

**Reporting dangerously in Mexico: Capital, risks and strategies
among journalists**

Julieta Alejandra Brambila Ramírez

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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“Inspiration plays no less a role in science than it does in the realm of art”

Max Weber (1919)

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Abstract

Over the last decades violence against journalists has increased dramatically worldwide. Within this trend, Mexico stands out as being the most dangerous country for journalists in the Western hemisphere. This thesis investigates how local journalists in Mexico address work-related risks and keep reporting amidst threatening and dangerous conditions. Based on the theoretical framework of the sociology of journalism and employing key concepts and hypotheses of field theory, the main argument of this thesis is that journalists' individual dispositions regarding forms and quantity of capital (material and symbolic resources) both constrain (e.g. increase risk exposure) and enable (e.g. through strategies for enhancing professional autonomy) journalistic practice in violent settings.

The research pursues a subnational comparative research strategy to analyse the dilemmas and strategies of journalists at the local and regional levels where most of the violence and harassments against journalists take place. Based on a set of 65 interviews with journalists (49) and key informants (16) from the ten most violent states in the country, this study suggests that exposure to risk among local journalists working on sensitive topics (such as crime, drugs and corruption) is unevenly distributed in the field and, more importantly, journalists who possess lower levels of capital (cultural, economic, social and symbolic) are at greater risk of danger and violence than journalists who possess higher levels of capital. Conversely, high levels of capital enable journalists to acquire the resources needed for fostering strategies aimed at enhancing their safety and professional autonomy in a working environment featuring violence and risk.

However, the data gathered suggests that the role of capital and the repertoire of strategic behaviours have some professional, organisational and social limitations.

Overall, this thesis offers a more comprehensive and theory-driven explanation of the cultural, economic, social and symbolic forces influencing journalistic practice in violent settings than has been offered by most of the current scholarship on this topic.

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Map of Mexico



Political Map of Mexico (University of Texas Library, 2008)

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Setting the scene

This is a thesis about the Mexican journalistic field, which is caught in a spiral of societal and criminal violence¹ in which local journalists working on the most dangerous stories in their communities (those on crime, drugs and corruption) have learned to navigate risk² and use the existing resources and strategies available to them to continue reporting. In order to explore this subject, this work analyses and compares risk mitigation strategies³ and the practice of journalism among local reporters who live and work in violent subnational regions in Mexico, which is widely considered to be the most dangerous place for the press⁴ in the world (RWB, 2018).

Violence against the press is not a new phenomenon in Mexico and has existed since the origin of the journalistic field (Smith, 2018; Moncada, 2012; Piccato, 2009);

¹ According to the World Health Organisation (2017), violence “is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation”.

² “Risk” in this context is understood as “a situation involving exposure to danger” or violence (Oxford Dictionary, 2017).

³ Following Cottle et al. (2016: 13), journalists working from hazardous places calibrated risks and “calculated possibilities or anticipated likelihoods which then afford and improved basis for decisions and actions and responses when things go badly wrong”.

⁴ For the purposes of this study, *the press* refers to all types of news media rather than simply print media.

however, the incidence and intensity of anti-press violence⁵ has increased considerably since the turn of the 21st century. This has been especially true since 2007 when, after a peaceful transition to electoral democracy (Schedler, 2002), the Mexican government launched a formal military operation to crack down on drug cartels – a policy commonly referred to in news media reports as the War on Drugs. After ten years, an estimated more than 110,000 people had been murdered and 30,000 had disappeared in cartel-related violence (Schedler, 2016:1050).

Mexican journalists have not escaped this spiral of criminal violence. At the time of writing, Mexico is ranked 147th out of 180 countries included in the Reporters Without Borders' World Freedom Index (RWB, 2017). Mexico holds the second-lowest ranking of all Latin American countries (just above Cuba) and is below countries such as Afghanistan, Russia and Zimbabwe. Various factors could explain this worrisome situation, including symbolic factors (a lack of social support and prestige), digital factors (surveillance), economic factors (financial crisis and increasing government subsidy) and violent constraints (RWB, 2017). While this study will consider all of the above, it mainly focuses on the influence of violence upon the practice of journalism at the local level.

Since the beginning of the War on Drugs, the monitoring programme of Article 19's Mexico chapter has documented the death of 80 journalists and the forced disappearance of 25 (presumed dead) in possible connection to their work, as well as more than 2,000 cases of aggression against the press (including threats, abductions and attacks on media installations, among others) (Article 19 Mexico, 2016 and 2017), with the vast majority of such crimes occurring locally, where the rule of law is

⁵ Anti-press violence is defined as physical attacks, verbal intimidation and threats against news journalists and media outlets as a result of their professional work (Waisbord, 2002:91).

weaker, the media market smaller (compared to the national level), and journalists often lack the material and symbolic resources of those who work in large metropolitan areas (such as Mexico City, for example) (Article 19 Mexico, 2016 and 2017). This repressive atmosphere, in turn, has led to the pervasive adoption of self-censorship (Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2017a). In fact, scholars agree (Vltmer, 2013:139; Guerrero-Martínez, 2010 and 2017; Hughes and Lawson, 2005) that even though Mexico is formally acknowledged to be an electoral democracy, the increasing spiral of criminal violence and human rights violations – as well as the inability of state authorities to guarantee the safe exercise of critical journalism throughout the national territory and failures to convict the possible perpetrators of such crimes – serve as reminders of some of the most serious obstacles to the viability of Mexico's democracy.

Although the Mexican case and the concerning situation for the press has produced multiple headlines and journalistic works (see for example Valdez, 2016; Corchado, 2013; Turati, 2011; Bosch and Velez, 2011; Osorno, 2011), as well as press rights organizations reports (Article 19 Mexico, 2016 and 2017; CPJ, 2017; RWB, 2017) and important scholarly research (see for example Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2017a and 2017b; Holland and Ríos, 2017; Del Palacio, 2015; Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014 and 2017; González de Bustamante and Relly, 2016a and 2016b; Del Palacio, 2015; Flores et al., 2012 and 2014; Feinstein, 2013; Lauría and O'Connor, 2010; Edmonds-Poli, 2013; Rodelo and Hernandez, 2010; Estévez, 2010; Rodelo, 2009; Lara-Klahr, 2007), we still lack answers to the following questions: How do local journalists operate in the most violent subnational regions? How do they navigate and address risk? And, more importantly, how do they use existing resources and strategies to continue reporting in threatening and risky conditions?

This study responds to these questions both theoretically, through the framework of the sociology of journalism and by employing key concepts and hypotheses of field theory, and empirically, through in-depth conversations with key informants (journalists and activists) and a set of in-depth interviews with local journalists living and working in the ten most violent states in the country⁶. Overall, this study is an attempt to place into a wider context the daily dangers, risk mitigation practices and strategies for continuous reporting developed by local journalists in Mexico.

In the next section I will place this study within the context of existing literature on the sociology of journalism and news production in areas of risk, conflict and violence. I will also present the two empirical questions and the main argument that underpins this study.

1.2 Literature review, Theoretical Framework, Research Questions and Main Argument

1.2.1 A brief introduction to the literature review

This research is largely inspired by a classic research question in the realm of scholarship on news production within an environment of conflict and violence: how

⁶ Based on the country's division into five regions made by Mexican government in 2013, and the level of societal violence per subnational state, two states have been selected for each of the five regions that presented the highest levels of 'societal violence' from 2007 to 2015. The selected entities were: Chihuahua, Estado de México, Guerrero, Jalisco, Michoacán, Nuevo León, Oaxaca, Sinaloa, Tamaulipas and Veracruz (for details please see the methodological chapter of this study).

do journalists operate in violent settings? (see for example: Tumber, 2006: 439; Vandevordt, 2017; Hoxha and Hanitzsch, 2017; Cottle et al., 2016; Hughes, et al., 2016; Markham, 2011; Robinson et al., 2010; Tumber and Webster, 2006; Allan and Zelizer, 2004; Hannertz, 2004; Armoudian, 2016; Simon, 2014). Although such studies have provided the foundational knowledge for understanding the practice of journalism in threatening and risky environments, they have two important deficiencies. Firstly, they have mostly concentrated on foreign correspondents in war zones, failing to account for local journalists working on sensitive stories in the context of electoral democracies suffering from anti-press violence (for some exceptions see Hughes, et al., 2017 and 2016; Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014; Rodelo, 2009). Furthermore, they have concentrated on the national level as the default category for analysis, failing to consider other levels of analysis (such as the subnational level of analysis considered herein). These are important oversights as the vast majority of violent murders or assaults on the press worldwide in the last decade were not perpetrated on war correspondents but on local beat reporters or investigative journalists working on sensitive topics within their own communities (Mosdell, 2016: 45)⁷. Contrary to war correspondents and special envoys, for whom the risks and effects of trauma end when they leave the field (Feinstein, 2013), journalists who live and work in subnational regions in electoral democracies are constantly exposed to hazardous situations and violent actors (Cottle et al., 2016; Asal et al., 2016).

⁷ “From 2008 to 2015, according to the International News Safety Institute (INSI), 60% of journalists and media workers killed were working in countries suffering from political or criminal violence, rather than in regular wars” (Brambila, 2017b: 300; Mosdell, 2016: 45).

Thus, in order to address the aspects in the academic literature identified here, this thesis uses a comparative subnational research strategy⁸ (Snyder, 2001) that aims to investigate risk exposure and news production among local reporters, “whose names usually do not resonate in the media” (Mosdell, 2016: 38) or attract the interest of international scholarly research. In doing so, the present study situates itself in the global wave of de-westernised studies on media and communication research (e.g. Lugo-Ocando, 2008; Park and Curran, 2000) and news production in conflict settings (e.g. Voltmer and Kraetzschmar, 2015).

In addition to these two important gaps, existing scholarly research on news production in the context of risk, conflict and violence tends to focus either on macro (larger scale trends and patterns) or micro (individual level experiences) perspectives. Although macro and micro perspectives each have their own merits, these perspectives still overlook the essential relationship between social forces, between institutional settings and the journalist, and between structure and agency. Therefore, in light of the gaps in the literature this study has followed a theoretical framework based on the sociology of journalism (Benson, 2004; Ryfe, 2017), an approach that helps us to link the practice of journalism together with the broader institutional rules in which it operates (in other words, connecting structure and agency) – this approach also allows for the investigation of news production from de-westernised and subnational comparative perspectives (Benson, 2010:616). As a subfield, the sociology of journalism seeks to investigate “how news gets constructed – by individuals – within a social and occupational setting” (Reese and Ballinger, 2001, 641). Among other things, this subfield considers how the institutional setting both

⁸ This approach studies social reality in territorially defined subnational cases (such as regions, states, provinces, cities) (Snyder, 2001; e.g. Putnam, 1993).

enables and constrains journalists' actions (Sjøvaag, 2013:161-163). From the realm of sociological approaches for studying journalistic practice (such as field theory, new institutionalism, actor-network theory) (Ryfe, 2017; Reese, 2016), this research uses key concepts and hypotheses of field theory as its main theoretical framework (Kluttz and Fligstein, 2016).

1.2.2 Theoretical considerations

Field theory offers a valuable theoretical framework and a battery of concepts “to think relationally” about journalism, both between the profession and its institutional setting, and between actors (journalists) in the field⁹ (Waisbord, 2013:11-13; Benson, 2010:616; Vandevordt, 2017). This theory has been used by media scholars analysing news production settings of both peace (Benson, 2013; Chalaby; 1996) and conflict (Vandevordt, 2017; Robinson et al., 2010; Hackett, 2006). From the rich theoretical framework offered by field theory, this thesis focuses on the concept of *capital*, which

⁹ Even when field theorists do not directly speak of media institutions or the press (Bourdieu 1998 and 2005 are rare exceptions), in the last decade and a half media scholars have begun to apply the theoretical and conceptual apparatus developed by field theorists (Chalaby, 1996; Benson, 2004, 2006, 2013; Benson and Neveu, 2005; Neveu, 2007; Waisbord, 2013; Powell and Vera, 2016). The introduction, adoption and interpretation of field theory in media studies, however, has not been exempt from criticism. Some scholars have criticised Bourdieu's negativism and economic reductionism (Marlière, 1998:223-224). Others have pointed out some “major problems” in Bourdieu's model regarding his interpretation of cultural media production and his relationship with audiences (Hesmondhalgh, 2006:228; for a review see Dickinson, 2008:1,390). Beyond these criticisms, which are explained in some detail in the next chapter, this thesis agrees with Waisbord. (2013:11) who suggests that field theory offers a “useful framework to analyse journalism in terms of its relations to other social sectors”.

will be empirically operationalised at the individual level. In addition, in this study I will also explore two other concepts, namely: *field* and *exogenous shocks*. According to this theory (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) and its application by scholars in political communication and journalism studies (Hughes, 2006; Benson, 2004, 2006, 2010; Waisbord, 2013; Vandervoort, 2017), in any given national state, the journalistic field is an arena of specialisation which has jurisdiction over the production and delivery of news (Waisbord, 2013:11-18; Benson, 2004 and 2006). In field theory, actors are positioned at different locations depending on the different forms and quantities of capital available to them (Fligstein, and McAdam, 2012; Bourdieu, 1997; Vandervoort, 2017; Benson, 2006). *Capital* are the material and symbolic resources that journalists rely upon to produce news stories and that enable professional practice (Vandevordt, 2017:613; Bourdieu, 1997). According to Bourdieu, four forms of capital “makes the game of society” (Bourdieu, 1997:46); cultural, economic, social and symbolic, all of which are analysed and operationalised in this study. *Exogenous shocks* are critical junctures that originate outside the field in question – such as wars, economic collapse or digital disruptions – and which subvert the broader social environment and the internal dynamics of the field (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012:99); in this case, Mexico’s War on Drugs is conceptualised as a exogenous shock to the field.

Following this theory, as capital always functions as a catalyst of agency in the field (Vandevordt, 2017; Bourdieu, 2005), field theory suggests that at critical junctures actors who possess higher amounts of capital will be more capable of confronting exogenous shocks to the field, while actors with lower levels of capital will be less capable (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 100). Nonetheless, the theory does recognise that actors can always use their quantity of capital strategically to confront

adversities and re-negotiate their position, even in situations of larger transformation such as critical junctures (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012).

Based upon all these theoretical considerations, in the next section I will present the two empirical questions and the main argument that underpins this study.

1.2.3 Research questions and main argument

In light of the gaps in the literature and taking into consideration the Mexican case, this study aims to answer the following questions:

- Considering Mexico's War on Drugs as an exogenous shock to the journalistic field, how do journalists' individual dispositions of forms and quantity of capital influence their exposure to risk in violent subnational settings?
- How do journalists' individual dispositions of forms and quantity of capital influence the adoption of strategies for enhancing their professional autonomy¹⁰ and safety¹¹ in the aforementioned settings?

¹⁰ Within journalism studies literature, the term 'professional autonomy' has been used in many different ways and is an elusive, often contested term (Hughes et al., 2016; Sjøvaag, 2013; Waisbord, 2013; Hallin and Mancini, 2004). For the purposes of this study, professional autonomy can be defined as the amount of agency that an individual journalist enjoys to develop his or her work according to professional judgments (Sjøvaag, 2013:155).

¹¹ Safety refers to "the condition of being protected from or unlikely to cause danger, risk, or injury" (Oxford Dictionary). This condition is essential for journalists who aim to provide information and news without "fearing for their security and life" (Unesco, 2015).

These two research questions aim to explore how journalists' individual dispositions of forms and quantity of capital both constrain agency (by increasing risk exposure, for example) and enable agency (by fostering strategies to enhance professional practice, for example)¹².

Based upon the theoretical framework of this study and empirical evidence, the main argument put forward in this thesis will proceed as follows: Exposure to risk is unevenly distributed across reporters in the field and journalists who possess lower levels of capital (cultural, economic, social and symbolic) are at greater risk of danger and violence than journalists who possess higher levels of the aforementioned forms of capital. Conversely, high levels of capital enable journalists to acquire the resources needed to foster creative strategies of professional practice and safety whilst reporting – what I have called strategies for safety autonomy. However, the data gathered suggests that the role of capital and the repertoire of strategic behaviours have some limitations that are, ultimately, shaped largely by journalists' routines, constraining forces at the organisational context and the unsafe local environment in which journalists operate.

¹² The reflections on these two empirical questions are organised across different chapters in the thesis.

For the most part, the first empirical research question is discussed in the second empirical chapter (Chapter five of this study); while the second empirical research question is discussed in the third empirical chapter (Chapter six of this study). The first empirical chapter (Chapter four of this study) presented the results of the main research method used in this study – open ended in depth interviews to 49 journalists working on dangerous beats and based in the most violent subnational states in the country.

1.3 Original Contributions

There are four aspects to the original contribution made by this research, namely: 1) the role of capital among journalists working in violent contexts; 2) a more nuanced understanding of risk exposure and journalistic practice among Mexican journalists working on risky beats in violent settings; 3) the methodological approach, and 4) policy formation. These contributions are further elaborated below.

