge that the rest of the population -40% are considered middle class and 13% high class- could afford newspapers. Literacy is considered a factor in this regard, yet around 20% of the population has access to higher education (Levy and Bruhn, 2001). Nevertheless, only 10% of Mexicans use newspapers as their main source of information (Consulta Mitofsky, 2005). To put it differently, more than the 10% of the population can have access to, or could afford to buy, newspapers, yet they choose not to. As noted in chapter 6, trust in the media has diminished over the recent years (in 2001 one fifth of respondents thought writing to a newspaper could help solve a problem, by 2005 the figure decreased to 7%). Writing about the 2006 elections, Bruhn and Green (2006) argue that political parties have become more polarised, yet the voters have become more moderate. Journalists in this study admitted to writing not for the average citizen, but for members of the so-called 'red circle', to which the political elite belongs. It could be argued, therefore, that the Mexicans who could afford to buy newspapers do not do so as the press does not offer them the kind of information they, as citizens, require or are interested in. More studies about uses and gratifications could contribute towards a better understanding of the factors that deter Mexicans from reading newspapers and whether or not this lack of readership affects the transition to democracy Mexico is said to be undergoing.

Another matter to keep in mind in regards to the latter point is highlighted by Hallin and Mancini (2004, 24) when they argue that

“no country that did not develop mass circulation newspapers in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century has ever subsequently developed them, even if its level of literacy and pattern of political and economic development have converged with those of the high-circulation countries”.

Furthermore, the decrease in press readership is a world-wide phenomenon, and it is therefore unlikely that the Mexican press would ever achieve the circulation levels seen in established Western democracies. Additionally, the arrival of new technologies and media convergence place new challenges in media organisation and production, and these consequently impact news making practices. All these are issues that need to be further understood both in established democracies and those undergoing democratic

transitions. We can only speculate about how Mexican journalism will respond to this wave of transformations. It may be possible that since the press in Mexico has always been addressed to a small group, it will remain so, and would therefore survive in its current -or a similar- guise. It is therefore necessary that we further understand the functions that the press serves in the Mexican societal and political context.

Finally, the accepted version of the history of Mexican media-state relations has to be looked at with more scrutiny, as it may be possible that events in the past can shed more light on the current state of affairs. Negrine (2008, 3) highlights the importance of drawing lessons from history in order to better understand transformations in political communication, “not to provide a historical account of changes (...) but to draw on historical change as a way of providing a background that helps us understand contemporary events”. A historiographical approach for the study of media systems can offer us a contextual framework and therefore allow us to elucidate continuities and disparities across different periods of time. Through the use of primary data that other literature has usually lacked, this study challenges the widely accepted notion that newspaper *Excelsior*, under the leadership of Julio Scherer, initiated in the summer of 1968 a trend towards media opening and an assertive and critical type of journalism in Mexico. This is not to argue that the narrative is false, but just to point out that at least in that respect, events have to be looked at again, and assumptions about the past have to be challenged just as much as the predictions that have been made about the future.

Appendix 1 General Information on Mexico and Mexican Politics

Geography and Demography

Mexico is located in the North American continent, it has borders to the north with the United States of America (3,152 km), and to the south with Belize (193 km) and Guatemala (956 km). Its land has a surface of 1,964,375 km². The length of the Mexican coastline is of 11,122 km (INEGI, 2003). Mexico is “easily more than twice the size of any Latin American country except Brazil” (Levy and Bruhn, 2001, 22).

In the census of year 2000, it was reported that the Mexican population was 97.5 million people. Life expectancy in Mexico is 75 years. It was reported in 1992 that two thirds of Mexicans were under twenty-five years old (Levy and Bruhn, 2001, 22). Mexicans are predominantly Catholics, with 87% of the population of that religion. A quarter of Mexicans live in rural areas, and nearly another quarter, 20 million, live in the metropolitan area of the Federal District (Mexico City). This makes Mexico City the world’s largest city and the one with the highest population density, with severe problems of pollution and crime (Levy and Bruhn, 2001, 21). While in developed countries a shift from rural to urban population is a synonym of modernisation, in the case of Mexico it shows the opposite, as ‘frustrated villagers’ have moved into the cities in search of opportunities (ibid, 22). According to Levy and Bruhn (2001, 22), 70% of Mexicans live in urban areas.

The official language is Spanish, making Mexico the largest Spanish speaking country in the world (Levy and Bruhn, 2001, 22). However, Mexico still has a significant population (6 million people) of indigenous origin who speak local languages and dialects (INEGI, 2003). Actually, Levy and Bruhn (2001, 22-23) note most Mexicans are ‘mestizos’, the product of mixture between native Indians and Spanish colonisers. The level of the mixture varies from one region to another from mostly Indian to mostly Spanish, but with a greater tendency towards the Indian side. This is noticeable through physical characteristics like skin colour, features, height, etc., as well as cultural and social aspects. There are over fifty ethnic groups concentrated in

different regions, such as Mayan descendants in the south, Aztec descendants in central Mexico, Yaquis in the north-west, to name but a few (ibid).