1.3.1 Sociology of journalism in conflict reporting

Traditionally, academic research on conflict reporting has been descriptive in nature (Vandevordt, 2017; Robinson et al. 2010). This study has made a contribution to the systematic and theory-driven analysis of conflict reporting. By drawing on the sociology of journalism and field theory (specially the concept of capital), this study has tried to relate structural conditions to microsocial strategies. In so doing, this thesis advances arguments and relationships that allow further examination into the form and quantity of resources gained by journalists, and how these both constrain and enable professional practice in conflict and threatening conditions¹³. The field analysis, as well as the exploration of the role of capital among journalists working in hazardous contexts, allows us to address internal differences in the field of journalism (regarding risk exposure and professional strategic behaviour) among a more diverse range of journalists than has been offered by most of the current literature on this issue, most of which tends to obscure internal differences in the field (for instance, differences between national correspondents and local journalists,

¹³ This study is largely inspired by a recent article which examined the role of capital in conflict reporting in Syria (see Vandevordt, 2017).

among others). In addition, contrary to previous interpretations that emphasise the constraining factors influencing news production in violent settings, this study is one of the first empirical investigations to place the emphasis on journalists' agency and their resources and strategic actions aimed at enhancing safety and professional autonomy amidst violence and risk. Up to this point, this study has advanced arguments, hypothesis and concepts (like the concept of 'strategies for safety autonomy'), which could be useful for explaining how journalists develop certain strategic behaviours, practices and tactics to keep reporting in regions suffering from violence and danger. Overall, this study offers a more systematic, rigorous and comprehensive explanation of journalistic practice in violent settings than has been offered by most of the current scholarship on news production in violent settings.

1.3.2 Understanding the Mexican case

This study captures a unique historical moment and contributes to expanding our understanding of the adverse conditions in which Mexican local journalists operate on a daily basis. Although recent works concentrate on regional case studies (Del Palacio, 2015; Relly and González de Bustamante 2014), and some quantitative works (Hughes and Márquez, 2017a and 2017b; Salazar 2017; Holland and Rios 2017; Brambila, 2017b) have offered important insights into the practice of journalism among risky environments in Mexico, this thesis is the first qualitative work that provides a theory-driven, systemic and holistic explanation with empirical data about how journalists address and mitigate risks, as well as how they develop and apply strategic practices to keep publishing amidst adverse and threatening conditions across all five regions of the country. Based on a set of qualitative interviews with local journalists from the most violent states in the country, this thesis also adds in-

depth understanding about the extent to which Mexican local journalists have experienced direct violence and intimidation due to their line of work.

1.3.3 Methodology and innovation of approach

Drawing upon the Mexican case and a comparative subnational strategy, this study suggests a shift in the scale of analysis from the national to the subnational as a very useful tool, both analytically and empirically, to explain press freedom, anti-press violence and safety of journalists across subnational regions around the world suffering from violence, inequality and poor government. This study suggests that the subnational comparative approach in journalism and media studies may offer stronger explanatory power which other approaches often overlook (for instance, approaches that take the national state as a default category for analysis). Indeed, this study suggests that this research design may inform subnational research both within a single country and across several countries and time, thus expanding the current methodological horizons available to communication and media scholars.

1.3.4 Policy formation contributions

Based upon the empirical findings of this study, some policy recommendations are given. This thesis shows that civil society, the international community, government agencies and the press should all work toward the building of more robust, credible and functioning legal frameworks, state agencies and contingency plans to protect journalists, increase awareness and monitoring, and denounce aggression against the press (this is especially needed among critical subnational states, like Guerrero, Oaxaca, Tamaulipas and Veracruz, where rates of violent homicide against journalists are highest). This thesis demonstrates that even though all the aforementioned actors

and institutions have a responsibility in the increasing number of aggressions against the press, the Mexican government and its institutions (both at national and local levels) can do much more to mitigate the risk to local journalists than any other social institution. To begin with, this thesis finds that the high levels of impunity in crimes against the press need to be addressed with urgency; among other things, a truly autonomous, strong and professional prosecutor's office needs to be established in order to achieve this goal. The thesis also finds that the prevalence of clientelistic relations between political actors and the journalistic field undermine peer solidarity and limit media organisations' autonomy and support of journalists, especially when a journalist has experienced work-related violence; this thesis thus calls for a more transparent legal framework for controlling the discretionary allocation of governmental advertising in the press (both at national and local levels). In addition to this, this thesis shows that too often news media organisations abdicate their responsibility to protect their own media staff; thus it is suggested that news media (especially those operating in the most violent states in the country) should begin to take the safety of journalists seriously, by implementing risk assessments and long-term plans addressing daily risks and journalists' safety. Finally, the empirical findings of this study suggest that the professionalisation of news gathering in dangerous settings could be understood as the result of a set of independent and collective efforts that are rooted in local experiences and dangers; therefore this thesis calls for greater international and domestic support aimed at fostering local independent and professional networks, organisations and collectives in which professionalisation of newsgathering in dangerous settings may occur.

The next section will offer further advantages for focusing on the case of Mexico.

1.4 Mexico as a Case Study

This study explores the dynamics and variables that influence conflict reporting in a single electoral democracy: Mexico. This selection was influenced not only by the personal affinity of the researcher, but more importantly because a clear and in-depth analysis of a single case study can reveal causal mechanisms behind social phenomena (Gerring and Seawright, 2008); for example, regarding the constraining or enabling factors in news production and sharing in violent settings. Therefore, the broader motivation for this research is to reveal those causal mechanisms and develop a theoretical framework which, under certain circumstances, may be generally applied to other countries (or subnational regions) within the whole-country context. As a case study, the Mexican case offers the following theoretical and empirical advantages to achieve this: 1) it is representative of a worldwide phenomenon; 2) it offers a real time window; and 3) it represents a rich and wide social laboratory, all three of which are elaborated below.

1.4.1 Representative of a worldwide phenomenon

While the data gathered for this study came from Mexico, this country as a case study is representative of a new type of democracy in which scholars have argued (Schedler, 2016; Desmond, and Goldstein, 2010) that violence, criminality and corruption place a considerable constraint on the functions of democratic political institutions, including a free press, despite the arrival of an electoral representation system (Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014; Waisbord, 2007). Indeed, some scholars (Hughes 2017:163; González de Bustamante and Relly, 2016a:51) have already suggested that understanding the Mexican case enables us to explain similar patterns of violence against journalists and journalists' safety in other electoral democracies suffering

from anti-press violence, high levels of societal violence, poor government quality and social inequality (Hughes et al., 2017) – cases in point are post-authoritarian countries like Brazil, the Russian Federation, Pakistan and the Philippines, among others (CPJ, 2017; Cottle et al., 2016).

1.4.2 Real time window

The current situation in Mexico offers an invaluable window to capture a momentous transformation within the journalistic field and to explore conflict reporting in real time. Given a moving target as complex as the practice of journalism in violent settings, the opportunity to interview journalists at a time of heightened levels of criminal violence and social transformation offers a unique, albeit challenging, set of advantages. Interviews with journalists were very rich in detail and experiences, which allowed me to deeply explore the forces enabling (and constraining) their daily practices. In addition, interviews with key informants were very helpful for providing the contextual background of this investigation, as were a handful of important experiences related by activists and government personnel about this topic. In short, the Mexican case offers a window to capture the complexities of the phenomenon under investigation – as well as the complexities and challenges in developing such research.

1.4.3 A rich and wide laboratory

The Mexican case is a rich and wide social laboratory to investigate news production in violent settings from a subnational perspective. This is because the country and its 32 subnational states offer very large and rich internal variation across social, economic, political, criminal and media dimensions (Lawson, 2002:7). As Simpson

(1941) provocatively put it 65 years ago, what may appear to be just one Mexico may indeed contain “many Mexicos.” Based on a comparative subnational strategy (Snyder, 2001), this study allows the examination of the research phenomenon and tests hypotheses about journalistic practice in violent states in many cases (ten selected states) instead of just one (Mexico). Moreover, by examining several homogeneous cases, a subnational perspective increases the validity of findings in comparison to cross-national studies, which are plagued by problems of heterogeneity among their units of observation.

In the following section, I present the Mexican context of investigation in more detail.

1.5 Mexican Context of the Study

Academic research on news media and journalism practice is about understanding general interactions in the context of political history and economic and social dimensions (Hallin and Mancini, 2004:11). In this spirit, this section offers a brief country profile aimed at capturing the socio-political context in which the Mexican journalistic field operates.

1.5.1 Historical and socio-political context

Although the roots of the country’s political institutions – including the press – can be traced long back into Mexico's history to the colonial period and the first century of independent governments (Smith, 2018; Piccato, 2009), the following research aims to present and explain the socio-political context since the beginning of the 20th Century, marking the institutionalisation of some its more enduring features.

1.5.1.1 Semi-authoritarian regime

For the majority of the 20th Century¹⁴ (1929-2000), political power in Mexico was concentrated in a semi-authoritarian political regime, which incorporated both authoritarian and democratic elements¹⁵ – including the recognition (at least *in jure*) of civil liberties such as freedom of the press and expression in the political constitution of 1917 (Ai Camp, 2007:10). Mexico's semi-authoritarian regime was characterised by relatively greater “access to the decision-making process” and, more relevant, in the determination of its key “decision makers” (Ai Camp, 2007:11), with presidents, for example, allowed to serve just one six-year term in office, with no possibility of re-election.

In Mexico's semi-authoritarian political regime, two institutions – the hegemonic party (PRI, Institutional Revolutionary Party) and the presidential figure – dominated all other political institutions (including the national Congress, the Supreme Court and the news media) and imposed their political logic upon the local

¹⁴ As a result of the ten-year civil war known as the Mexican Revolution – a political and social movement (1910-1920) that overthrew Porfirio Diaz's dictatorship (1874-1909) – there emerged a political regime that ruled Mexico with an incomparable record of longevity lasting from 1929 until 2000.

¹⁵ For conceptual purposes, in this thesis I agree with Schedler (2005:9) who characterises this regime as *electoral authoritarianism* whereby “electoral autocracies hold regular elections of relative pluralism while limiting the uncertainty of electoral outcomes by authoritarian means, such as electoral fraud, corruption and coercion”.

political arenas (including the 32 subnational states)¹⁶ (Lawson 2002: 13-60). In contrast to military dictatorships within South American authoritarian regimes of the second half of the 20th Century (Hallin, 2000a: 86), Mexico's semi-authoritarian regime was characterised by neither fierce personal control nor brutal military repression. On the contrary, Mexican autocrats moderated elite conflict and maintained political stability (and the support of other political institutions like the press) by implementing a successful mix of political negotiation, corporativism¹⁷ and clientelistic relations¹⁸, as well as extended corruption and selective repression (Lawson 2002:13-60).

As in other one-party regimes (Votmer, 2008:33), Mexican autocrats used a strong state apparatus and corporativist relations with the industry to push towards

¹⁶ Despite the fact that Mexico has formally been a federal republic since 1917 (according to the federal constitution, Mexican subnational states are “free and sovereign” in their internal affairs and jurisdiction), the centralised national system, rooted in both hegemonic party and presidential figures, governed political life within the federal branches. However, exercise of power during priismo was actually more diffuse than many students of the political system concede (Smith, 2014).

¹⁷ Corporativism is a “special relationship between society and the state, in which the former created umbrella organizations to house them and through which demands can be presented” (Ai Camp, 2007:12; Schmitter, 1974:93).

¹⁸ Clientelism is a pattern of social organisation in which elites (mainly political actors) offer public goods, services and protection to clients in return for their political loyalty and support (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos, 2002:184-185; Scott, 1972:92). Clientelism diminished the rational-legal authority (Kaufman, 1974), the judiciary, the administrative apparatus and, in the journalistic field, journalists’ professional autonomy and internal solidarity within peers (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos, 2002).

economic development (Lawson, 2002: 13-60). In a context of political stability, from 1940 to 1970 the country experienced substantial urbanisation and industrialisation. Over the same period, the number of Mexicans living in urban centres increased dramatically (by 1970, 56% of Mexicans lived in urban centres) (Smith, 2018). Indeed, it could be said that the regime made possible the “human infrastructure of the press” (Hallin and Mancini, 2004:228) by providing massive and free public education. As a consequence, literacy rose dramatically from 42% in the early 1940s, to 76% of the population by the late 1970s (Smith, 2018).

1.5.1.2 Electoral democracy

Although Mexico's semi-authoritarian regime proved to be stable and persisted through many decades, by around 1980 to 1990 the hegemonic party lost its political dominance. As in other countries in the region, two macro societal forces helped to explain this long-term transformation, namely: 1) the adoption of a neoliberal economic model; and 2) the rise of political plurality (specifically a multi-party political system) (Hallin, 2000a:85). In terms of the economic dimension, the more relevant transformation was the shift in the economic model from a closed, protectionist economic development model to a neoliberal one. This transformation took the form of privatisation of state-owned companies and de-regulation of the market – a transformation deepened in 1992 when the Mexican government signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Hallin, 2000a:85-86; Lustig, 2000).

From a political perspective, the liberalisation of the political regime followed a pathway of “democratisation by elections” (Schedler, 2002:104). Between 1980 and 1990 both right- and left-wing opposition parties captured a wide range of

municipalities and governorships all over the country¹⁹ (Langston, 2017). Mexico formally inaugurated its life as an electoral democracy²⁰ in 2000, when the conservative PAN defeated the PRI in the federal elections²¹ (Ai Camp, 2007:10).

Concurrently with the liberalisation of the economic and political arenas, different political institutions went through a process of gaining political autonomy from the old regime (such as the national Congress, political parties, civic organisations and the journalistic field) (Lawson, 2002:13-60; Hughes, 2003 and 2006). However, as a consequence of such democratisation and dispersion of political power (Aguayo 2010), powerful local incumbents were granted fiscal and political autonomy, which increased their political power without imposing a system of checks and balances aimed at limiting their influence (Langston, 2017; Hernández, 2008). In

¹⁹ Elections were not a gracious concession from the autocrats, rather they were a result of a set of contestation cycles and street mobilisations (from 1950 to 1980), subsequent economic crises (in 1976, 1981-1982), and a cascade of electoral reforms in place since 1977 (Guerrero-Martínez, 2010).

²⁰ Electoral democracy is defined as a “system of government in which two or more parties compete in an open and fair electoral process and exchange control over national political leadership” (Ai Camp, 2007:10).

²¹ In the electoral dimension, the political opposition won important municipalities as early as 1970 and 1980. In 1988 the right-wing Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) captured its first governorship in the northern state of Baja California (and two more in 1991, in the states of Guanajuato and San Luis Potosí). After 1988, the left-wing Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) joined the electoral fray in subnational jurisdictions and won elections in Mexico City in 1997. In 2000, when PRI lost the presidency after 71 years, opposition parties wrested majority control of the national chamber of deputies from PRI and governed almost fifty percent of the country's municipalities as well as 14 of 32 states (Langston, 2017; Hernandez, 2010; Lawson, 2002).

this context, state governors replaced the president as the most relevant power brokers in the local arena (Aguayo 2010). Thus these incumbents captured (instead of replaced) the once monopolised clientelistic machines controlled by the hegemonic party (Lawson, 2002:87; Langstone, 2017).

1.5.1.3 War on Drugs

At the beginning of the 21st century and in the context of electoral democracy, it was not just the governors who achieved greater political power and financial resources. Indeed, during this period, informal power holders (non-legal authorities like business elites, media moguls and criminal bands) also gained political independence from the old authoritarian regime (Aguayo 2010; Valdés, 2013). One of the informal powers that has drastically influenced political life in Mexico since then are the drug-trafficking organisations.

Although the presence of drug-related violence sharpened during the first years of Mexico's electoral democracy, researchers agree that the issue can be traced a long way back in Mexico's past (Enciso, 2017b; Valdés, 2013). In the contemporary context, the so-called War on Drugs was declared by president Felipe Calderon in 2006, with neither a parallel effort to re-build the judicial apparatus that had been historically corroded by corruption and inefficiency, nor integral efforts to shield local police bodies - the most vulnerable link to the drug cartels' co-optation capacity in the whole Mexican coercive apparatus (Valdés, 2013). In the 2012 national election, Mexican citizens returned the PRI to power. With the arrival of a new government led by President Peña Nieto, the administration decided to continue the militarisation strategy (Schedler, 2015:15).

Having laid out the background, the core argument of the research and a brief Mexican context, below I will summarise each chapter in the thesis and provide a general overview of the argument contained in each, as well as their relationship to the core argument of this thesis.