Mexico is also characterised by poverty and inequality. Nearly half of the population is poor, unable to meet the minimal food intakes of the FAO standards, and half of the poor are considered to be in a level of extreme poverty (Levy and Bruhn, 2001, 13; also see Szekely, 2005). Despite this great number of Mexicans living in poverty, Mexico is not one of the world's poorest countries "because much of the rest of the population is relatively well off" (ibid). About one third of the Mexican population are peasants and they account for less than 10% of the GDP (ibid). While poverty is a big problem, it is also true that in 1993 Forbes reported Mexico as the fourth nation in the world in the number of billionaires; by 1999 it was fifth (Levy and Bruhn, 2001, 14, 286).

Another great contrast in Mexico is regarding education levels. Less than half of the adult population finished primary school and there are around four million illiterate children, most of them of indigenous origin (Levy and Bruhn, 2001, 14). The year 2000 census revealed that of the 62.8 million people of over 15 years old, 5.9 million were illiterate (INEGI, 2002). However, almost 20% of the population has access to higher education and the most privileged, Levy and Bruhn (2001, 14) note, do so in the US graduate schools.

Basic structure of Mexican politics

Mexico is a federation of thirty-one states and a Federal District (Mexico City), also known as the United States of Mexico or the Mexican Republic. Each state has a local government autonomous from the central government. Mexico has a presidential form of government, so the president leads the Executive branch of the federal government. He is elected through direct elections and universal suffrage every six years with no possibility of re-election as dictated by the Constitution. In the local governments, the executive power is held by local governors and in the case of the Federal District by the Mayor of Mexico City, also called Chief of Government. They also serve a six-year term and are elected through elections. The Legislative branch of the federal government is constituted by the Congress of the Union, divided in two chambers,

that of deputies and that of senators. In the states there is a single chamber, the Local Congress and in the Federal District there is a Legislative Assembly. Members of the Congress are elected for a three-year term, with no chance of serving two consecutive terms. Finally, the Judicial branch of the federal government is represented by the Supreme Court of Justice, formed by eleven ministers elected by members of Congress from a list put forward by the President. Local governments have a local Supreme Court of Justice (IFE, 2005).

The federation as well as the thirty-two federal entities have their own electoral regulations, institutions and procedures (IFE, 2005). The Institution for Federal Elections (IFE) is a public, autonomous and independent body responsible for the administrative duties of organising the federal electoral process. The IFE is located in the Federal District and has decentralised bodies in each of the thirty-two federal entities as well as the 300 electoral districts into which the country is divided.

Men and women of Mexican nationality and aged at least eighteen years old are entitled to vote in both local and federal elections. In order to do so they must be registered in the voters' roll and have their photo voting card, which is issued by the IFE upon application by the citizen. Voting is restricted to citizens within the country on polling day, and they have to do it in the polling station that corresponds to their address (IFE, 2005).

Only the national political parties are entitled to nominate candidates. They do so in accordance with their own procedures. A party can gain legal recognition by applying to the IFE. They have to submit their declaration of principles, an action plan, and the by-laws that would regulate their activities. They must also demonstrate that they have enrolled a minimum number of members of no less than 0.13% of the total of registered voters in the previous federal elections. In order to maintain their legal recognition, parties must obtain at least 2% of the votes in federal elections (IFE, 2005).

Parties obtain their funding mainly from public funds since the Constitution states that these "must prevail over other kinds of financing sources that the law allows and regulates" (IFE, 2005). There is not a legal specification on the amount parties

receive, the only issue regulated in that respect is the proportion they can get. However, parties can legally obtain private funds by charging affiliation, from donations of supporters and by self-financing and income generated through trust funds. Parties are restricted from obtaining financial support from any public power, bodies, entities or agencies of public administration, foreign political parties, international agencies, cult ministers or associations, people living abroad or Mexican commercial companies (IFE, 2005).

Currently there are eleven political parties recognised by the IFE (IFE, 2005):

- PAN National Action Party
- PRI Institutional Revolutionary Party
- PRD Party of the Democratic Revolution
- PT Labour Party (Partido del Trabajo)
- PVEM Green Ecologist Party of Mexico (Partido Verde Ecologista de Mexico)
- CD Convergence for Democracy (Convergencia por la Democracia)
- PMP Party of Mexico Possible (Partido Mexico Posible)
- PLM Liberal Mexican Party (Partido Liberal Mexicano)
- FC Citizenry Force (Fuerza Ciudadana)
- PSN Party of the Nationalist Society (Partido de la Sociedad Nacionalista)
- PAS Party of Social Alliance (Partido Alianza Social)

All these parties contested the federal elections in July 2006, when a new President for the period 2006-2012, PAN party candidate, Felipe Calderon, was elected. Later in this chapter the issue of the emergence of parties of the opposition to the PRI will be addressed, as well as their evolution within the Mexican political arena.