1.6. Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2: Journalism, field and capital. This chapter offers the theoretical bases that underpin this research. Based on the sociology of journalism, this chapter introduces the theoretical assumptions and conceptual apparatus for understanding the relationship between the practice of journalism and the conditions in which it is practiced. The chapter is divided into four parts: the first begins by grounding the study of journalism as a social field in the tradition of the sociology of journalism and news production in conflict settings. The second section introduces the theoretical roots and main assumptions of field theory, putting a special emphasis on the concepts of field, capital and exogenous shocks. Then, assisted by the applications and developments of the field perspective undertaken by media scholars, the third section explores the main features of the journalistic field, with a special emphasis on the Mexican case (e.g. logic of the field, professional autonomy, sources of transformation, among others). The fourth explores the logic of the field during an exogenous shock (e.g. Mexico's War on Drugs), including the constraining and enabling forces shaping journalism practice. In addition, drawing upon the literature and the Mexican context, this section proposes an empirical operationalisation of the four forms of capital under investigation in this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology and research design. This chapter discusses the specific and detailed approaches, decisions, procedures and techniques involved in

generating data for this study. To this end, this chapter provides a detailed explanation of the comparative analysis taken in this study, as well as of the subnational scale of analyses that I have followed. The chapter thus constructs the case for the relevance of the subnational state as a unit of analysis and explains how this method was applied. The research explains why and how qualitative in-depth interviews were used as the main research instrument; this chapter also addresses the value and richness of in-depth opened-ended interviews for gathering information from key informants and journalists who work on sensitive stories and in hazardous places. Chapter 3 reviews some of the key decisions, challenges and ethical dilemmas concerning data analysis and interpretation faced in this research.

Chapter 4: Socio-demographic background of journalists and violence against journalists. This chapter presents socio-demographic information and data about direct experience with violence taken from standardised open-ended interviews with 49 journalists, with the aim of informing the reader about the characteristics of the study sample and offering a nuanced picture of the participants' personal, organisational and institutional contexts. In addition to socio-demographic information, this chapter also presents and discusses participants' experiences with direct intimidation or violent attacks as a result of their professional work. The data and analysis presented here aims to provide context for the following two chapters (Chapters 5 and 6) in which data gathered from the interviews will be used to answer the two main empirical research questions that have guided this thesis.

Chapter 5: Journalists' uneven risk distribution. This chapter aims to respond to the first empirical research question: How do journalists' individual dispositions of forms and quantity of capital influence their exposure to risk in violent subnational settings? In response to this, the main argument presented in this chapter is that local journalists working in dangerous newsbeats who possess lower levels of

capital (cultural, economic, social and symbolic) will be at greater risk of danger and violence than journalists who possess higher levels of capital. This is because journalists who possess more capital have more resources to maintain their position in the field and mitigate risks and dangers, whereas journalists who possess less capital lack the resources that enable them to overcome adverse circumstances. The aforementioned argument and relationships will be shown to be sufficiently supported by qualitative data. In addition, the chapter discusses the main findings and their theoretical, analytical and contextual implications.

Chapter 6: Journalists' strategies for safety autonomy. This chapter aims to respond to the second empirical research question: How do journalists' individual dispositions of forms and quantity of capital influence the adoption of strategies for safety autonomy in the most violent states in Mexico? For its part, this chapter presents the working hypothesis that journalists who possess more capital (cultural, economic, social and symbolic) have more resources to maintain and increase their position in the field and, therefore, will be more likely to develop strategic actions to enhance their professional autonomy and safety. In addition, it is argued that journalists deploy strategies both for newsgathering and publishing news using the aforementioned forms of capital. The chapter furthermore discusses the main findings and their theoretical, analytical and case-based implications, as well as addressing some of the limitations of this study.

Chapter 7: Conclusion, discussion and policy recommendations. This chapter summarises the thesis' arguments in light of its empirical findings, including a discussion of the implications and limitations of the study and future work. Also, this chapter explains some of the similarities and differences regarding the application of risk mitigation tactics and strategies for safety autonomy among local journalists

working in the most violent states in the country. In addition, Chapter 7 summarises the main original contributions and offers some policy recommendations.

Chapter 2

Journalism: Between field, capital and autonomy

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to present the study's theoretical framework (as well as placing it in the Mexican context). This chapter represents an intellectual effort to employ key concepts in field theory (such as field, capital and exogenous shocks) and hypotheses for explaining the historical development and current position of the journalistic field in Mexico. By using the concept of field this chapter simultaneously brings together the historical features that constrain the journalistic field, the macro forces shaping its constitution, the internal rules governing action, as well as the cultural, economic, social and symbolic dimensions enabling (or constraining) journalists' individual practices. Additionally, this chapter constitutes a theoretical effort to conceptualise the so-called War on Drugs as an exogenous shock to the field and, more importantly, analyses the impact of such a critical juncture upon the internal field logic and journalists' behaviour, especially the forces enabling and constraining their daily work.

The chapter is divided into four parts, beginning by grounding the study of journalism as a social field in the tradition of the sociology of journalism and news production in conflict settings. The second section introduces the theoretical roots and main assumptions of field theory, putting a special emphasis on the concepts of field, capital and exogenous shocks. Then, assisted by the applications and developments of the field perspective undertaken by media scholars, the third section explores the main features of the journalistic field and the role of capital, with special emphasis on the Mexican case (for example, field logic, professional autonomy, sources of field

transformation). The fourth explores the logic of the field during an exogenous shock (such as Mexico's War on Drugs), including the constraining and enabling forces shaping journalism practice. Based upon the literature, the last section also offers a rationale about how the four forms of capital under investigation in this study were operationalised in this thesis.

2.2 The Sociology of Journalism: Between Structure, Agency and the Mezzo-Level Spaces

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.

(Karl Marx, 1852)

Media scholars have devoted important academic work to analysing the factors that have shaped news production and sharing in conflict reporting (Tumber, 2006; Vandevordt, 2017; Markham, 2011; Robinson et al., 2010; Tumber and Webster, 2006; Allan and Zelizer, 2004; Hannertz, 2004; Armoudian, 2016; Simon, 2014). However, for some media scholars (such as Vandevordt, 2017: 609-610; Robinson et al., 2010), the vast majority of this literature tends to focus too much on either the macro or the micro level perspectives, neglecting an approach that links together the social spaces in which social action takes place. On the one hand, macro perspectives have commonly analysed larger social structures and patterns that influence conflict reporting, and have thus failed to investigate how individual journalists navigate such

environments (e.g. Asal et al., 2016; Paterson, 2014; Nerone, 1994)²². On the other hand, micro perspectives have traditionally been concerned with journalists' personal health and well-being (Feinstein, 2006, 2012 and 2013; Flores et al., 2012 and 2014), as well as with individual experiences with violence and first-hand accounts of conflict journalists (e.g. Armoudian, 2016; Allan and Zelizer, 2004; Knightley, 2004), and have thus failed to account for the broader institutional context in which they operate²³.

Within the academic research of mass communication and journalism studies, the sociology of journalism offers an alternative perspective from which to study the practice of journalism in violent or conflict settings to those offered by macro or micro perspectives (for context in conflict reporting and violence, please see: Vandevordt, 2017: 609-610; Robinson et al., 2010; for non-conflict contexts, please see: Ryfe, 2017; Waisbord, 2014; Benson, 2004 and 2013). In this sense, the sociology of journalism provides an explanatory framework for understanding the complex interplay between journalism practice and the institutional and macro-context conditions in which it is practiced. For Reese, the sociology of journalism, "ties social structures to symbolic formations, seeking to understand how social reality takes shape and foregrounding normative concerns of how well journalism is working under

²² Some exceptions among this large-scale analysis are historical perspectives that analyse patterns among violence against the press, as well as the individual effects of such attacks upon journalists (Nerone, 1994).

²³ Some exceptions in this micro-individual analysis are quantitative surveys (Hughes et al., 2016) or qualitative studies (Voltmer and Kraetzschmar, 2015) that investigate role performance, risk mitigation practices and professional autonomy among individual journalists working in settings of conflict and violence.

these arrangements” (Reese, 2016:2)²⁴. In short, this approach suggests that in order to understand social structures and journalistic practice it is important to analyse both concepts (Benson, 2004).

As such, the classic debate in social science between structure and agency is at the core of the sociology of journalism²⁵ (Waisbord, 2014:15). This debate can be understood as the long discussion on the relative influences of the social order on people’s practices and vice versa. In this sense, the sociology of journalism takes into consideration the evolving dynamics between the single journalist (agency) and the social and institutional conditions (structure) in which this profession is practised (Sjøvaag, 2013:161-163). As one media sociologist points out: “[the sociology of journalism] is grounded in the analysis of social process and forces that shape the dynamic interaction between structure and agency” (Waisbord, 2014:15).

By taking into consideration the structure/agency dichotomy, the sociology of journalism acknowledges the impossibility of disconnected ‘agency’ and ‘structure’ in journalistic empirical practice (Votmer, 2013:58). By doing this, the sociology of journalism considers Giddens’ famous proposition of the “duality of structure”, in which social structures rather than constraining behaviour can indeed be seen as empowering them; as Giddens suggests “[structures] are both the medium and the outcome of the practice they recursively organize” (Giddens, 1986:25). Following this

²⁴ Central to the sociology of journalism lies research questions such as “*how and why journalists act*” (Dickinson, 2008: 1385) – these research questions have a close resemblance to the question that inspired this research, which is: *how do local journalists operate in violent settings?*

²⁵ In this account, ‘structure’ is the web of social relations, patterns and meanings implicated in the reproduction of social systems (Giddens, 1986:377); while ‘agency’ refers to an actor’s capacity of influence on the social world (Giddens, 1986:14).

vein of thinking, the sociology of journalism overcomes the usual opposition between agents and structures and suggests that both matter if we are to understand journalistic practice (Reese, 2016:6). As Vandevordt (2017: 622) comments in the context of conflict reporting, such an approach provides “a battery of concepts that enables relating these structural conditions to microsocial strategies”.

Thus, rather than supplanting previous approaches in journalism studies or the literature on conflict news production, for Benson and Neveu (2005:7), approaches rooted in the sociology of journalism *supplement* previous scholarship by acknowledging that journalism operates in the ongoing relationship between individual practices and organisational and institutional contexts. Media scholars close to the sociology of journalism have devoted some space to considering this. Sjøvaag (2013:161-163), for example, in following structuration theory²⁶, has suggested that journalists follow rules and use resources available to them to enact professional practice. Benson (2006, 2013) uses Bourdieu’s field theory to suggest that journalists, as actors with a specific position in the social space, enact rules (of the game) and use the resources (or capital) available to them to act in bounded social systems (so-called fields). By using Bourdieu’s field theory, Vandevordt (2017:623) suggests that the form and quantity of capital (material and symbolic resources) that journalists have acquired “prove to be decisive in determining how a reporter might deal with a particular situation as it emerges in front of him.”

²⁶ In structuration theory (Giddens, 1986; Sewell, 1992), social structures are made up of rules – “generalized procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social life” (Giddens, 1986:2) – and resources – “anything that can serve as source of power in social interaction” (Sewell, 1992:9).

Scholars have suggested that the sociology of journalism offers a nuanced theoretical toolkit that incorporates a mezzo-level space to think and theorise the individual constraints and social dynamics shaping the practice of journalism (Dickinson, 2008:1389; Benson, 2004:275). The term mezzo-level space refers to a social level between the individual journalist and the macro institutional environment; one that links together the individual practice of journalism and the institutional rules in which journalism operates and where such practice occurs.

Within the realm of studies associated with the sociology of journalism – or with the practice approach to journalism as Ryfe (2017) has recently called it – scholars have labelled these mezzo-levels spaces in different ways depending upon the theoretical perspectives they follow, including for example the terms “fields” (Chalaby, 1996; Bourdieu, 2005; Benson, 2004; for context of conflict see Robinson et al., 2010; Markham, 2011; Vandevordt, 2017), “institutions” (Cook, 1998; Hughes 2003 and 2006; for context of conflict see Robinson et al., 2010) or “social worlds” (Dickinson, 2008: 1391)²⁷. Of particular interest in this thesis are those mezzo-level analyses rooted in field theory (Kluttz and Fligstein, 2016), which offer a useful analytical framework to study journalism practice, as is used in this study.

The following section will introduce the intellectual roots and theoretical assumptions of the approaches that identify with field theory.

²⁷ Although all these approaches came from different theoretical traditions, they all agreed that journalism, as a social practice, occurred in bounded social spaces in which any explanation of regularities in journalistic practice occurred recursively (Ryfe, 2017).

2.3 Field theory

2.3.1 Theoretical roots

Field theory considers social life in mezzo-level spaces where social interaction occurs (where structure and agency continually interact and influence each other). The essence of field theory is that regularities in social life are formed relationally between actors within the field, and externally between that field and other social spheres (for example, consider the journalistic field that is in interaction with – and shaped by – other fields, such as the political and economic fields) (Martin, 2003:1). This is why Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:96-97) say that “to think in terms of field is to think relationally”. Field theory suggests that actors have a position in the field which depends upon the types of resources that they have gathered. This approach suggests that fields do not exist in a vacuum but rather in constant interaction with other spheres of influence and are ultimately shaped by the overarching environment to which they must adapt. This approach suggests that there are actors who work to produce and reproduce their positions in social structures; that there are general rules governing social action; and that all participants have an understanding of their position in the field and can interpret other’s actions and frame reality by using the resources available to them (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012:27; Kluttz and Fligstein, 2016).

Kluttz and Fligstein (2016) observe that field theory has intellectual roots which can be traced to the work of Weber and Lewin²⁸. Weber suggests that social relationships require actors, “whose actions are based on the acknowledgment of and orientation to the other” (Weber, 1978:28-30, cited in Kluttz and Fligstein, 2016:187). Also, inspired by Durkheim and Marx, Weber suggests that small orders were present

²⁸ For a review of the intellectual roots of field theory see: Kluttz and Fligstein (2016).

in every society, such as the legal, economic and political orders (Kluttz and Fligstein, 2016: 187). Due to these ideas about social orders, according to Bourdieu (2005:30), Weber was the “sociologist who became closest to the notion of fields”. In each of these orders something different is at stake, Weber suggests; for example, “status is at stake in the social order, political power in the political order”, and material resources in the economic order (Kluttz and Fligstein, 2016: 187). Weber suggests that power in one order could be translated into influence in another; for instance, economic success could bring status – a seminal idea that is fundamental to the notion of ‘convertibility’ developed by Bourdieu (and central to this thesis). According to Kluttz and Fligstein (2016: 187), Weber’s seminal ideas were fundamental to the conceptualisation of “fields as socially constructed arenas of action”.

Lewin was the one “who most directly transferred the idea of field theory from physical sciences to the social sciences” (Kluttz and Fligstein, 2016:187). Lewin’s field theory (1951) attempts to analyse the social nature of psychological phenomena, not simply their effects on individuals (as has traditionally been studied). For Lewin, an actor’s behaviour is simultaneously influenced both by the field environment and by the actor’s navigation in the “life space”. In this account, Lewin (1951:240) defines fields as the “totality of coexisting facts which are conceived as mutually interdependent”; while life space is “the person and the psychological environment as it exists for him” (1951:57, cited in Kluttz and Fligstein, 2016: 188). According to Kluttz and Fligstein (2016: 188), Lewis’ seminal ideas served as foundational roots for the development of field theory – especially his metaphor of the ‘field’ as a social space.

2.3.2 Varieties of field theory

Kluttz and Fligstein (2016) suggest that in the last half-century sociologists have developed three major approaches rooted in field theory, namely: Bourdieu's theory of field; DiMaggio and Powell's neo-institutional approach to organisational fields, and the model of strategic action fields developed by Fligstein and McAdam. The present thesis draws upon aspects of these three approaches – especially Bourdieu's concept of field and capital, as well as Fligstein and McAdam's theoretical framework and their concept of exogenous shocks. The present section will briefly review all three.

Bourdieu's approach is the most commonly associated with the contemporary development of field theory in social science (Kluttz and Fligstein, 2016) and in media and communication research (Benson and Neveu, 2005; Bourdieu, 2005; Benson, 2004, 2006, 2010; Waisbord, 2013; Vandervoordt, 2017; Chalaby, 1996). Drawing from the seminal ideas developed by Weber and Lewin²⁹, Bourdieu says that in any given national state, there are as many fields as there are sites of struggle in society (such as political, economic, academic and journalistic). Each field is differentiated from others depending upon a unique symbolic capital (in the case of journalism it is the symbolic power to produce and disseminate news). For Bourdieu, some fields have more power relative to others. In capitalist societies, the political and economic fields are the more powerful fields compared to others (including the journalistic field). Within fields, agents compete for recognition and prestige by following the

²⁹ Bourdieu also found inspiration from Cassirer's philosophy of culture, from phenomenologists Husserl, Mauss and Elias, as well as from Marx and Durkheim, among others (Kluttz and Fligstein, 2016).

“rules of the game”: shared understandings that allow actors to interact with each other in a given field. In Bourdieusian theory, actors are located within fields depending upon their historical trajectory and the amount of material and social resources (what he calls capital) that they have gathered. Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of capital as a material and symbolic resource is particularly important for this study and will be examined later. According to Bourdieu, capital “makes the game of society” (Bourdieu, 1997:46); cultural, economic, social and symbolic, all of which are looked at in this study. Within fields, each actor is committed to attain as much capital as possible, which enables them to exercise agency vis-à-vis other actors in the field and in society at large (Bourdieu, 2005; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

Influenced by Bourdieu’s field theory, Giddens’ structuration theory as well as New Institutionalism³⁰, DiMaggio and Powell (1983 and 1991) developed the ‘organisational fields’ model. For DiMaggio and Powell (1983:148) ‘organisational fields’ are social sectors which “constitute a recognized area of institutional life”. As institutional arenas, these organisational fields are made by all actors who engage in a common activity in society (for example, the public universities sector, the political

³⁰ New institutionalism is a set of schools in the social sciences that place most importance on creating elements of order in institutional matters in social interactions (March and Olsen, 2006). New institutionalism theory seeks to explain people’s choices as a question of agency and structure, in which institutional factors constrain human agency, but human agency can indeed influence and transform institutional arrangements (Peters, 2011). Equal to structuration theory, institutions both empower and constrain actors and make them more capable of acting according to the rules and resources available to them (March and Olsen, 2006). Among the different schools of new institutionalism, in this work I will make some reference to the organisational-sociological branch of new institutionalism, which incorporates elements of field theory (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983 and 1991) (for reviews see Hall and Taylor, 1996, and Peters, 2005).

parties sector, or the journalism sector). Central to DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) model is the idea that actors (whether as individuals or a collective) in a given sector tend to look the same because they are driven by similar institutional concerns (such as legitimacy) rather than by mere competition, as Bourdieu's model suggests. Despite the organisational fields model offering a more powerful explanation than Bourdieu's theory about how organisations are shaped by external forces, early works in this tradition (Di Maggio and Powell, 1983) perhaps under-theorise how actors can influence the organisational environment (Kluttz and Fligstein, 2016). In order to supplement this, Di Maggio (1988) develops the concept of institutional entrepreneur, defined as a visionary actor "who initiates and participates in change to an institution" (Kluttz and Fligstein, 2016: 193)³¹ – a concept that will be particularly relevant in developing the empirical analysis for this thesis, particularly when the role of economic capital in enabling the creation of strategies for safety autonomy is analysed. Based on Bourdieu's concept of capital, Battilana (2006:659) complements this proposition by suggesting that the likelihood of actors to be institutional entrepreneurs is related to the quantity and forms of capital that they have gathered.

Finally, Fligstein and McAdam (2012:9) elaborate the most recent version of field theory, one that complements the two previous versions of field theory with recent developments on sources of stability and change derived from social movements theory (McAdam and Boudet, 2012), among other theoretical sources for inspiration (for a review of this see Fligstein and McAdam, 2012:23-31). Fligstein and McAdam's (2012:9) model is very close to Bourdieu's theory, suggesting that social life occurs in mezzo-level orders (so-called strategic action fields), where actors

³¹ For the application of this concept in media and communication studies please see Hughes (2006).

(individual or collective) “interact with one another on the basis of shared understandings” on three things: “the purposes of the field, the relationship to others in the field, and the rules governing legitimate action in the field”. Similar to Bourdieu’s model, Fligstein and McAdam’s model suggests that actors’ position in the field is determined by the form and quantity of capital that they have at their disposal. Contrary to early models in field theory, which suggest that actors’ behaviour is driven either by competition (the Bourdieu model) or legitimacy (the Di Maggio and Powell model), the Fligstein and McAdam (2012:23-26) model suggests that actors are driven by a fundamental desire to interact with other actors socially. This conceptualisation allows for cooperation and collaboration between actors in the field – a concept that will be particularly relevant in developing the empirical analysis for this thesis, particularly when the role of social capital in enabling the creation of strategies for risk mitigation and strategic actions to continue reporting are analysed. Finally, contrary to earlier theories of field, which are devoted to explaining sources of reproduction in social life, Fligstein and McAdam offer a more compelling perspective of change and transformation. Among other sources of transformation, these authors theorise that the role of exogenous shocks are macro events that originate in larger fields and which generate a sensation of generalised crisis in the field under examination (such as economic crisis, regime change and wars) (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012:101) – a concept that will be particularly relevant in developing the theoretical framework for this thesis.

Having established the core theoretical roots in the field perspective, as well as the main assumptions in three different approaches to field theory, the following section conceptualises journalism as a social field. By using the Mexican case as an example, the historical origins of the field are reviewed, as well as that field’s

proximity to other fields and logic and the role of capital and sources in field transformation.

2.4 The Journalistic Field

2.4.1 Definition

In his Bourdieu-inspired approach, Waisbord (2013:11-18) suggests that the journalistic field has developed as an area of “specialisation” in modern societies. For him, one way to conceptualise the journalistic field is as a modern profession. In this account, a field could be considered as a jurisdictional arena over the production of a specific area of work, which is disciplinarily and professionally defined (Freidson, 1977:71). According to Abbot (1988:59), the rise of modern professions (like journalism) was part of a differentiation process, in which professions (and professionals) developed control (or jurisdiction) over a specific occupation (Waisbord, 2013:11-18).

Although some scholars have criticised the professional nature of journalism (Zelizer, 2004)³², this study follows some media scholars (Schudson and Anderson, 2009; Waisbord, 2013) in arguing that journalism may be classified as a profession to

³² Academic debates around the issue of professional journalism have raised a fruitful and contested discussion in communication studies in general and journalism studies in particular. In such a discussion, definite answers and agreements are rarely found, especially in light of the new media environment which, it is claimed, has eroded the ‘boundaries’ that define journalism as a profession (Singer, 2003). However, for the purposes of this thesis, a journalist is classified less in terms of licenses, than as someone who makes news according to certain norms, routines and values that inform their work (Waisbord, 2013:130; Schudson and Anderson, 2007).

the extent that journalists and news organisations have successfully claimed a unique kind of knowledge to articulate an activity in society: the production and delivery of news (Waisbord, 2013:13). Drawing upon Park's (1940) work on news³³ as a distinctive form of knowledge, Waisbord says that journalism is a unique "epistemic community"³⁴ (Holzner, 1968, cited in Waisbord, 2013: 130), "that produces a form of knowledge that results from the organisation, processing, and manufacturing of information" (Waisbord, 2013:130). In a parallel interpretation, by using some elements of the organisational fields model (DiMaggio and Powell, 1981) Cook (2005:64) conceptualises journalism as "a trans-organizational agreement on news process and content". In his Bourdieu-inspired approach, Benson has defined the journalistic field as the "inter-organizational, professional, social, and indeed cultural space within which journalists situate or orient their action and interaction" (2004: 311). In this view, journalism is the profession of making news, while journalists are those for whom making news is their profession. In this context, professionalism refers "to the ability of journalism to define boundaries in relation to other professions and social fields, and to the strategies, practices, and norms used to define those boundaries" (Waisbord, 2013:222).

Some years ago, in his interpretation of the journalistic field, Bourdieu (2005:40) suggested that the journalistic field "has exerted an increasingly powerful hold", which "is more and more imposing its constraints on all other fields", and holds

³³ In this context news is understood as a specific form of "public knowledge" (Schudson, 1995:3) in which "new information about an event or issue is shared with others in a systematic and public way" (Zelizer and Allan 2010:62–63, 80).

³⁴ The concept of 'epistemic community' is different to Zelizer's (1993) conceptualisation of journalism as 'interpretative community'.

a “de facto monopoly on the production and dissemination of news in the modern world” (Waisbord, 2013:215). However, such a claim is difficult to sustain in the contemporary media environment (Dahlgren, 2009:34-56). This is especially true in light of the contemporary globalised and hyper-connected world – what Castells (2009) calls the network society – in which different forces have reconfigured the work and content of journalism, making journalism and media work increasingly commercialised and precarious due to digital disruption and a growing media participation culture (Lewis, 2012:837; Dahlgren, 2009:34-56). In such a context, the production and delivery of news has become more complex than ever before and, according to some scholars (Deuze, 2005; Jenkins 2006), the place of journalism as the *de facto* profession that supplies news is threatened.

Thus, even though this thesis recognises the large transformation of the rules governing the journalistic field in the light of recent societal and technological transformations, it also agrees with Waisbord (2013:130, 203) who argues that journalism is still the only profession in the last two hundred years that has exclusively and systematically been devoted to news production and delivery. In so doing, journalism has proved to be the only modern profession in contemporary societies to offer citizens information about public affairs that is accessible, timely and independent (Waisbord, 2013:203). I shall argue later that the new media ecosystem offers new possibilities to journalists, especially for the creation of online news start-ups, which are not affiliated to legacy news organisations, but which seek to be recognised by their peers as digital platforms for news sharing (Powers and Vera Zambrano, 2017:859; Bruno and Nielsen, 2012).

In addition, as Waisbord (2013:170) suggests, and I shall argue later, in many new democracies the main challenges to journalism do not necessarily come from other occupations that have claimed authority over the production of news, but from

the continuous interference (by various means, including violence) from the political or criminal worlds upon the professional logic of journalism.

2.4.2 Early origins of the field

In the Anglo-Saxon tradition, the journalistic field emerged as a professional field around 1860 and 1870, when a distinctive kind of professional activity – a “fact based discursive practice” (Chalaby, 1998 and 1996) – was “invented” by British and American newspapers (Waisbord, 2013; Hallin and Mancini, 2004:198-222). For Chalaby (1998 and 1996), the “invention” of this profession happened when – under specific economic, political and technological conditions – a group of periodical publications on both sides of the Atlantic distinguished their daily work, values and activities from other fields of practice (such as literature and politics) (see also: Waisbord, 2013:19-42, and Schudson, 1978). This differentiation process occurred when the field developed a primacy of news over interpretation, as well as the adoption of journalistic discursive styles (such as reportage, inverted pyramid, the rule of the five W’s), and journalistic techniques and practices (like source attribution, the interview and active news gathering from a variety of sources) (Waisbord, 2013: 19-42). The specific institutional conditions in which the field developed in these countries were closely connected to an ethic of public service (Hallin and Mancini, 2004:36), which enables actors in the field (journalists and news organisations) to claim a role in democratic societies as vehicles of public deliberation and political accountability (see Voltmer 2013:25-31).

However, the unique historical and social juncture in which journalism emerged as a profession in the Anglo-Saxon world was not met everywhere (Voltmer, 2013:198-200; for the Latin American context see Waisbord, 2000:3-32; De

Albuquerque, 2005). In fact, scholars have suggested that the adaptation (rather than the passive adoption) of these professional values, practices and techniques, has occurred at different moments and has produced different results across media systems in Western democracies (Hallin and Mancini, 2004) and in the Global South (Voltmer, 2013:196-203), including Latin America (Waisbord, 2000:3-32; Lugo-Ocando, 2008).

Thus, as in the rest of Latin America (Lugo-Ocando, 2008; Waisbord, 2000), for some scholars the Mexican journalistic field originated in the colonial period (1521-1810), either when the first printer was established in 1522 (Del Palacio, 2006:162), or when the first newspaper was published in the country in 1722 (Novo, 1974). However, in line with the field approach taken in this study (Krause, 2011:90; Chalaby, 1998 and 1996) it could be argued that the Mexican journalistic field emerged between 1880 and 1900 when some newspapers (mainly in Mexico City) adapted from American newspapers journalistic techniques, practices and some professional values, as well as the industrialised press system³⁵. In fact, it could be said that the field emerged when a few Mexican newspapers adopted new technologies (like linotype and the telegraph) and an increased bureaucratisation in

³⁵ Prior to 1880 and 1900, the discursive practices exhibited in vast number of publications during the 17th to 19th Centuries did not follow the rules of the journalistic field (like worthiness or active reporting), as they remained under the influence of its traditional spheres of origin, mainly literature and politics (Piccato, 2009). As in other Latin American countries (Waisbord, 2000:8-11) inspired by European publications (especially French and Spanish traditions), these early publications followed a type of cultural production of opinion or doctrine. Examples of these were the partisan press that emerged at different moments in the 19th Century, like that *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* and *El Monitor Republicano*. At its core, this type of publication conceives journalism as a vehicle of partisan ideas (Waisbord, 2000:8).

their internal organisation (like specialisation in newsbeats) from American newspapers³⁶ (Del Castillo, 1997:30). They also adopted an information-oriented journalism, which tended to prioritise description over interpretation and facts over opinions³⁷ (Rojas-Avendaño, 1976:29; Del Castillo, 1997:28).

In this period, the figure of the reporter, who was employed to actively gather news, became common within urban publications for the first time in the country (Del Castillo, 1997:28). Furthermore, journalistic techniques (such as the chronicle, reportage, and the interview) as well as discursive styles (like the use of headlines, the rule of the five W's, and fact-based reporting) were progressively used as common practices among certain journalists and newspapers in Mexico City, and major urban centres like Veracruz and Guadalajara (Rojas-Avendaño, 1976:39, 41 and 126).

However, by the beginning of the 20th Century this press model, which integrated some innovations from the U.S. model such as newsroom designs, formats and organisation, as well as the rejection of partisan journalism, remained marginal in the Mexican press system and was confined to a handful of publications in Mexico City and some developed cities in the countries interior (such as Veracruz,

³⁶ Press historians commonly agree that the first industrial newspaper in Mexico was *El Imparcial*, a pro-government publication based in Mexico City (Ross, 1965:366), which developed mass audiences and ran partisan publications – like the *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* and *El Monitor Republicano* – out of business (Picatto, 2001). Beyond Mexico City, Del Palacio (1997) has suggested that modern industrialised newspapers also developed among certain states in the country's interior, such as *El Diario Comercial* and *El Dictamen* in Veracruz, *La Gaceta de Guadalajara* in Jalisco, and Sinaloa's *El Correo de la Tarde*.

³⁷ Some examples of these publications were *El Federalista*, *El Nacional* and *El Noticioso* (Rojas-Avendaño, 1976:29; Del Castillo, 1997:28).

Guadalajara, Puebla, among others) (Rojas-Avendaño, 1976). Thus, a limited number of readers, as well as a small number of private advertisers and the interference of the political world, frustrated the transition to a mass-reader press system during this period (Benavides, 2000).

As this brief discussion of its early origins has suggested, the Mexican journalistic field, as with other political institutions in the last two centuries, “has developed out of conflicts rooted in major social transformations” in the country (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 60), as well as from the influence of other international experiences. The next section reviews the relationship between the journalistic field and other fields in society – what Benson (2013:25) has called field position. The next section also offers a brief account of the Mexican journalistic field in different historical periods, from the rise and fall of the long-term authoritarian regime in the 20th century, to the rise of electoral democracy at the beginning of the 21st Century.

2.4.3 Field position

For Benson (2013:25) field position refers to the distance (or proximity) to other spheres of action (notably the economic and the political spheres). The notion of field position suggests that journalism is historically and contingently situated. This notion also implies that as a professional activity, journalism does not exist in isolation but in relation – as Bourdieu suggests – to other spheres of action in society (Waisbord, 2013: 11). In contemporary societies, media scholars have argued that field position across countries varies largely between media institutions, both inside each country and within different types of media outlets (Hallin and Mancini, 2004:30; Voltmer, 2013).

According to Bourdieu (2005) and Benson (2010:616), in contemporary societies, any national journalistic field has a position of “relative” proximity to either the economic (such as the capitalist market, see McChesney, 1997; for the Mexican context see Vidal, 2008), or the political spheres (such as the state, see Curran, 2011), or the government, (see Cook, 1998:60; for the Mexican context see Trejo-Delarbre, 2001). Thus, as in other new democracies in Latin America (Lugo-Ocando, 2008; Hughes and Lawson, 2004; Hallin and Papathanassopoulos, 2002; Waisbord, 2000), it could be said that in the Mexican case these two spheres of action – the political field (state) and the economic world (market) – have historically influenced (either by limiting or enabling) the development of the journalistic field (Hallin, 2000a:100).

Central to the concept of field position is that of field autonomy. Following Engel (1970:12)³⁸, field autonomy refers to the autonomy from other fields of a occupational group of professionals. For Sjøvaag (2013:156), field autonomy in journalism is the “independence from other socio-political institutions, primarily the state and the market”. In Latin America, empirical research has suggested that certain institutional and organisational arrangements may facilitate autonomy in the journalistic field (Waisbord, 2013:69). Empirical research shows that democratic political settings offer better conditions for professional autonomy; whereas authoritarian and transitional political regimes offer lower levels of professional

³⁸ In his work on the sociology of professions, Engel (1970:12) posits that autonomy in a professional sphere could be categorised on two levels, namely: 1) autonomy with respect to the occupational group of professionals, and 2) autonomy with respect to the individual professional. The former is work-related autonomy of the corps of professionals in accordance to their professional practices and rules. The latter is freedom to conduct work as an individual journalist. This section concentrates in the former. The latter will be examined below.

autonomy (Waisbord, 2013; Voltmer, 2013). Academic research has also suggested that journalistic fields embedded in societies with high levels of societal violence and public insecurity have less autonomy than those embedded in peaceful societies (Asal et al., 2016; Reich and Hanitzsch, 2013).

Drawing upon these ideas and academic works, the rest of the section argues that since its early origins, the Mexican journalism field has gained and lost autonomy from other fields (particularly the political and economic fields) depending upon socio-political context. In this sense, as Champagne (2005:50) observes in the context of the French journalistic field, the section argues that the history of the Mexican journalistic field “could well be a story of an impossible autonomy [...] an autonomy that must always be re-won because [it] is always threatened”.