In 2005 the following Mexican political parties had presence in the local and federal governments as follows:

Government of states:

PRI	PAN	PRD
Campeche	Aguascalientes	Baja California Sur
Coahuila	Baja California Norte	Chiapas
Colima	Guanajuato	Guerrero
Chihuahua	Jalisco	Michoacan
Durango	Morelos	Nayarit

Hidalgo Estado de Mexico Nuevo Leon Oaxaca Puebla Quintana Roo Sinaloa Sonora Tabasco Tamaulipas Veracruz	Queretaro San Luis Potosi Tlaxcala Yucatan	Zacatecas Federal District
Total: 16 states	9 states	7 states

As for the Chambers of Deputies and Senators, they are organised in the following manner:

Party	Senators:	Deputies:	
		Uninominal	Plurinominal
PRI	58	161	63
PAN	47	80	71
PRD	15	56	41
PVEM	5	3	14
PT	0	0	6
Others	3	0	5
TOTAL	128	300	200

So, while the PRI party still has control of half of the states of Mexico, it is important to remember that it had absolute control of federal and local governments up until 1988. Also, it should be noted that the Federal District is the geographical area where traditionally all political powers concentrate, yet the government of it is in the hands of the PRD. The Mayor of Mexico City for 2000-2006, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, was elected in the same polls of July 2000 in which PAN party candidate Vicente Fox won the presidency. So while the PAN could remove the PRI from the executive, it was not strong enough to obtain the majority in Congress or the government of the Capital, which as noted before, concentrates one fifth of the Mexican population. While the IFE officially recognises 11 political parties, the government of the states is concentrated in the hands of only the PRI, PAN and PRD. Some authors believe that Mexico is therefore turning into a three-party system.

Appendix 2 History of the Mexican Media

This appendix contains further information on the history of the Mexican mass media, as well as data regarding broadcast media and ownership.

1. Brief History of the Mexican Media

Mexico was the first country in the American continent with a printing press (1536), the second with gazettes, and the third with a daily newspaper. (Cole, 1996, 115). However, Carreno (2000) notes that historically, the Mexican media system has followed a model of subordination to public power: during the 19th century the press served 'caudillos' or policies in opposition. During the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz early in the 20th Century, the opposition press was persecuted and suppressed. But also, Carreno (2000) notes, there was a type of press that was subjected and "addicted" to the government. Finally, according to Carreno (2000) the model of subordination was perfected during the PRI regime up until the 70's when threats and persecution were no longer needed as the media were absolutely subordinate to the government. The following sections will offer a more detailed account of the historical development of the Mexican media system.

a. Press in the 19th Century and the Porfirio Diaz dictatorship

Mexican intellectual Carlos Monsivais (2003, 103) notes that control of the Mexican press dates back to the 19th century, when in 1829 conservative politician Lucas Alaman repressed publications in order to facilitate the administration of then president Anastacio Bustamante. In 1833 president Santa Anna gave journalists a didactic task: that of promoting submission and support to the president amongst readers. However, both supportive and critical press were born together; one with the support of the government and the other with its prosecution. Examples of the critical press usually had a short life, as did the first liberal publications *El Observador de la Republica Mexicana* (1827-1828) and *El Fenix de la Libertad* (1831-1834) (Monsivais, 2003, 103).

Monsivais (2003, 104) notes, the 19th century was a period of conflict and confusion with several mini civil wars, treason, vandalism and 31 presidents between 1835 and 1855, out of which 8 were the same person, Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. There were also international conflicts such as the American invasions that led to the loss of nearly half of the Mexican territory as well as wars with Europe in 1948. During this period the press was paramount in establishing and promoting the two contending tendencies of politics of the time, the liberal thought versus the conservative doctrine. Dictator Santa Anna therefore, through the Lares Law of 1853 put strong limits on the freedom of the press. However, this did not limit the emergence of subversive media, as there are many examples of critical media of the period, such as *El Cosmopolita* (1837-1843), *El Monitor Republicano* (1844-1896) and *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* (1844-1896). Monsivais (ibid) notes that for the liberals the press was more than a political vehicle, it was also their first educational project as they were trying to build the Mexican nation. Years later, during the empire of Maximilian of Habsburg, the emperor declared he aimed to give the press the freedom it lacked in the past, yet during his rule several journalists were prosecuted with claims of offending the emperor and public peace (Monsivais, 2003, 109). When the republic was restored with Benito Juarez as president, limits to the press were still part of the regime. Yet some critics were present, especially in regards to Juarez' plans to be re-elected, his death, however, overtook events. The next president, Sebastian Lerdo de Tejada (1872-1876) was often a target of criticisms and jokes. Monisvais (2003, 112) notes of journalism of the time that, since the country was so used to coups and civil wars, criticism was inevitable and widely accepted. Furthermore, criticism levelled at Lerdo de Tejada was not because he tried to limit press freedom, rather criticisms focused on his bribery of journalists.

During the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz (1876-1880, 1884-1911), the first few years saw relative tolerance of the press. He tried to gain the support of journalists and jailed those who refused to be complacent but released them shortly afterwards, as he did not want any martyrs of press freedom (Monsivais, 2003, 113). During his second period in government, Diaz sponsored the development of big newspapers that were supportive of his regime, such as those run by Rafael Reyes Spindola, who funded *El Universal* in 1888 (ibid). Opposition media increased but so did the repression of journalists that escalated from jail to murder. It is during this period that the longest

surviving liberal media, *El Monitor Republicano* and *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* came to an end (Monsivais, 2003, 117). So, Monsivais (2003, 118) notes, the press of the Diaz dictatorship both explicitly and subtly tried to settle one idea, that the nation was, literally, the president and that the union of Mexico was consolidated around the presidential figure.