2.4.3.1 Field position during the early origins of the field: Origins of a subsidised journalistic field

Around 1890, in the early origins of the field, and in contrast to the American journalistic field, the Mexican industrialised press did not enjoy a very sizable market and was unable to derive substantial revenues from its activities (Benavides, 2000). In this context, the vast majority of these industrialised publications belonged to close allies of the Diaz dictatorship and lived from governmental subsidies. It could be said that the Diaz dictatorship institutionalised press subsidy as one of the more prominent components of the Mexican journalistic field that has lasted until today (Benavides, 2000). The emergence of the press as a subsidiary activity of the government is relevant for this thesis because, as Benson suggests (2010: 616; Champagne, 2005:50), the contemporary field position has maintained certain features that were established at the field’s founding (Benson, 2013:27). This idea resembles what North

(1990, cited in Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 11) has called “path dependency”, which implies that choices in the past have a constraining effect on the future (Voltmer, 2013: 8 and 116). In this sense, scholars (Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014; Guerrero-Martínez, 2010 and 2017; Márquez-Ramírez, 2012; Hughes, 2006; Lawson, 2002; Trejo-Delarbre, 2001; Hallin, 2000a; Fromson, 1996; Cole, 1975) agree that government press subsidy is one of the more salient features of the Mexican journalistic field, both at national and local levels.

2.4.3.2 Field position during electoral authoritarianism: Institutionalisation of a subsidised journalistic field

During electoral authoritarianism, at the centre of the press-state relationship was an enduring clientelistic arrangement, which enabled the subsistence of a government press subsidy. In this period, Mexican autocrats (both at national and local levels) replaced the old political bosses that emerged at the beginning of the 20th Century during the Diaz dictatorship with a modern patrimonial apparatus, anchored in the hegemonic party. In this context, Mexican autocrats gave technical and economic benefits (including subsidies to print and broadcast media) as well as legal facilities (a lax regulatory framework for broadcasters) to ensure the development of the journalistic field in exchange for political endorsement (Guerrero-Martínez, 2010 and 2017; Hughes, 2006; Lawson, 20002; Trejo-Delarbre, 2001; Hallin, 2000a; Fromson, 1996; Cole, 1975). In this context, the most prominent newspapers both at national and local levels, as well as the private TV monopoly, gave political support to the

regime (Guerrero-Martínez, 2010 and 2017; Hughes, 2006; Lawson, 2002)³⁹. However, when a sophisticated spin machine and clientelistic relationships as a main form of censorship failed to function, Mexican autocrats implemented a series of media manipulations, which included legal intimidation and violence (Guerrero-Martínez, 2017 and 2010; Hughes, 2006; Lawson, 2002) (the series of media manipulations during electoral authoritarianism will be explored below).

As the political sphere ruled journalism during Mexico's period of electoral authoritarianism (Hallin, 2000a), journalistic professional autonomy was seriously limited, not only by the presence of clientelistic relations (which undermined

³⁹ Regarding the print press, there were the capital's broadsheet publications – also known as the *gran prensa* [the big press] (such as *Excelsior*, *El Universal*, *Siempre*, *Novedades*, *La Prensa*) – which served primarily as a means of communication among the political elites (Hallin, 2000a:100). In addition, there were local broadsheet publications at the subnational states and a subnational concentration of print publications in just a few hands (e.g. Organización Editorial Mexicana). These publications were largely subsidised by the government and could be catalogued as *oficialista* publications, which only published critical stories that reflected conflicts among factions of the ruling party (Hallin, 2000a). By the early 1960s, print publications became the most important source of information among Mexicans – by 1958, 70% of Mexicans read newspapers (Smith, 2018). The same could be said about the broadcasting industry, especially TV, which was *oficialista* and largely subsidised by the government. Due to the U.S. commercial model that the Mexican broadcasting industry adopted (Brambila, 2016), the most important private TV company was *Televisa*, a private national monopoly of TV owned by the Azcárraga family – a family which maintained close ties to the ruling political elite (Guerrero-Martínez, 2010). By 1970, TV trumped both radio and newspapers as the primary source of information for Mexicans (Guerrero-Martínez, 2017; Hughes, 2006). In terms of audience, this company monopolised 90% of the national audience, and 95% of ad revenues until the mid-1990s (Guerrero, 2017; Hughes, 2006).

horizontal solidarity among journalists (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos, 2002), but also by a weak occupational consensus on journalistic standards and low peer solidarity and peer-recognition (Hughes, 2006).

In the long term, the hegemonic regime would have a significant influence upon the journalistic field, eroded by a mix of internal and external factors (such as economic and political liberalisations (Guerrero-Martínez, 2010 and 2017; Hughes, 2006; Hallin, 2000a).

2.4.3.3 Field position during democratic transition and the rise of electoral democracy

Between 1980 and 1990 two social forces – political plurality and the adoption of a neoliberal economic model – heavily transformed the journalistic field (Guerrero-Martínez, 2010)⁴⁰. In this context, media scholars (Guerrero-Martínez, 2010; Hughes, 2006; Lawson, 2002) have argued that the journalistic field (both at national and local levels) underwent a process of gaining autonomy from the political sphere⁴¹. From the 1980s to the 2000s, this autonomy process materialised in greater pluralism in

⁴⁰ In terms of the printed press, the shift towards neoliberalism implied, among other developments, the closing of the state paper subsidy company. In terms of the broadcasting industry, the Mexican government sold the largest public broadcaster to a private owner, *TV Azteca*, which rose to become the only competitor to private monopoly TV company *Televisa* (Hughes, 2006).

⁴¹ This differentiation process occurred when demands for more pluralist information was reflected in more pluralist media coverage (instead of advocacy reporting linked to the established regime), and a growth of professional norms leading to the development of journalistic autonomy.

political and electoral coverage within all types of media (from print publications to the broadcasting industry) (Guerrero-Martínez, 2017; Hughes, 2006; Lawson, 2002).

In fact, scholars agree that these two-macro processes – political openness and commercialism – had a huge impact on its internal functions (Lawson, 2002:61-121; Hallin, 2000a:90-93; Hughes 2006), and that these processes forced media outlets to reflect upon the pluralistic composition of Mexican society. As Hughes suggests: “the incentives for news production changed and the legitimacy of separating the newsroom from state domination increased” (2006: 10).

In addition, as Lawson (2002:2) has argued, this “differentiation” process materialised in a greater pluralism in political and electoral coverage in all news organisations, from the 1980s to the 2000s. However, as has been noted by Hughes (2006), this process occurred at different times depending on the type of media and geographical location (in Mexico City and the states). The print media opened up in the late-1970s and 1990s (cases in point are newspapers *Excelsior*, *La Jornada*, *El Día*, *Reforma*, *El Financiero* and *Milenio*, as well as magazines *Proceso*, *Nexos*, *Vuelta*)⁴². In addition, researchers (Lawson, 2002; Hughes, 2006) have argued that between 1970 and 1990, a wave of regional publications (some legacy newspapers as well as new ones) exhibited a more pluralist and independent brand of journalism that reflected the openness of the political regime – like *El Norte* (in Nuevo León), *A.M.* (in Guanajuato), *El Sur* (in Oaxaca), *El Diario de Yucatán*, *Mura* (in Jalisco) and *Zeta*

⁴² Although certain print publications exhibited a degree of pluralism and independence before the 1970s, like political magazines *Político*, *Sucesos* and *Por Qué?*, regional broadsheets (Montgomery, 1985), satirical magazines (like *El Capulín* in Oaxaca) and local tabloids (Smith, 2018).

(in Baja California). With regard to the broadcasting industry, scholars have argued that, as the economy opened up and new competitors arrived around 1980, some radio stations incorporated new formats to capture new audiences (Guerrero-Martínez, 2010 and 2017). The most successful of these radio experiments was the *Monitor* newscast, which incorporated political opposition in their transmissions, and whose anchor openly talked about social issues in Mexico City. In the case of the TV industry, scholars suggest that this was the last type of media to open up, around the mid-1990s. This is in part because the owner of *Televisa* maintained a close relationship with some of the most important figures in the political sphere. Then, contrary to what had happened for more than 50 years previously, *Televisa* for the first time lost its broadcasting monopoly in favour of the new competitor, *TV Azteca*. At that moment, both companies began to compete for new audiences. This competition led to the presence of more oppositional figures and voices in TV newscasts. At the local level, broadcasters were caught either under the political influence of state local authorities, or under the logic of crony capitalism (Hughes and Lawson, 2004).

Although the Mexican journalistic field between 1980 and 1990 gained autonomy from the old regime, some scholars (Guerrero-Martínez, 2010 and 2017; Márquez-Ramírez, 2012; Hughes, 2006; Hallin, 2000a) agree that in subsequent years the journalistic field has been heavily influenced by the economic sphere, the political field (especially at local level) and the criminal world.

2.4.3.4 Contemporary field position: Proximity to the market pole

Although the Mexican journalistic field became more distant from the field of politics (or at least from the national autocratic regime), from the 1990s onwards the field exhibited an increasing proximity to other spheres of action, including the market

pole. This shift should not be understood as a domestic phenomenon, but rather a global trend within new democracies, where following the diminishing of the old regime and liberalisation of the market, the journalistic field became part of a commercialised global economy (Voltmer, 2013:4).

For some media scholars (McChesney, 1997; McManus, 2009), in a capitalist globalised economy, private-oriented media converted content into a commodity and the public into consumers, while also transforming a marketplace full of diverse ideas and editorial autonomy into a market-driven model, guided by economic, financial and corporate interests. In Mexico, the market logic in the production and consumption of information as well as the media concentration, explains the mid-1990s rise in market-driven news (Hughes, 2006)⁴³. In Mexico, market-driven journalism is characterized by the “spectacularisation of information”, from elections to natural disasters, passing throughout simplification of social movements and current affairs (Brambila, 2017a: 399; Hughes, 2006; Lozano, 2004; Hallin, 2000b). Regarding the coverage of political campaigns, one of the effects of market-driven journalism was that the majority of stories in newscasts – instead of reporting on the political platform of candidates – became dedicated to political scandals and controversies (Brambila, 2017a: 400; Lozano, 2004). Market-driven journalism has appeared in TV programmes (Hallin, 2000b; Hughes, 2006), the print press (Lozano, 2004) and online quality newspapers (Sánchez, 2014). More recently, scholars have also pointed out that market-driven journalism has become one of the most common

⁴³ For McManus (2009:227), market-driven news is “any action intended to boost profit that interferes with a journalist's or news organization's best effort to maximize public understanding of those issues and events that shape the community they claim to serve”.

forms of news coverage during the so-called War on Drugs (Hernández-Ramírez and Rodelo, 2010).

2.4.3.5 Contemporary field position: Proximity to the political sphere at local level

Since transition to electoral democracy in 2000, the Mexican journalistic field has remained closely connected to the political field. In contrast to the old authoritarian years, in which the journalistic field was ruled by the political sphere, in contemporary Mexico, as in other new democracies (Vltmer, 2013; Castells, 2009), these two fields maintain a relationship of co-dependence, in which the political sphere needs the journalistic world to communicate their policies and win elections; whereas the journalistic field needs the political world not just for gaining access to information but also as a main source for financial resources (Castells, 2009: 80).

In contemporary Mexico, at the local level, the relationship between the political and journalistic fields has some resemblance to the authoritarian years. In that sense, scholars (Salazar, 2017; Del Palacio, 2015; De León, 2011) and reports (Article 19, 2016 and 2017) suggest that local incumbents, the local public administration and opposition political parties operate their budgets for public communications in a completely opaque manner without any restriction from local laws, local accountability mechanisms or federal intervention⁴⁴. In this context, the vast majority of this money is used to subsidise the local press, which operates mainly

⁴⁴ Although activists and journalists mentioned the possibility of ‘activating’ federal controls over discretionary spending through the implementation of a new regulatory framework (Article 19 Mexico, 2017).

with public money (the prevalence of press-state clientelistic relationships is discussed below).

2.4.3.6 Proximity to other fields

As Benson (2010:617) recognises, under certain historical conditions and in some national states, other spheres of influence (beyond the political and economic ones) may exert significant influence upon the journalistic field. As in other new democracies experiencing high rates of criminal violence, public insecurity and economic inequality (Asal et al., 2016), in the last decades the criminal field has risen as one of the macro forces exerting influence upon Mexican society in general, and in the journalistic field in particular (Holland and Ríos, 2017). The criminal field, in this context, encompasses all actors (from corrupt authorities to drug cartels to gangs) who engage in the commission of illegal activities for profit, especially drug trafficking (Schedler, 2016). As has been amply documented in academic and journalistic accounts, in many Mexican regions drug traffickers, in collusion with local authorities, have exerted a discretionary influence through the use of intimidation, coercion and violence upon journalistic frames of coverage and, more importantly, upon the personal safety of media personnel (Guerrero-Martínez, 2015; Article 19 Mexico, 2016 and 2017; Edmonds-Poli, 2013; Rodelo, 2009). This has been particularly true since 2007, when the Mexican government declared a formal military operation to weaken drug cartels. Since then, drug traffickers have acquired greater financial resources, military capacity and publicity (the influence of the so-called War on Drugs upon the journalistic field is discussed below).

Finally, in contemporary Mexico it cannot be denied that other spheres of action also enable the journalistic field. One such sphere of influence is that of the

civil society field (McPherson, 2012). In this sense, it could be argued that as liberal democracy was established in 2000 and political plurality became the norm (rather than the exception) in national and local congresses, civil society organisations have become an active ally for media organisations in producing and sharing valuable information.

The next section reviews what Benson (2013:25) calls field logic, which is the “dominant news practices and formats” as well as rules in a given journalistic field.

2.4.4 Field logic

In field theory (Bourdieu: 2005; Fligstein and McAdam, 2012), each field develops its own “rules of the game”, which could be defined as a set of shared understandings of “what is at stake” in the field. In other words, the rules are the conditions under which actors can play the (political, economic or journalistic) game – in the case of journalism, the “rules of the game” refers to the prevailing values and practices which are enacted (consciously or unconsciously) by journalists in the field (Benson, 2006).

As in other spheres of action, the “rules of the game” in journalism claim to be a unique logic that distinguishes a social field from any other sphere of action in society. For Waisbord (2013:13), this “unique distinctive logic” could be conceptualised as the logic of the modern professions: “the control of skills and knowledge” over a work activity. For Ryfe (2006:138), this logic – what he calls “news regimes” – are “taken for granted”, “assumptions and behaviour that have become deeply embedded” within the journalistic field. In his Bourdieu-inspired approach, Waisbord (2013:135) refers to this logic as the journalistic logic, defined as “the specific rationality of journalism articulated in the observance of news values – the criteria commonly used to define and report news”.

Scholars (Waisbord, 2013:179-180; Reese, 2016) agree that the globalisation of liberal democracy and market-based media have made journalism a global profession with similar aspirations, techniques and role models around the world – what Deuze (2005) has called the global culture of professional journalism. In this context, scholars have argued that news values – the criteria to define whether or not certain information can be defined as news (Waisbord, 2013:183) – are remarkably similar around the world: story-ness, timeliness, elite-centred news, geographical proximity, relevance and others (Harcup, 2015). For example, by comparing journalistic practice within 21 countries, Weaver (2007) found a comparability across cultures in terms of distinguishing what is considered news. Similar findings have been pointed out by studies (Waisbord, 2013:174-202) and surveys (Hanitzsch and Mellado, 2011) in different parts of the world, including Latin America (Mellado et al., 2012; Lugo-Ocando, 2008) and Mexico (Mellado et al., 2012; Márquez-Ramírez, 2012).

In addition to this, scholars (Waisbord, 2013:188) have suggested that journalistic aspirations are alike around the world. Although academic investigations and surveys with journalists have found that there are no universal standards, it can be said that detachment and watchdog reporting are common aspirations among journalists around the globe (Waisbord, 2013:181; Hanitzsch and Mellado, 2011; Weaver, 2007). In the Mexican context, in their representative national survey of 377 journalists, Márquez-Ramírez and Hughes (2016:2) found that the most commonly assumed roles among journalists across the country were reporting on events as they are (95%) and monitoring and scrutinising political leaders (86%).

Although academics have suggested that journalists around the globe share similar aspirations, techniques and role models, scholars also agree that the combination of electoral democracy, neoliberalist economy and increasing

connectivity around the globe have not yet lead to embracing of similar ethics associated with the practice of journalism (Waisbord, 2013:194, Voltmer, 2013: 200).

Deuze (2005:445) summarises this ideas as follows:

Journalists in all media types, genres and formats carry the ideology of journalism.

It is therefore possible to speak of a dominant occupational ideology of journalism on which most news workers base their professional perceptions and practices, but which is interpreted, used and applied differently among journalists across media.

One of the reasons for this plurality of journalistic ethics is that the same aspirations (like press freedom) may have different meanings or interpretations in different cultures (Voltmer, 2013:201; Voltmer and Wasserman, 2014). This is found to be especially true in new democracies – like Mexico – where the rise of ethical pluralism has coincided with the general crisis in the journalistic business model worldwide (Voltmer, 2013:203).