Carreno (2000) believes that while during the 19th century there were an important number of newspapers of different orientation, such as party oriented, liberal, conservative, even socialist, labour and about business, most of them were published in a small number and had a short life span, however they are the antecedent of the Mexican media system of today. This is basically because it was then that the tradition of advocate media and clientelism was born, as these publications only survived due to the financial support they obtained from the causes or people they supported. Journalism as purely informative or as entertainment did not develop (Carreno, 2000). Furthermore, Carreno makes no mention of the importance of oppositional media prior to the revolution. Yet Carreno (2000) notes that Mexican journalism acquired its shape in those days, not as a journalism of information but mostly as a journalism of opinion. The writing was loaded with adjectives and advocated particular causes, and, most of all, it was a journalism that was organised and financed by the established political powers.

b. Press during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1921)

Monsivais (2003, 120) notes that the anti-porfirist press has been underestimated as it was one of the impulses to the Revolution. Some radical newspapers emerged during the Revolution, such as *Regeneracion* (1900-1916) and *El Diario del Hogar* (1881-1912). Some conservative newspapers became radical too, such as *El Imparcial*, *El Pais*, *La Nacion*, *La Prensa*, *La Tribuna* and *El Manana*, which aimed to spread the fear of peasant upheavals and to praise the dictatorship (ibid).

Carreno (2000) sees as ironic the fact that while the press was a traditional advocate of the government, the only time it was entirely critical was against president Madero, “maybe the only democratically elected president of the 20th century”. Yet the press was responsible for creating the hostile environment that ended up with the murder of

the president in 1913. Some of the media that spread the antipathy towards Madero for considering him a weak president were *La Satira* (1910-1912), *Multicolor* (1911-1914), *El Ahuizote* (1911-1912), *La Guacamaya* (1911-1915) and *El Mero Petatero* (1911-1913) (Monsivais, 2003, 122). The media at the time was entirely biased, “there are no neutral or objective zones” in the country (Monsivais, 2003, 124). Mosivais (2003, 124) notes that the most important thing about the press of the revolution is that the Mexican press did not aim to pursue journalism but to make history. He believes that the best journalism of the time lies in the photographs and not the articles.

There were media that supported each faction of the revolutionary movement. Carranza was supported by *El Constitucionalista* (1913-1916) and *El Radical* (1914-1915), Villa by *La Vida Nueva* and *Monitor* and Zapata by *Tierra y Justicia* (Torres, 1997, 19; Monsivais, 2003, 127). After the murder and defeat of those leaders, some newspapers disintegrated or gave their support to other revolutionary figures, such as Alvaro Obregon who became president in 1921 until 1924. While Torres (1997, 20) and Reed (1995, in Torres, *ibid*) believed that Obregon was neutral to critical media, Fernandez (1980, in Torres, *ibid*) and Monsivais (2003, 127) note that the president rejected the idea of freedom of the press. Indeed, Carreno (2000) mentions that as newspaper *El Universal* originally supported Venustiano Carranza, when Alvaro Obregon became president he temporarily closed the newspaper arguing it had interests opposed to his government.

Mexican radio appeared during the government of Alvaro Obregon. He granted concessions to newspapers editors like Felix Palavicini from *El Universal* to install the first radio stations (Torres, 1997, 20). In 1923 the Central League of Mexican Radio (*Liga Central Mexicana de Radio*) was created, and it is the first antecedent of the current National Council for the Industry of Radio and Television (*Camara Nacional de la Industria de Radio y Television, CIRT*) (*ibid*). Following the government of Obregon, Calles was president from 1924 until 1928. This latter was the year in which Obregon “had himself” re-elected (Aguilar and Meyer, 1999, 74), but he was murdered before taking office. President Calles devised the idea of a party that would embrace all factions of the revolutionary movement. Through the creation and management of state institutions, the party would have complete control over

political power in Mexico avoiding further conflicts between caudillos. So in 1929 the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR), the first face of the current PRI was created and in 1930 the first PNR president, Pascual Ortiz Rubio took office (Aguilar and Meyer, 1999, 108).

c. Mexican media during the PRI regime (1929-2000)

The General Lazaro Cardenas' (1936-1940) administration had tendencies towards the left, so much so that it was often described as 'communist' (Torres, 1997, 24). It was Cardenas who transformed the PNR into the Party of the Mexican Revolution (PRM, Partido de la Revolucion Mexicana). President Cardenas is attributed with the ability to spread the network of the ruling party to broader sectors of the Mexican society by their incorporation in different unions, such as peasant, workers, the poor, the military, etc. By doing so, he also ensured that the media became part of the network of power of the one-state party. During his administration formerly independent and privately owned newspapers Excelsior and La Prensa were turned into cooperatives. Furthermore, Cardenas created the state corporation PIPSA, which had the monopoly of newsprint supply to the press, which was distributed and charged for arbitrarily, and thus it became one mechanism of control and dependency of newspapers. Finally, Cardenas created the concept of a press officer through the creation of the Autonomous Department of Publicity and Advertisement (DAPP, Departamento Autonomo de Publicidad y Propaganda), which issued official press bulletins (Torres, 1997; 24-25). During the following administration, President Avila Camacho (1946-1952) moved the government towards the right. He ended many of the policies carried out by his predecessor, like the provision of land to peasants, and withdrew the military from the ruling party. He also transformed the DAPP into the General Directorate of Information. This was an office derived from the Ministry of Interior but following the same aim, to centralise official information. In 1943 with the support of President Avila Camacho, a large chain of newspapers was created by Colonel Garcia Valseca.