In the Mexican context, Márquez-Ramírez and Hughes (2016:2) found that the same journalists who responded that they have an ideology similar to the traditional Anglo-Saxon model (such as “reporting things as they are” and “monitoring and scrutinising political leaders”) also agreed that they were guided by other kinds of aspirations or models of journalism, such as communitarianism and advocacy reporting, neither of which are traditionally considered in the Anglo-Saxon canon of professional journalism) (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). More precisely, Márquez-Ramírez and Hughes (2016) found that 89% of journalists agreed that their professional roles included the promotion of tolerance and cultural diversity (92%), advocating for social change (89%), and letting people express their views (88%). Along with other studies in the country, these numbers suggest that “the ethical cannon of professionalism doesn’t have a hegemonic position in local or national press cultures” (Waisbord, 2013:194).

The hybridisation of journalistic cultures (Mellado et al., 2017) could be expressed in many ways. During the so-called War on Drugs, existing research (Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014; Hernández-Ramírez and Rodelo, 2010; Lara-Klahr, 2007) has shown that dominant electronic news media (such as TV newscasts) have supported the government agenda by producing a pro-government news model that includes three features: 1) access to the media is largely dominated by official voices; 2) the subject matter of the coverage reflects a narrow agenda, focusing largely on the “government’s achievements”; and 3) civilian casualties are ignored. However, in contrast to this model, scholars and journalists (Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2017b; Valdés, 2016; Turati, 2011; Osorno, 2011 and 2009; Rodelo, 2009) have documented the rise of a hybrid type of journalism (Waisbord, 2013:230) that integrates both professional and collaborative news values and practices with advocacy reporting in favour of the victims of the War on Drugs (this is something that will be explored further below, when referring to the strategic actions taken at the organisational level in order to continue reporting the War on Drugs).

So far, this chapter has presented an overview of the early origins of the field, as well as of the field position and logic. The following section aims to go beyond the historical process and macro-structures in which the field is embedded in order to analyse the internal composition of the field, particularly with regard to how individual actors in the field negotiate their professional autonomy.

2.4.5 Capital and journalists’ individual professional autonomy

In field theory, actors are positioned at different locations depending on the different kinds and amounts of capital available to them (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012; Bourdieu, 1997). Capital is defined as material and symbolic resources that are

possessed by each actor and are able to take on different forms (Bourdieu, 1997). For Vandevordt (2017:613), “the volume and nature of the capital they possess may provide an explanation for how they deal with particular situations” in certain ways. Furthermore, for Vandevordt, the different kinds and amounts of capital available to journalists enable them to exercise agency. In this view, journalists are skilled actors who frame their moves strategically through others, with the goal of enhancing or maintaining the different kinds and amounts of capital that they have gathered (Vandevordt, 2017: 613-614).

In his work *The Forms of Capital* Bourdieu suggests that four forms of capital – cultural, economic, social and symbolic – are the fundamental manifestations of material and symbolic resources in the system of society, and that these forms of capital are “what makes the game of society” (Bourdieu, 1997:46). Cultural capital encompasses scholarly background, specific knowledge and life experiences. Economic capital refers to financial resources or to assets that can be directly translated into money. Social capital refers to the networks of mutual acquaintance and recognition between actors in the field. Finally, symbolic capital is the form of cultural, economic and social capital taken on so that they are perceived and recognised as legitimate by others in the field (Bourdieu, 1997: 46-50). In this sense, symbolic capital could be understood as actors’ prestige in the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:119-120). Media scholars have focused mostly on forms of capital at the organisational level (cf. Vandevordt, 2017; Benson, 2006). However, as this thesis offers an actor-centric perspective of journalistic practice in violent contexts, the forms of capital at the individual level will be further investigated.

It is worth mentioning that the division between cultural, economic, social and symbolic forms of capital could be analytically valuable, but this is an artificial division. In fact, different volumes and types are embodied by individual journalists

and, quite commonly, overlap with each other. However, for the purposes of this work, this division is rather useful, specifically because it helps to define diverse axes in the field where actors are situated. Ultimately, those who have more money, better educational backgrounds and prestige are not always the same.

Key to Bourdieu's notion of capital (and to this thesis) is the capacity to transform one form of capital into other. Drawing upon Weber, Bourdieu (1997) suggests that all of these types of capital could be translated ("converted") from one field to another, or one situation to another, when opportunities arise. That is to say, actors with one form of capital may attempt to convert it into other types of capital or resources. For example, Piccato (2009:64) suggests that Mexican journalists in the late 19th Century turned the symbolic and cultural capital generated by their public polemics and literary writing skills into social capital (elite friendships), or economic capital (patronage or money). Another more recent example is suggested by Powers and Vera (2017). In their study about the rise of news start-ups in France and the U.S., they found that once they are perceived as legitimate actors in the field, journalists' symbolic capital could be converted into fund-raising and other economic resources that they need in order to create an online news start-up (Powers and Vera Zambrano, 2017).

The next section reviews how the four forms of capital under investigation (cultural, economic, social and symbolic) can be materialised in the field, especially in the Mexican context.

2.4.5.1 Cultural capital at individual level in the journalistic field

Cultural capital at the individual level "refers to the skills that are particularly important for journalists covering" newsbeats (Vandevordt 2017:613-614). For

Benson (2006:189-190), “cultural capital encompasses such things as educational credentials, technical expertise, general knowledge, verbal abilities, and artistic sensibilities”. Following Bourdieu (2005) and others (Benson, 2006), it could be argued that cultural capital also encompasses other life experience relevant to the making and sharing of news, such as professional practice, as well as personal experience in their profession (like personal experience in undertaking risky coverage or experiencing violence due to work). In empirical investigations, scholars have operationalised cultural capital as personal abilities to develop news (Vandevordt, 2017), educational background (Powers and Vera, 2017), and years of professional experience (Tandoc Jr., 2017).

In the Mexican case, cultural capital could be operationalised as years of professional experience or formal education, among other criteria. According to a representative survey, “Mexican journalists are fairly experienced”: half of Mexican journalists have had more than ten years of professional practice (Márquez-Ramírez and Hughes, 2017:115). According to the same study, around 80% of Mexican journalists hold a university degree either in journalism or communication (Márquez-Ramírez and Hughes, 2017:113).

Additionally, it could be argued that Mexican journalists obtain cultural capital by increasing their life experience in the field, including their first-hand experiences with violence and risk (González de Bustamante and Relly, 2016a) (I will further develop this argument below). As some studies have showed (Soerjoatmodjo, 2011; Feinstein, 2006), empirical evidence from conflict reporters who have experienced direct violence due to work (including in Mexico, Feinstein, 2013) suggests that they were not only highly resilient but also able to learn to become more cautious in order to avoid risk of violence while reporting. In reference to this process, some psychologists refer to a kind of meaningful resilience: the mechanism that individuals

(like journalists) who have experienced a traumatic event apply to persist, adapt and learn from such events (Novak and Davidson, 2013).

2.4.5.2 Economic capital at individual level in the journalistic field

For Benson (2006:190; Marlière, 1999), economic capital “is simply money or assets that can be turned into money”. In a more comprehensive take, Vandevordt (2017:613-614) suggests that this type of capital is defined as the material means and organisational assets that individual journalists “rely upon to produce news stories, including their income, their guarantee for work” (freelancers, part-time workers); type of media outlet for whom they work to (national or local media outlet; legacy or digital born news media); position in the organisational hierarchy (journalist, editor, editor-in-chief); and the level of editorial and management support journalists enjoy for producing news. In empirical investigations, economic capital at the individual level has been operationalised either as personal income (Tandoc Jr., 2017) or organisational support (Vandevordt, 2017:613-614).

In the Mexican context, economic capital could be operationalised as journalists’ individual income, journalists’ job position (e.g. fixers, local journalists, national correspondents), among others. According to different studies, regarding individual income, there are at least three types of journalists in Mexico: national correspondents, which are defined as journalists who live in a subnational state but work for news media in Mexico City (e.g. *Reforma* or *Proceso*), who usually earn between US\$700 to \$1,000 per month; local journalists, which are defined as journalists who work for a local media outlet, who earn around US\$250 to \$600 per month, and freelance journalists who are not affiliated to any news organisation and

who earn around US\$200 per month⁴⁵ (Rodríguez and Quintanar, 2016; Rodríguez, 2015; Del Palacio, 2012). In addition, economic capital could be operationalised as the organisational support that a single journalist receives from their managers, like editors and editors-in-chief. In Mexico, existing research and journalistic accounts (Valdez, 2016; Rodríguez and Quintanar, 2016; Rodríguez, 2015; Corchado, 2013) have shown that too often local journalists (especially local crime beat reporters) lack the support and commitment that investigative reporters and national correspondents have.

2.4.5.3 Social capital at the individual level in the journalistic field

Social capital can be defined as the level of professional solidarity shared with peers (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). Solidarity in the journalistic field could be defined as the sense of or agreement in horizontal and mutual support among field members (such as journalists, photo-journalists and editors) (“Solidarity”, Oxford dictionary, 2017; Hallin and Mancini, 2004). Existing research suggests solidarity is difficult to achieve due to occupational competition (Reich and Hanitzsch, 2013:146; Gans 1979). In autocratic and violent settings, other barriers make it difficult to achieve, including: the prevalence of press-state clientelistic relations; weak occupational consensus; and the risk involved in collective action (Gonzalez de Bustamante and Rely, 2016; Voltmer 2013). Scholars have argued that in the current digital environment, where different forces have reconfigured journalism (Lewis, 2012:837; Dahlgren, 2009:34-56), including a growing participation culture and a collaborative type of reporting with other journalists, organisations (like NGOs) and audiences, journalists’ social

⁴⁵ Minimum family income in the country is about \$600, according to INEGI (2017)

capital could increase by developing a kind of networked journalism (Van der Haak et al., 2012). This kind of journalism is characterised by more collaborative and cooperative strategies (than before) – like sharing news and developing digital news startups (Graves and Konieczna, 2015).

It is worth mentioning that empirical investigations using a field analysis have concentrated mainly on cultural and economic capital and have not gauged social capital among members in the journalistic field (for an exception see Graves and Konieczna, 2015 and Vandevordt, 2017). Within a few academic works, social capital at the individual level has been operationalised as “the width and depth of journalists’ social network, that is, the number of relevant people they know and the degree to which they can be relied upon” (Vandevordt, 2017:613). In the Mexican context, historically, the level of journalistic professional solidarity has been very low (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos, 2002). This is especially because during most of the 20th Century journalistic professional autonomy was seriously limited, not only by the presence of clientelistic relations (which undermined horizontal solidarity among journalists (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos, 2002), but also by a weak occupational consensus on journalistic standards and low peer solidarity and peer-recognition (Hughes, 2006; Lawson, 2002; Hallin, 2000a). This pattern has been very persistent through time. A recent investigation has found that just 25% of journalists interviewed belonged to a professional organisation (Márquez-Ramírez and Hughes, 2016). Finally, one way to operationalise social capital is precisely through journalists’ adherence to these professional journalistic organizations, which could be defined as independent and horizontal professional networks that group local journalists in order to foster professionalisation and safety (González de Bustamante and Relly, 2016a and 2016b; Edmonds-Poli, 2013).

2.4.5.4 Symbolic capital at the individual level in the journalistic field

Symbolic capital refers to the form the economic, social and cultural forms of capital take “once they are perceived and recognised as legitimate by others in the field” (Bourdieu, 1989). In the case of the journalistic field, symbolic capital can be closely related to the notion of peer recognition (Jenkins and Voltz, 2016). Among media and communication researchers (Marchetti, 2005:69; Benson, 2006), symbolic capital has been commonly operationalised as the number of awards or type of news media for which a journalist works – such as international correspondents or local reporters (Vandevoordt, 2017:613-614). In the Mexican context, media historians (Smith, 2018; Lara-Klahr and Barata, 2009; Martínez, 2005; Del Castillo, 1997) suggest that, historically, journalists who cover common crime (so-called *policiazo* journalists) lack the prestige that other kind of journalists, like investigative reporters or national correspondents have. During Mexico’s electoral authoritarianism, according to Martínez (2005), *policiazo* reporters were the least valuable kind of journalists, as they were closer to the “dirtiest” aspects of society (e.g. murders) and were usually absent from the centres of political power (Márquez-Ramírez, 2015: 25). Recent investigations suggest that *policiazo* reporters remain the least prestigious type of journalists in Mexico (Márquez-Ramírez, 2015: 25; Del Palacio, 2015; Lara-Klahr and Barata, 2009).

As already mentioned, different kinds and amounts of capital available to journalists enable professional autonomy. This is reviewed in the next section.

2.4.5.5 Journalists’ capital and professional autonomy

In field theory, forms and quantity of capital serve as a source of action in social interaction. In this context, it is argued that the type and quantity of capital that

journalists have gathered function as a source of power (or agency) in social practice (Sewell, 1992: 9)⁴⁶. According to Vandevordt (2017:613), the different kinds and amounts of capital available to journalists may enable them to exercise autonomy through other actors (Sjøvaag, 2013:155)⁴⁷. In this context, autonomy is defined as the amount of agency that an individual journalist enjoys to develop his or her work according to professional judgments⁴⁸. Journalists' professional autonomy is widely regarded as a key component of professional journalism and a *sine qua non* condition for producing journalism of public interest (Hallin and Mancini, 2004; McQuail, 1992). Following all of these propositions, it is suggested that the types (cultural, economic, social and symbolic) and amount of capital that journalists have gathered enable journalists' agency in some ways, but also constrain journalists' agency in other ways.

For Vandevordt (2017:613), the type and number of types of capital that journalists have gathered “enable them to negotiate their professional autonomy” from different forces, both from inside the newsroom (from editors), and from outside the newsroom (from state or market pressures). By doing so, following Vandevordt

⁴⁶In this context, power is understood as “transformative capacity” (Giddens, 1986:15). For Thompson (1995:12), “power is the ability to act in pursuit of one’s aims and interests, the ability to intervene in the course of events and to affect their outcome”.

⁴⁷ In this context, autonomy should be understood within the second level mention by Engel (1970:12), which is autonomy with respect to the individual professional.

⁴⁸ Within journalism studies literature, the term ‘professional autonomy’ has been used in many different ways and is an elusive, often contested term. According to Sjøvaag (2013:155), any discussion on the professional autonomy should account for Giddens’ concept of the “duality of structure”.

(2017:613), “they try to distinguish themselves from competing colleagues and media organisations by means of the quality and the nature of their reports”. Empirical research has found that certain national, institutional and organisational contexts may facilitate journalists’ professional autonomy (Waisbord, 2013:69; Hughes et al., 2016; Sjøvaag, 2013). For instance, a cross-national survey of journalists around the globe has found that perception of professional autonomy is closely related to job satisfaction, media type and level in the organisational hierarchy (Hughes et al., 2016 and 2017; Hanitzsch and Mellado, 2011; Reich and Hanitzsch, 2103; Weaver, 2007). In the context of advanced democracies, Weaver (2007) found that higher levels of job satisfaction, private media (in contrast to public media) and higher levels in the organisational hierarchy (editors versus reporters) are all related to higher perceptions of one’s professional autonomy. While academic research has found similar findings in new democracies (Hanitzsch et al., 2010) (including Mexico, Mellado et alt. 2012), scholars have also suggested that the negative influence of autonomy is increased in autocratic regimes (Hanitzsch and Mellado, 2011; Reich and Hanitzsch, 2013), as well as in polities with overlapping forms of inequality, press-state clientelistic relationships and physical threats (Hughes et al., 2016 and 2017). In a recent investigation, it was argued that the most significant determinants for professional autonomy in Mexico were: “pressures from violence and multiple forms of inequality, manifested via work related theatres, lower wages, a lack of organizational authority, and insecure (part-time) labour contracts” (Hughes et al., 2017a:969).

2.4.5.6 Journalists' capital and professional autonomy for developing and publishing news

Scholars in the areas of journalism and news production in contexts of conflict have argued that “news production is a multi-step process” which includes different stages (Hoxha and Hanitzsch, 2017:1). In the context of news production in conflict and violent settings, Hoxha and Hanitzsch (2017:1) conceptualise news production in three different states, namely: “story ideation, story narration and story presentation”. By analysing 315 reconstructed articles and 215 in-depth interviews with journalists, they suggest that news production “is influenced by a variety of actors, many of which have stakes or pursue particular goals with regard to the desired outcome of media reporting” (Hoxha and Hanitzsch, 2017:1). In a recent study that compared levels of professional autonomy between journalists in Mexico and Colombia, Hughes et al., (2016) suggested that journalists' perception of professional autonomy is clearly experienced across the different stages of news production, identifying two dimensions: autonomy in developing news and autonomy to publish news. The former (developing news) refers to the individual freedom in newsgathering and news selection (Hughes et al., 2017:963), while the latter refers to the presentation and distribution of news (Hughes et al., 2017a:963) – a conceptualisation that will be particularly relevant in the empirical chapters of this thesis. Among other things, the authors identify a set of predictors for both types of autonomy, including contextual (e.g. level of societal violence), institutional (e.g. type of media organisation) and personal elements (e.g. demographic aspects).