Avila Camacho's successor, President Miguel Aleman (1946-1952), took the original concept of the DAPP further by having press officers in every government office. They issued official press bulletins that were handed to the press. Miguel Aleman

changed the name of the PRM into its current name PRI. He also led the country more towards the right by further centralising the regime and by exercising a tough control of the working class (Torres, 1997, 26). It was during his government that television appeared in Mexico following the commercial model of the USA. Aleman himself was one of the owners of Telesistema Mexicano, which was later to become the monopolistic television company Televisa. President Miguel Aleman also inaugurated the 'Day of Freedom of the Press', a celebration that according to Torres (1997, 29) was aimed at reinforcing the allegiance of the press towards the government. By the time Adolfo Ruiz Cortines (1952-1958) took office, an important group of businessmen had risen in Mexico due to the previous administrations having had tendencies towards the right. This new industrial and financial elite had very close links to the political elite, including media owners such as families O'Farril and Azcarraga, who shared ownership of Televisa with the Aleman family. The next president, Adolfo Lopez Mateos (1958-1964) was not leftist, but was rather populist (Torres, 1997, 27), and re-started the program to provide land to peasants and expanded the program of social security as well as the construction of schools in rural areas of the country. Monsivais (1981 in Torres, 1997, 28) describes the press of this and the previous three administrations as loaded with fascist-like propaganda, hate campaigns against opposition, social pages as portraits of the triumph of wealth and the resentment of the middle classes as populism.

When the following administration, that of Gustavo Diaz Ordaz (1964-1970) was preparing to host the Olympic Games in Mexico City, it had the challenge of facing a year of worldwide student unrest, that also manifested in the Mexican Capital. The government response to the student movement ended up in the repression of a student protest in Tlatelolco, yet there is academic debate in regards of the media coverage of the events; some authors believe that under the leadership of Julio Scherer, newspaper Excelsior marked the trend towards media opening in Mexico, but others believe the press in general took a conservative stance and supported the official line (see the chapters 7 and 8 of this thesis). As a means of distancing himself from the events of 1968, despite having been Minister of Interior at the time, President Luis Echeverria Alvarez (1970-1976) carried out a series of policies known as a 'democratic opening', which included measures in regards of the media. In effect, in reference to the

proposals of the 1976 summit in Costa Rica about mass media in Latin America, Fox (1988) notes that

“Mexico became the only country to attempt major changes after the San José meeting. Backed by two presidents of the republic, Luis Echeverría and José López Portillo, between 1970 and 1982, an overall reformulation of the communications rights of citizens was proposed which would democratize the entire communications system.”

Fox's enthusiasm is somewhat shared by Caletti (1988), however this is highly debatable as a review of some issues of the Echeverría administration demonstrate. According to Aguilar and Meyer (1999), the 'democratic opening' move was not meant to question the institutional legacy of the Mexican State, but rather to update it and recover whatever was still recoverable after the erosion that the Mexican politics suffered in 1968. It was, Aguilar and Meyer argue, a matter of “letting things change so that everything remains the same” (1999). Echeverría, thus, used the media for his own benefit and the so-called opening was the way to perpetrate the ideological values of the PRI. That is why Echeverría's administration took a great interest in developing the media, it even purchased television Channel 13. The most outstanding move of the Echeverría administration in the use of the media in regards to the 'Democratic opening', note Aguilar and Meyer (1999, 208), was on June 1971 when government officials repressed another student demonstration. Echeverría made a great statement on television where he promised he would find those responsible for the massacre and give them the appropriate legal punishment. Soon after, two high officials were removed from office, one of them being the mayor of Mexico City “even though the investigations weren't conclusive and those responsible were not incarcerated” (idem, 208).

As for radio and television, Carreno (2000) notes that president Echeverría expropriated a group of stations of what nowadays is Grupo Radio Formula because its concessions were owned by someone who was partner of a businessman prosecuted for tax evasion. With those radio stations the government formed the Mexican Institute of Radio (IMER, Instituto Mexicano de la Radio). Echeverría promoted the integration of Televisa as a monopoly and removed the private concession of channel 13, from which later on the government created Imevision, the state owned television company. It was also during the Echeverría administration that

Mexican newspaper *Excelsior* had its glory days with a critical journalism that questioned the government and created controversy. Nevertheless, the presidency through the Ministry of Interior (Secretaria de Gobernacion) orchestrated and financed a movement inside the newspaper that led to the expulsion of the editor in chief, Julio Scherer, and the group of journalists and editors who made *Excelsior* the critical newspaper it was (Aguilar and Meyer, 1999; Scherer, 2003; Monsivais, 2003; Cockcroft, 1998). However, Riva Palacio (2004, 256) has a different view on the events, as he notes that it was Scherer's personal and political interests that prompted the conflict with "his old friend" president Echeverria. Scherer, Riva Palacio notes (*ibid*) wanted to interfere in the selection process of Echeverria's successor by giving preferential coverage to Mario Moya Placencia, and slating all other hopefuls, including Scherer's cousin, Echeverria's chosen candidate, Jose Lopez Portillo. This observation gives a completely different reading to the events, as it was not Scherer's commitment to responsible journalism, but rather his personal interests as part of the ruling clique that led to his ousting from *Excelsior*.

Also in regards to the press, as Echeverria did not like the way newspaper *El Norte* covered events, supplies of paper were cut and more funds directed towards *El Norte* competitors (Hughes, 2003, 98). Finally, during the Echeverria administration, the Garcia Valseca chain of newspapers was expropriated by the state and turned into the Mexican Editorial Organisation (OEM, Organizacion Editorial Mexicana), and also during this administration, OEM was privatised again (Carreno, 2000). Therefore, the presidential efforts to democratise the media during the 1970s in Mexico were nothing but a smokescreen to generate favourable opinions for the one state party system.

After his expulsion from *Excelsior*, journalist Julio Scherer, cousin of President Lopez Portillo (1976-1982), created political newsmagazine *Proceso*. When in 1982 Mexico started suffering a severe economic crisis and *Proceso* reported on it, Lopez Portillo cancelled the advertisement in the magazine, which amounted to over 50%, sometimes even up to 80% of the paid inserts in the magazine. During the ceremony of the Day of Freedom of the Press, when asked about the conflict with *Proceso*, President Lopez Portillo said "no pago para que me peguen" ('I don't pay to be hit') (Torres, 1997, 135), a phrase that ever since has been noted to encompass the relationship between the press and the government in Mexico during the PRI era. In

the following administration, Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988) promoted the so-called 'moral renovation of society', nevertheless, the system of bribing journalists prevailed during his administration (Torres, 1997, 98). De la Madrid also exercised control of the media through the allocation of government advertisement. Such was the case with newspaper *El Financiero*, which had government publicity cancelled after the newspaper reported on the ill management of the Mexican foreign debt (Riva Palacio 1992 in Torres, 1997, 136, Hughes, 2003, 98-99).

President Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) began his presidency trying to gain public support as the elections that named him president were accused of being fraudulent. He created the populist program *Solidaridad* even though his government had a neo-liberal tendency. As a matter of fact, he signed the North America Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA with the USA and Canada. The day NAFTA became valid, January the 1st 2004, an indigenous and peasant 'Zapatist' rebellion burst out in Chiapas. In March that year Presidential Candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio was assassinated, as was leader of the PRI party Ruiz Massieu later that year. In 1989, the PAN party won for the first time the government of a state (Baja California). Carlos Salinas also created the Institute for Federal Elections, IFE. As for the media during this administration, as it was of a neo-liberal orientation, many government-owned businesses were privatised. These included newsprint supplier PIPSA and television broadcasting group *Imevisión*, which was sold to Salinas Pliego who created TV *Azteca*, one of the main investors was said to be Raul Salinas, brother to the President. Even though *Televisa* had competition for the first time in history, it still remained a close supporter to the government, so much so that Emilio Azcarraga became one of the entrepreneurs who contributed with 25m USD towards the presidential campaign of 1994. Riva Palacio (1994) notes that the media were heavily controlled during the Salinas administration, as, for example the Ministry of Interior instructed the media to refer to the Zapatistas as 'law violators' in order to delegitimise their claims and portray the government favourably (in Torres, 1997, 105).

After the turbulent year of 1994, and despite having had their candidate murdered, the PRI party won the presidential elections and President Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000) furthered the neo-liberal policies of his predecessor. However, the national currency was over-valued during the Salinas administration, and devaluation drove the country

into a severe economic crisis by early 1995. The government's support for the media suffered as a consequence, and many newspapers, lacking readership, advertisement or government hand-outs ceased publication. This situation, however, did not scare off investors into the market. As Hughes (2006, 97) notes "The opening of new papers financed by businessmen rather than politicians, outpaced the closure of insolvent newspapers".

Appendix 3: Matrix of respondents

Respondent	Gender	Years of experience	Press	Radio	TV
1	Male	21 to 30	x	x	x
2	Female	11 to 20	x		
3	Male	11 to 20	x	x	
4	Male	11 to 20	x		
5	Female	11 to 20	x	x	
6	Female	1 to 10	x		
7	Male	1 to 10	x		
8	Male	21 to 30	x		
9	Female	1 to 10	x		x
10	Male	21 to 30	x	x	
11	Male	1 to 10	x		
12	Male	1 to 10	x	x	
13	Male	11 to 20	x		
14	Male	21 to 30	x		x
15	Female	1 to 10	x	x	
16	Male	11 to 20	x	x	
17	Male	21 to 30	x		
18	Male	11 to 20	x		
19	Male	11 to 20	x		
20	Male	31 to 40	x		
21	Female	11 to 20		x	x
22	Male	21 to 30	x	x	x
23	Male	31 to 40	x	x	
24	Male	21 to 30	x	x	
25	Male	11 to 20	x		
26	Male	21 to 30	x	x	x
27	Male	31 to 40	x		
28	Male	1 to 10	x	x	x
29	Male	31 to 40	x	x	
30	Male	11 to 20	x	x	
31	Male	11 to 20	x		
32	Female	31 to 40	x		
33	Male	1 to 10	x	x	
34	Female	41+	x		
35	Male	11 to 20		x	x

Appendix 4

Interview questionnaire

BACKGROUND

1. Have you got any professional qualifications or training? If so, where did you obtain them? When?

2. What publications have you worked for?

(Have you worked for broadcast media?)