Finally, empirical research has found that in many media systems, especially within new democracies, a wide range of actors (from political parties to social groups to criminal organisations) seek to exert control over journalists' professional autonomy (Voltmer, 2013; Waisbord, 2013; Hanitzsch and Mellado, 2011). Referring

to this point, Hallin and Mancini (2004:37) have coined the term instrumentalisation, which refers to “the control of the media by outside actors”. The next section examines the instrumentalisation of actors in the journalistic field by external forces. The section places special emphasis on media instrumentalisation through violent means in the Mexican context.

2.4.6 External interferences to the logic of the field: Media coercion and instrumentalisation

Chalaby (2000) argues that, historically, elites and powerful actors have intended to restrict media institutions by coercive means. In this context, coercion is defined as the “action or practice of persuading someone to do something by using force or threats” (“Coercion”, Oxford Dictionary). Commonly, Chalaby (2000) suggests, elites employ a range of techniques to coerce the media, including legal, administrative, economic and technological methods and violence as an extreme form of coercion (Chalaby, 2000:21). In order to ensure their maintenance, elites implement this mix of media manipulation with the aim of silencing their critics or shaping the media agenda. Although certain institutional arrangements at the national level favour the use of these manipulative strategies (like populist or autocratic regimes) (Reich and Hanitzsch, 2013), the risk of media coercion is universal and found everywhere that autonomous media institutions exist (Chalaby, 2000). Scholars agree that in developed democracies this media coercion is made up primarily of information subsidy, spin and material resources (such as government or private advertising in the media) (Ciboh, 2017). More recently, scholars have also suggested that democratic polities use other forms of media coercion, such as surveillance (Simon, 2014). In contrast to manipulation techniques applied in established democracies, made up of

information subsidies, spinning practices and surveillance, media coercion in many new democracies includes other forms of coercion, such as clientelistic relations, violence and intimidations, among many others (Ciboh, 2017; Cottle et al. 2016; Voltmer, 2013; Waisbord, 2002). In the context of new democracies, manipulative strategies do not emerge in a vacuum, but rather follow a historical path and bear a close resemblance to those deployed by the old authoritarian regimes (Voltmer, 2013:118).

2.4.6.1 Press instrumentalisation during Mexico's electoral authoritarianism

The manipulative machine during electoral authoritarianism operated with a mix of spin apparatus (both in Mexico City and in the states by 1950s) as well as material incentives (like political advertisements, payments, bribes, paper subsidies, low interest loans and tax exemptions) (Smith, 2018). The most effective form of media control was clientelistic relations (Cole, 1975:70-71; Hallin, 2000a:100; Rodriguez-Castañeda, 1993; Lawson, 2002; Hughes, 2006; Guerrero-Martínez, 2010 and 2017). Press-state clientelistic relations took many forms, from economic incentives (such as paper subsidies, low-interest loans and tax exemptions) to political advertisements, to payment of bribes (Fromson, 1996:113). However, it would be a mistake to assume that journalists, editors and publishers were forced to adopt these practices. As in other authoritarian regimes (Voltmer, 2013:78), news media and journalists provided their support to the regime very willingly (as the media benefitted from this arrangement). In addition, when clientelistic arrangements did not function as coercive mechanisms, Mexican autocrats used other means of coercion, including imprisonment and selective violence, although murders and disappearances of journalists did not constitute a regular means of coercion in this period. Nonetheless, violence against

the press did exist and in fact Smith (2018) has documented 20 journalists killed, with around 200 violent attacks against local journalists and newspapers between 1940 and 1970. Though general patterns were difficult to discern⁴⁹, Smith (2018) found that violence against the press was perpetrated against local reporters by local bosses affiliated to the hegemonic party.

2.4.6.2 Press instrumentalisation during Mexico's electoral democracy

The arrival of electoral democracy in 2000 did not end external interference in the journalistic field. However, some elements did change: in contrast to the old authoritarian days in which political actors related to the authoritarian regime deployed manipulative strategies, in contemporary Mexico a constellation of actors (from local incumbents to drug traffickers to business elites) have employed these manipulative strategies since 2000 (Guerrero-Martínez, 2017). Beyond information subsidy and spin, a wide range of actors implant a range of media manipulation techniques that is fundamentally made up of two tactics: economic incentives and anti-press violence.

2.4.6.2.1 Economic incentives

As during the period of electoral authoritarianism (Lawson 2002), one of the forms of press control most often employed is the use of economic incentives, which have been

⁴⁹ According to Smith (2018), these attacks rose in moments of increased levels of political contestation (like elections); in places with higher levels of regional financial activity (like oil cities in Veracruz and Tabasco); and in places where drug trafficking organisations operated (like in Tijuana since the early 1950s).

used both to benefit media allies and to punish media critics. As during hegemonic party rule (Lawson 2002), economic incentives often take the shape of clientelistic arrangements between elites, who offer public goods, services and protection to journalists and media owners in return for their political loyalty and support (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos 2002). Although scholars argue that there are a range of forms that these clientelistic arrangements can take, they suggest that the two most common are direct bribes and perks to journalists, as well as discretionary spending on public advertisements (Article 19 Mexico, 2017 and 2017; Salazar, 2017; Del Palacio, 2015).

As happened in the old years of one-party hegemonic rule (Lawson, 2002), in contemporary Mexico (especially at the local level) direct bribes can take the form of economic compensation such as free meals, transportation, hotel accommodation and gifts (Del Palacio, 2015; Márquez-Ramírez, 2014). Although some studies suggest that novice journalists – often educated in universities – were less likely to receive bribes, such studies also mention that the widespread practice of direct payments and bribes among local journalists is related not only to a lack of ethics (Márquez-Ramírez, 2014), but also to the very poor salaries that local journalists receive (around US\$250 to \$600 per month) and that they also often lack social security and safety equipment (Rodríguez and Quintanar, 2016; Rodríguez, 2015; Del Palacio, 2015). In the context of the so-called Mexican War on Drugs, empirical investigations suggest that direct bribes to journalists are not just paid by political elites but also by drug traffickers (Valdez, 2016; Rodríguez and Quintanar, 2016; Rodríguez, 2015; Del Palacio, 2015; Edmonds-Poli, 2013; Estévez, 2013). These studies suggest that contrary to bribes offered by politicians, over which journalists exercise a degree of autonomy (willingness) to accept, journalists have been forced to accept money from

organised crime (under the threat of retaliation if the bribes are not accepted) (Valdez, 2016; Del Palacio, 2015; Edmonds-Poli, 2013; Estévez, 2013).

Beyond bribes and perks, academic studies (Guerrero-Martínez, 2015; Salazar, 2017; Rodríguez and Quintanar, 2016; Rodríguez, 2015; Del Palacio, 2015; González-Macías, 2013; De León, 2011) and reports (Article 19 Mexico, 2016 and 2017; RWB, 2017; CPJ, 2017) have suggested that the other much exploited economic incentive is discretionary spending on public advertisements in the news media, which have in turn limited the editorial autonomy of media companies. In this context, local incumbents, the local public administration and opposition political parties operate their budget for public communications in a completely opaque manner without any restriction by local laws, local accountability mechanisms or federal intervention (Article 19 Mexico, 2016 and 2017). The vast majority of this money is used to subsidise the local press, which operates mainly with public money (Article 19 Mexico, 2016 and 2017; Salazar, 2017).

2.4.6.2.2 Anti-press Violence

All politics is a struggle for power; the ultimate kind of power is violence.

(C. Wright Mills, 1956)

A more extreme form of media control is anti-press violence, which is defined in this study as physical attacks, verbal intimidation and threats against news journalists and media outlets as a result of their work (Waisbord 2002:91). Contrary to the violent means deployed during hegemonic party rule – which were limited in number and exercised mainly by political actors related to the hegemonic party (Lawson 2002) – violence in contemporary Mexico has been “democratised” and is deployed by a

constellation of actors, including state (local incumbents and public security forces such as the police and military) and non-state actors (mainly, but not exclusively, organised crime cells) (Guerrero-Martínez, 2015 and 2017; Article 19 Mexico, 2016 and 2017; CNDH, 2016; Edmonds-Poli, 2013; Estévez, 2013). Although these actors commonly follow different logics and goals in pursuing their strategies (Schedler, 2015), academic studies have suggested that they have often operated together in a sort of collusion of interests (for example, when a journalist is killed by local police officers on the orders of a the local criminal cell) (Valdez, 2016; Rodríguez and Quintanar, 2016; Rodríguez, 2015; Del Palacio, 2015; Edmonds-Poli, 2013; Estévez, 2013).

In Mexico, since the War on Drugs began, the monitoring programme of Article 19's Mexico chapter has documented the deaths of 80 journalists and the forced disappearance (and assumed death) of 25 journalists that were possibly related to their profession⁵⁰. Between 2006 and 2017, the London-based organisation documented 55 attacks against media facilities in the country (see Figure 1). In addition, from 2010 to 2015, for every journalist killed per year, at least 35 acts of verbal intimidation and physical aggression against the press (on average) were documented by Article 19 Mexico (2016). It is possible that the real number is far larger than this (Bosh and Velez, 2011). In addition, academic studies (Brambila, 2017b; Holland and Rios 2017; Del Palacio, 2015; Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014) and data from non-profit organisations (Article 19 Mexico, 2016; RWB, 2017) show that the vast majority of victims were local beat journalists or investigative reporters working on

⁵⁰ The autonomous Human Rights Commission (CNDH 2016) reported a similar number, documenting 80 journalists killed and 23 disappeared since 2007.

common crime (so-called *policiaico* journalists), corruption, organised crime, drugs and human rights violations in the country's interior (Article 19 Mexico, 2016 and 2017; Valdez, 2016; Lara-Klahr, 2007).

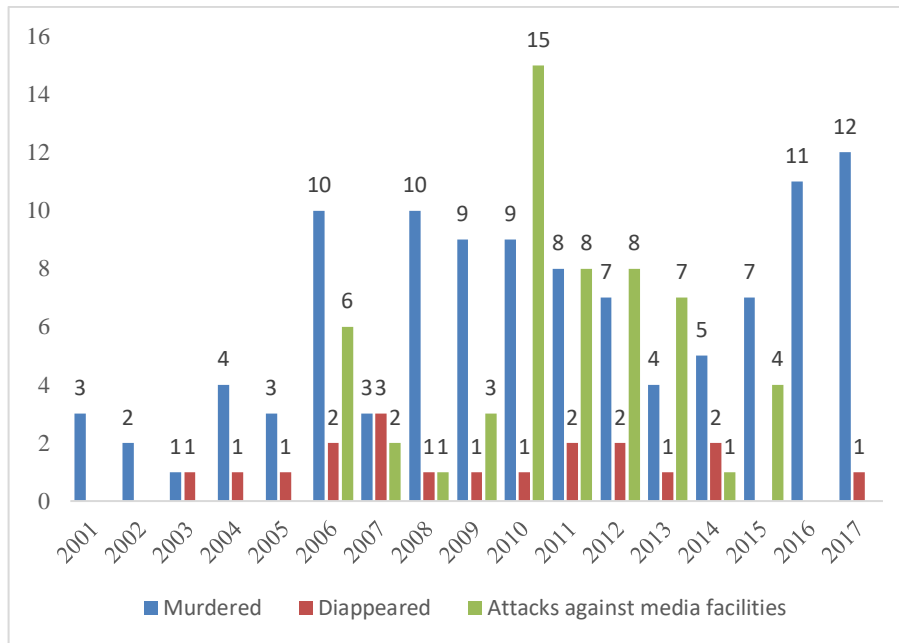


Figure 1 Number of crimes against journalists by type of aggression (2000-2017)

Source: For 2001 to 2017: Article 19 Mexico, cited in Article 19 Mexico, 2017.

According to Article 19 Mexico (2016 and 2017), from 2007 to 2015, government officials – local politicians and police officers – were involved in about half of the (psychical and psychological) attacks against the press; three times more than the number of cases in which organised crime was involved. In many cases, the extent to which attacks came from the authority or organised crime was not clear, as corruption and collusion are widespread (Del Palacio, 2015; Edmonds-Poli, 2013; Estévez, 2013; Article 19 Mexico, 2016 and 2017). Beyond these two actors, the rest of the assaults came from businessmen, political organisations and local political bosses (Article 19 Mexico, 2016 and 2017). The vast majority of all the attacks (around 90 percent) were targeted at local journalists and media outlets that used to work and live in subnational Mexico, where the press is more vulnerable to financial

and political pressures (Article 19 Mexico, 2016 and 2017).

The cycle of impunity in which the majority of these crimes are trapped at local level reinforces the effectiveness of anti-press violence as a manipulative strategy. According to the CPJ (2016 and 2017), in 89% of assassinations since 1992 that were committed specifically against journalists as a result of their jobs, the perpetrators have not been punished. The high impunity rate remains despite the fact that in 2013 federal authorities created a special mechanism to permit the federal jurisdiction to prosecute crimes against freedom of expression across the whole country (Article 19 Mexico, 2016; Brambila and Lugo-Ocando, 2018). The prevailing impunity for crimes against the media also results from the control over local courts by local incumbents who have often boycotted all attempts to bring the federal courts into their local jurisdictions (Article 19 Mexico, 2017).

Finally, Waisbord (2002 and 2007) has argued that when violence against journalists is extensive in a given territory, it implies a widespread problem regarding the functionality of democratic and state institutions. Löfgren and Örnebring (2016: 881) summarise this assumption as follows:

Systematic violence toward and intimidation of journalists also commonly indicates more widespread democratic problems, for example, the inability of the state to maintain a monopoly on legitimate violence, weak police, and judiciary authorities who are unable to guarantee the rule of law, low status of freedom of expression in general, and so on.

The following section aims to examine how in a context of widespread violence, a broken judicial apparatus and social inequality, a macro event (the so-called War on Drug) has created an extended crisis over all social fields, including the journalistic field. Embedded in such a crisis, it is argued, is the current wave of violent attacks against journalists in Mexico.

2.5 The Journalistic Field and the Crisis of the State

2.5.1 Crisis of the state and criminal violence as exogenous shocks

As already mentioned above, for Fligstein and McAdam (2012:99), fields are not commonly destabilised by internal process, but by forces of transformation from outside the field⁵¹. In their model they recognise three principal external sources of field transformation: 1) invasion by outside groups; 2) changes in fields upon which the field in question is dependent; and 3) macro events (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012:99). This study will discuss the latter. Macro events (or exogenous shocks) are rare transformational moments (like wars or economic depressions) that “serve to destabilize the broader social/political context in which the field is embedded [and] create a sense of generalized crisis” (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012:99 and 101). According to the authors, in modern societies, the national state is one of the main sources of field transformation because the state is one of the central nodes of connection and interdependence within many fields in society (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012:101; for a similar argument in media and communication studies see Flew and Waisbord, 2015). Examples of these exogenous shocks include wars, invasions and economic crises “because these crises undermine all kinds of linkages in society and make it difficult for groups to reproduce their power” (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012:101).

Based on these ideas, for conceptual purposes, it is argued that manifestations of such exogenous shocks are what Kaldor (2013:2) has called “new wars”, which typically:

⁵¹ Fligstein and McAdam (2012:99) recognise that there are exceptions to this rule, for example, “circumstances when internal processes alone account for the onset of instability and crisis”.

take place in areas where authoritarian states have been greatly weakened as a consequence of opening up to the rest of the world. In such contexts, the distinction between state and non-state, public and private, external and internal, economic and political, and even war and peace are breaking down. Moreover the breakdown of these binary distinctions is both a cause and a consequence of violence.

For Kaldor, new wars are part of a post-Cold War era, in which post-authoritarian states or new democracies – interrelated in a global interdependence (Kaldor, 2013) – have been greatly weakened by the diminished sovereignty of nation states (Kaldor, 2013:2; Castells, 2009; Waisbord, 2007). This demise in sovereignty can be perceived in many forms, from the loss of control upon the flow of information in the national territory, to the loss of control upon national borders. One manifestation of such loss of sovereignty occurs when the state lacks control and loses its monopoly of legitimised violence in the national territory (Waisbord, 2007).

In such a context, Kaldor (2013) suggests, a kind of war arises that instead of regular armed forces combines state and non-state actors, who fight within a given territory. They fight neither for ideologies nor with political purposes, but under other flags, including identity and economic purposes. In this context, this thesis has followed Schedler (2016:1047) when he suggests that one example of such “new wars”⁵² is the so-called Mexico’s war on drugs⁵³, in which, by seeking economic

⁵² Since the end of the Cold War, the emergence of new wars (Kaldor, 2013), featuring failed states, terrorists and armed criminal bands, also put journalists and media workers at increased risk, as the nature and patterns of global conflicts have been transformed and the lines between combatants and non-combatants have become blurred (Cottle et al., 2016; Simon, 2014; Tumber and Webster, 2006).