EDITORIAL CONSTRAINTS

3. There are several examples where journalists have been told not to write about certain issues because of political connections or bribes. In your experience, have you ever had such problems?

4. There are also stories about editors being approached by government officials instructing them how to frame coverage (as in the uprising in Chiapas in 1994 where the EZLN army was referred to as a 'subversive group'). Have you ever experienced that? When and why?

5. During the PRI regime, the government apparatus enforced several mechanisms of control, such as the provision of print paper or government advertisement. Did the media you have worked for ever have to endure such pressures? Do similar practices still occur?

6. A famous phrase in journalism during the PRI era was that you can talk about anything as long as you don't touch the president, the army or virgin of Guadalupe.

a. Do you agree with that assertion? If so, what was it like to work under such constraints? (i.e. did your work suffer from editorial censorship or even self-censorship?)

b. Are there still issues that are off-limits to journalists? If so, which ones?

WORKING CONDITIONS

7. Mexican journalists were reported to regularly accept government bribes, commonly known as 'chayotes' or 'embutes'. Some argue that it was because of low salaries.

a. Whatever the case, have you or anyone you know ever been offered them? If so, what were the consequences of accepting it or refusing it? (in other words, how was your reporting compromised by it?)

b. Have you or any of your colleagues ever been offered a similar bribe? If so, who offered it and why?

8. On the other hand, there are also several accounts of journalists being threatened, some even murdered, because of the implications of their coverage of certain issues, such as corruption. Have you ever been threatened/felt at risk? If so, what issues do you regard as dangerous to talk about?

a. Comparing with the past, is journalism a more secure profession? Are the working conditions better?

b. Do you perceive journalism as a safe profession? Do you consider your work conditions to be fair?

9. a. Have the levels of corruption of newspapers or journalists lessened? If so, what prompted the change?

b. Do you consider there is corruption in newspapers or amongst journalists? (Who is it related to it?)

RELATIONSHIP WITH POLITICIANS

10. Usually, how is the first contact with government officials? (Is there any kind of protocol or are they usually open to speaking with journalists?)

a. Are there any conditions for access to politicians? In other words, are they open or restricted? When there is contact, is it subject to any conditions?

11. There's been reports of politicians refusing to speak to journalists who work for a certain publication, has that ever happened to you? (In other words, is access to politicians influenced by institutional credentials?)

a. Has a politician ever banned you for your reputation or previous reporting?

b. In your opinion, what journalists get better access and why? (i.e. is there a tendency towards allowing greater access to bigger media, like broadcast media or national newspapers?)

12. Have you ever had implicit or explicit requests for talking about a particular issue or not talking about another one?

DEMOCRACY

13. Carlos Monsivais argues that the press in Mexico was addressed towards a single reader, the president. Furthermore, Ai Camp says that members of the political elite used to send messages across groups through the use of the press.

a. Do you think that was the case?

b. Has that changed? Who do you consider your readers are? Does that assumption shape your writing or even the issues you cover?

c. What agendas do you work with? Do you look at all issues equally or which ones are given preference?

14. Mexico is noted to be going through a democratic transition. Furthermore, we will be having presidential elections in a few months. Do you think coverage of presidential candidates has changed? Since when and in what ways?

a. As a journalist, what kind of information do you consider you ought to give citizens in order to make informed political decisions?

15. What do you consider are the scenarios for Mexican journalism according to the possible result of the elections?

Appendix 5

Content analysis coding schedules

1968 Coding Schedule

1. Newspaper _____

1. Excelsior
2. El Universal

2. Date _____ / _____

3. Type of article _____

4. What is the story about?

- Main subject _____
- Subsidiary subject 1 _____
- Subsidiary subject 2 _____

5. Voices featured in article (up to five)

Actor	Position	Quoted	Mentioned	Both

6. How do politicians or government officials regard the demonstration? (up to five)

Name	Position	Favourable	Unfavourable	Neutral	Can't tell/ N.A.

7. Who is noted to take part in the student movement? (up to five)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

8. What adjectives are used to describe participants in the student movement? (up to five)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

9. Words or phrases used to describe actions taken by the government? (up to five)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

10. Words or phrases used to describe actions taken by the president? (up to five)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

11. Words or phrases used to describe the student movement? (up to five)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

12. Are there references to violence, if so, of who is noted to be the cause of it? _____

- No reference to violence
- Government/military
- Students/civilians
- Undetermined
- Both

13. Is the newspaper article? _____

- Favourable to student movement
- Favourable to government
- Neutral

1968 Student movement list of codes

3. Type of article

1. Main news story
2. Other news story
3. Column
4. Editorial
5. Op-ed
6. Other (i.e. letters, paid insertions, etc.)

4. What is the story about?

1. Description of a speech/demonstration organised by the student movement/The demands of the student movement
2. Violence occurred during the events of the student movement
3. Actions of the government regarding the student movement
4. Actions of the students regarding their movement (e.g. decision to go on a strike)
5. A declaration of the president or a government official
6. Impact of the student movement on nationalism
7. A statement of support in favour of the government
8. A statement of support in favour of the student movement
9. A statement of support in favour of the president
10. A criticism of the student movement
11. A criticism of the government
12. A criticism of the president

5. Voices featured in article

1. Government
2. Army
3. PRI party
4. Other party
5. University staff/ representatives
6. Students
7. Other civilians
8. Foreigners / Other
9. N.A.

7. Who is noted to take part in the student movement?

1. students
2. peasant organisations/other civil groups
3. foreigners
4. intellectuals
5. academics
6. politicians
7. agitators
8. other
9. No mention

8. Adjectives

1. mediocre
2. failed, unsuccessful
3. false, sham
4. subversive, seditious, rebellious
5. vulgar, improper, offensive
6. arrogant, big-headed
9. no adjectives

9. Words or phrases used to describe actions taken by the government?

1. Repression
2. Fair, adequate/ constitutional
3. Excessive use of force
4. Reestablishment of order
5. Negligent /intransigent
6. Anti-constitutional/ anti-nationalist/ unfair

10. Words or phrases used to describe actions taken by the president?

1. Kind, courteous, considerate
2. Fair, adequate, just/ constitutional
4. Reestablishment of order
3. Excessive use of force
5. Negligent /intransigent
6. Anti-constitutional/ anti-nationalist/ unfair
9. N.A.

11. Words or phrases used to describe the student movement?

1. An act of delinquency/ illegal / violent
2. Aggressive towards the president/Mexico / anti-nationalist/ anti-constitutional/ anti-revolutionary
3. Fairly motivated
4. Communist / of subversive ideology
5. arrogant / unreasonable
6. not based on student interest
7. Anarchy / disorder/ chaotic
9. N.A.

'Mega-Demonstration 2004' coding schedule

1. Newspaper _____

- 1. La Jornada
- 2. Reforma

2. Date _____ / _____

3. Type of article _____

4. What is the story about?

Main subject _____

Subsidiary subject 1 _____

Subsidiary subject 2 _____

5. Voices featured in article

Actor	Position	Quoted	Mentioned	Both

6. How do politicians or government officials regard the demonstration?

Name	Position	Favourable	Unfavourable	Neutral	Can't tell/ N.A.

7. What words or phrases are used to describe or refer to demonstrators?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

8. Who is noted to promote/endorse and/or take part in the demonstration?

- 1

- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

9. Words or phrased used to describe the reason or focus of the demonstration (up to five)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

10. In regards to the demonstration, is the newspaper item overall ____

- 1. Favourable
- 2. Not Favourable
- 3. Neutral
- 9. Can't tell/ not applicable

Mega-demonstration 2004 list of codes

3. Type of article

1. Main news story
2. Other news story
3. Column
4. Editorial
5. Op-ed
6. Other (i.e. letters, paid insertions, etc.)

4. What is the story about?

1. Security measures during the demonstration
2. Political response to public demands (i.e. legal/policies reforms to tackle crime)
3. Leadership of demonstration
4. Politicisation of demonstration
5. Demonstration as political conflict between parties and/or federal and local governments
6. Organisation of demonstration/Behaviour of demonstrators/Description of demonstration
7. Demands of demonstrators (i.e. more security, tougher penalties)
8. Levels of crime/crime incidence
9. Poor government tackling of crime/incompetence
11. An opinion in favour of demonstration
12. An opinion against demonstration
13. Breakdown of society/social causes of crime
14. Corruption/impunity (related to corruption/complicit in crime)
15. A criticism of Lopez Obrador/GDF
16. A criticism of Fox/Fed Gov./PAN
17. A criticism of government in general
18. Criticism of neoliberalism
19. Criticism of left

5. Voices featured in article

1. PRI party member
2. PAN pm
3. PRD pm
4. Other party
5. Civil society
6. NGO
7. Government official
8. Other
9. Fox
10. AMLO
11. GDF government
12. Federal government
13. Academic/researcher/intellectual/author

14. Religious leader
15. Representative of PI/Business/Commerce

7. What words or phrases are used to describe or refer to demonstrators?

1. Citizens
2. Society/people/civil society
3. Demonstrators/marchers
4. Leftists
5. Extremists
6. Activists
7. Pacifists
10. Dissatisfied
11. Fake citizens
12. Families
13. Crowds/masses/thousands
14. Mexicans (or other references to place i.e. capitalinos, mexiquenses)
15. Neighbours/ community members
99. No mention

8. Who is noted to promote/endorse and/or take part in the demonstration?

1. Upper classes
2. Lower classes
3. All classes??
4. 'Right'/ 'Ultraright'/ 'Yunque' / private interests/businessmen
5. PRI
6. PAN
7. PRD
8. Other parties
9. Foreigners
10. Politicians in general/public officials
11. The media
12. The president/Federal government
13. Religious groups/Catholics
14. Left
15. Civic organizations
16. Centre
17. Schools
18. Other states
19. Business/commercial orgs.
20. Celebrities
21. Migrants
22. Disabled
99. No mention

9. Words or phrases used to describe the reason or focus of the demonstration

1. Against insecurity
2. Against crime/kidnaps
3. Against inefficient public security system
4. Against inefficient crime prevention

5. Against lack of crime punishment policies/ impunity
6. Against corruption
7. Lack of human rights
8. For peace/ against violence
9. Politically manufactured
10. Smokescreen for private interests/ product of manipulation
11. For justice
12. Homage for/solidarity with victims of crime
99. No mention

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