⁵³ “When confrontations between armed groups within a state cause more than a thousand “battle-related deaths” per year, conflict scholars speak of “civil war.” At least since 2001, democratic

profit, powerful drug trafficking organisations have challenged the state's authority and subverted the bases of democratic institutions (Schedler, 2015), including the free press (Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014) (for a discussion about Mexico's war on drugs as a new war please see Schedler, 2016).

According to Valdés (2013), in order to understand the Mexican War on Drugs it is worth considering the immediate background, including: the breakdown of the historical unwritten arrangements and understandings between corrupt Mexican officials and drug cartels at the end of the 1980s; the increase in criminal density (number of competitors and force capacity) in the 1990s; and the rise of global drug markets at the end of the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s. Considering this historical background, scholars agreed that in 2006, in the middle of a political crisis derived from allegations of electoral fraud (Meyer, 2015), Mexican President Felipe Calderon (2006-2012) declared a formal military operation to crack down on drug cartels just 10 days after taking office in December 2006. This "war" (as Mexican President Felipe Calderón labelled his own militarisation policy) was declared with neither a parallel effort to re-build the judicial apparatus that had been historically corroded by corruption and inefficiency, nor integral efforts to shield local police bodies (Enciso 2017a and 2017b; Guerrero-Gutiérrez, 2017; Schedler, 2015; Hope, 2015; Valdés, 2013). In 2012 the new government, led by Enrique Peña Nieto, decided to continue the militarisation strategy, although in public he and his cabinet maintained silence on this issue (Schedler, 2015).

As the militarisation strategy included splintering criminal organisations by killing (or capturing) their more important leaders, this situation, in turn, has resulted

Mexico has experienced levels of "internal war" that surpass this conventional threshold" (Schedler, 2016: 1047).

in a criminal fragmentation from six drug trafficking organisations in 2006, towards a universe of more than 250 criminal gangs across the national territory by 2016 (Guerrero-Gutiérrez, 2017). Between January 2008 and November 2012, according to Schedler (2016: 1048), more than 2,500 police officers and more than 200 military personnel were violently murdered by criminal organisations; “Yet in numerous instances, public officials have collaborated with criminal organizations” (2016:1048). In this context, scholars agree that the militarisation strategy has destabilised and increased the sources and intensity of violence between the military and drug cartels, among drug cartel cells, and against society as a whole (Schedler, 2015:15; Guerrero-Gutiérrez, 2017; Enciso, 2017a and 2017b). In this context, between 2006 and 2011, the intentional homicide rate, which measures noncombat homicides, rose from 9.3 to 22.8 per 100,000 people (INEGI, 2017). After ten years, more than 110,000⁵⁴ people had been murdered and 30,000 had disappeared in cartel-related violence, but the perpetrators of such crimes have gone unpunished in 99% of cases (Schedler 2016:1050) (see Figure 2).

⁵⁴ This is a conservative estimate and works on a scholarly standard (Guerrero-Gutiérrez, 2017). Official information on this matter is not consistent over time. For example, there is some disparity between INEGI (National Institute of Statistics and Geography) and SNSP (National System of Public Security) figures due to differences in methodology. News reports suggest that the actual number killed is far higher and, depending on the source, estimates vary between 150,000 and 250,000 deaths attributed to cartel-related violence (see reports from newspapers *Reforma*, *Milenio* and the magazine *Zeta*).

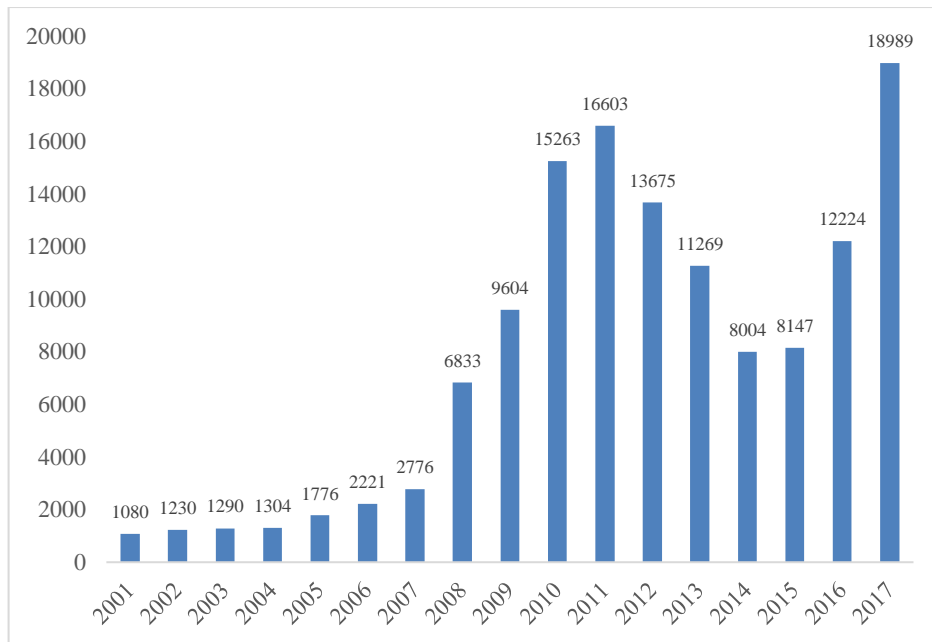


Figure 2 Number of homicides attributed to organised crime in Mexico, 2001–2017

Sources: For 2001 to 2015: General Attorney’s Office cited in Schedler, 2016: 1045. For 2016 to 2017: Lantia Consultores, “Dataset of Violence by Organized Crime” (<http://www.lantiaconsultores.com/>).

This unprecedented increment in intentional homicides in the recent history of Mexico was also manifested among the states selected for this study (see Figure 3). However, the intensity of criminal violence changed over time and across space depending upon different factors, including the state’s response and the composition of criminal organisations at a local level, among other factors (Enciso, 2017a; Guerrero-Gutiérrez, 2017; Schedler, 2015; Valdés, 2013). After the Mexican government launched a massive military offensive against drug cartel cells in certain municipalities and cities among northern states (like Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua) in 2010 and 2011, criminal violence tended to decrease in these regions (like Chihuahua, Nuevo León, Tamaulipas, Sinaloa) (Enciso, 2017a; Guerrero-Gutiérrez, 2017; Hope, 2015); however, around the same time, criminal violence and human rights violations started to increase in southern states (like Guerrero, Oaxaca and Veracruz). As other scholars have observed (Hughes et al., 2016: 960; Holland and

Ríos, 2017; Brambila, 2017b), and I shall argue later, the direction of change in criminal violence moved *pari passu* with the violent attacks against journalists. Additionally, as I shall argue in the empirical chapters, the direction of change in anti-press violence has broader consequences for the adoption of risk mitigation practices and development of strategies for safety autonomy among local journalists.

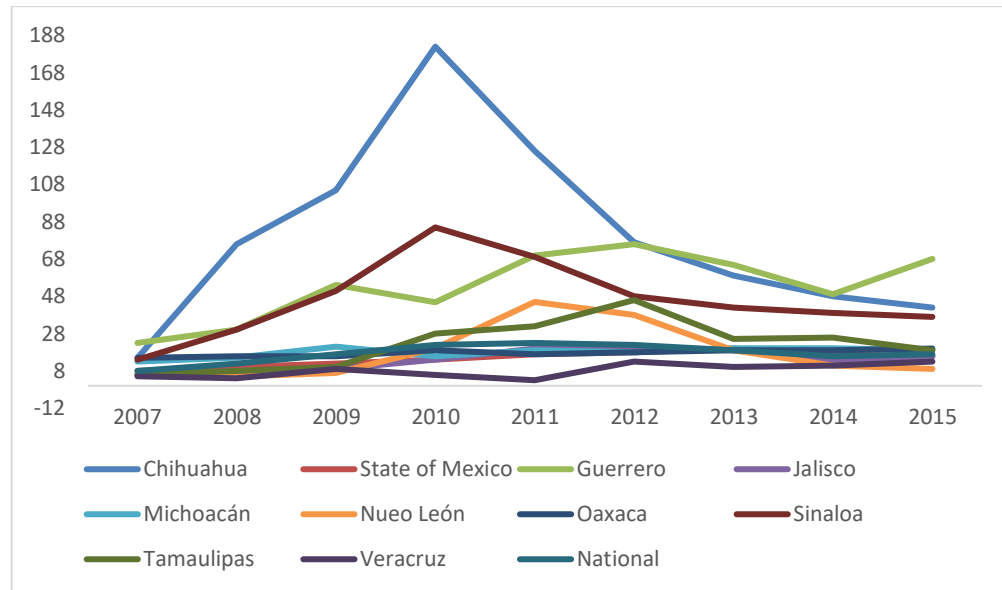


Figure 3 Number of intentional homicides in Chihuahua, Estado de México, Guerrero, Jalisco, Michoacán, Nuevo León, Oaxaca, Sinaloa, Tamaulipas, Veracruz, 2007–2015

Sources: INEGI, 2017.

In addition, the drug business fell due to emerging liberalisation of marijuana laws in Mexico and the U.S. and the drop in the price of cocaine in the U.S. market (Enciso, 2017a). In this context, drug trafficking organisations have diversified their criminal portfolio to include protection rackets, kidnappings and extortion, among other crimes (Enciso, 2017a; Guerrero-Gutiérrez, 2017; Schedler, 2015; Hope, 2015). Therefore, the number of cartel-related crimes – homicides, kidnapping and extortion – increased dramatically in this period, especially within certain subnational regions of the country (like Coahuila, Guerrero, Tamaulipas, among others) (Hope, 2015). Furthermore, with the military in the streets fighting openly against drug cartels,

human rights violations by the military (or other state authorities such as local police groups) also increased in the same period (Anaya, 2014).

Mexico's weak democratic institutions, low law enforcement and broken check and balance mechanisms have reinforced drug traffickers' corrupt arrangements with local authorities and security forces (including local police officers) (Enciso, 2017a). In addition, rampant inequality and extended poverty have fostered cheap criminal labour (around 55% of Mexicans, 60 million people, live in poverty, according to the INEGI, 2017). As Enciso (2017b) comments: "The availability of young people prepared to kill for modest payments has played an important part in the recent spike in murders." In the political dimension, this situation has, in turn, led to what Goldstein and Desmond (2010) have labelled "violent pluralism", which involves local power struggles among numerous alliances between politicians and criminals. This violent pluralism has substituted multi-party dynamics in some subnational states in Mexico (like Tamaulipas and Michoacán) (Smith, 2018).

For political scientists, new wars are an extreme manifestation of "state crisis" (Waisbord, 2002) or "state incapacity" (Grugel, 2002:68-91). For Voltmer (2013:138), "state incapacity" could affect the development of media institutions "in an extreme form" when the state continuously fails to monopolise the means of violence within all its territory. As Fligstein and McAdam (2012:101) have suggested, when the state is in crisis, the crisis subverts all dynamics in related fields, in this case the journalistic field. In his seminal article on anti-press violence, Silvio Waisbord (2002:101) describes this situation:

My argument is that the breakdown of the state accounts for why the press, particularly investigative reporters and publications, is the target of violence. Anti-press violence reflects the impossibility of the state's fulfilling its mission to monopolize the legitimate use of violence and the lack of accountability of those responsible for the attacks. In situations when the state is on the verge of collapse,

certainly it is not only the expression of ideas, but any form of political participation, that is dangerous.

Thus, in a context of a exogenous shocks⁵⁵ such as new wars, actors in the field of journalism undergo hard times in order to fulfil their most basic duties. As Sambrook (2016:24) notes, “in times of extreme politics, journalists simply doing their work in holding power to account can find themselves enemies of the state, with their lives at risk as a consequence”. As academic studies (Cottle et al., 2016; Hughes et al., 2016; Waisbord, 2002 and 2007) and press rights organisations have documented (Article 19 Mexico, 2016 and 2017; RWB, 2017; CPJ, 2017), in the context of state crises or new wars – as contemporary Mexico – there are devastating consequences for the practice of journalism. In addition to this, some recent evidence rightly suggests that violence against journalists in non-regular wars (such as ‘new wars’ contexts) are more likely to happen in those societies that have some amount of freedom of the press, but where the state institutions systematically fail to guarantee the exercise of free and critical reporting (for international evidence on this see Asal et al., 2016; for the Mexican context see Brambila 2017b). In fact, academic studies also suggest that the most risky states are emerging democracies, like Mexico, in which criminality, human rights violations and weak state institutions explain, in part, the lethal situation for the press (Brambila, 2017b). In addition, one of the main consequences of this “state incapacity” (what Waisbord (2007) calls “statelessness”) is the pervasive adoption of self-censorship (Voltmer, 2013: 138), which undermines

⁵⁵ Among the literature on media and communication studies, the role of exogenous shocks has been conceptualised as technological and digital disruptions (Nielsen, 2012), as well as an economic and business model crisis (Bannerman and Haggart, 2015); however, less attention has been paid to the conceptualisation of exogenous shocks as a state crisis.

the democratic role of the press, as well as any attempt at public deliberation and participation. In fact, a representative survey of Mexican journalists conducted between 2012 and 2013 showed that 67% of journalists have adopted self-censorship as a protective factor (Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2017b:308).

Finally, the next section examines the role of journalists' capital influencing (either constraining or enabling) journalistic practices during exogenous shocks, with a special emphasis on the Mexican context.

2.5.2 The role of capital in influencing journalists' professional autonomy during exogenous shocks

Although the practice of journalism in conflict situations has elicited a vast and rich literature in journalism studies and political communication (Tumber, 2006; Vandevordt, 2017; Markham, 2011; Robinson et al., 2010; Tumber and Webster, 2006; Allan and Zelizer, 2004; Hannertz, 2004; Armoudian, 2016; Simon, 2014), this literature barely explains how and “why journalists deal with challenging situations in certain ways” (Vandevordt, 2017:609). As Kramp and Weichert (2014:21) have argued, “the specific conditions and problems of journalistic practices in crisis reporting are a relative new area of interdisciplinary research”. In a recent study, Hoxha and Hanitzsch (2017:2) say something similar: “Despite a wealth of research in the area, we know surprisingly little about the realities journalists face on the ground and the processes of conflict news production”. Thus, based on field theory, especially the theoretical framework of Fligstein and McAdam's model, as well as Bourdieu's concept of capital, it is suggested that the level and quantity of journalists' capital influences (either constrains or enables) journalistic practice during exogenous shocks.

According to Fligstein and McAdam (2012:101), an actor's position in the field determines the extent to which they can (or cannot) resist the crisis generated by exogenous shock. More precisely, Fligstein and McAdam (2012:101) suggest that those actors who possess higher amounts of capital are better positioned to resist and maintain their source of power during exogenous shocks. In addition, based upon Vandevordt (2017), it is argued that journalists who possess higher levels of capital have more resources to maintain their position in the field and to increase their professional autonomy, while journalists who possess lower levels of capital are more likely to lose their professional autonomy. Equally important, Fligstein and McAdam (2012) argue that an actor's position in the field also determines the kind of strategic behaviour that they may follow in such a context. In this vein of thinking, Vandevordt (2017: 623) has argued "that the particular volume and nature" of the capital that journalists possess have "a qualitative impact on their perceptions and experiences and thus ultimately on their professional strategies as well".

Thus, drawing upon all these ideas, this section reviews, in the context of exogenous shocks and in the Mexican case, how the types and amount of capital (cultural, economic, social and symbolic) that journalists have gathered enable journalists' agency in some ways, but also constrain journalists' agency in other ways.

2.5.2.1 Risk and constraints during exogenous shocks

As I have mentioned, professional autonomy could be defined as the amount of agency that an individual journalist enjoys to develop her work (Sjøvaag, 2013:155; Waisbord, 2013:43-73). During exogenous shocks, like those imposed by Mexico's War on Drugs, journalists' professional autonomy could be seriously affected by several factors (risk of violence, lack of confidence, fast-changing circumstances, self-censorship, among others) (Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez-Ramírez, 2017b;

Article 19, 2016; Flores et al., 2014; González de Bustamante and Relly, 2016a; Edmonds-Poli, 2013; Rodelo and Hernandez, 2010; Estévez, 2010; Lauría and O'Connor 2010; Rodelo, 2009; Lara-Klahr, 2007; Waisbord, 2002). In this context, one of the elements that could limit journalists' professional autonomy, among others, is the risk of violence that journalists confront in the field. In this context, risk⁵⁶ can be understood as "a situation involving exposure to danger" or violence ("Risk", Oxford Dictionary, 2017). Media and communication researchers have long argued that conflict reporting is intrinsically risky, as this type of journalist needs to cover dangerous stories and the pain experienced by others, is assigned to hazardous missions and exposed to violent actors, and, in addition, needs to process the psychological effects that all of the aforementioned may have on their individual wellbeing (Tumber, 2006:441; Feinstein, 2006; Cottle et al., 2016). Contrary to war correspondents and special envoys, for whom the risks and effects of trauma end when they exit the field (Simon, 2014; Feinstein, 2013), local conflict journalists who live and work in violent settings are exposed on a daily basis to these adverse conditions (Cottle et al., 2016:2), for example Mexican local journalists who work on crime, drugs and corruption (Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2017a:501). In addition, risky and challenging environments may restrain journalists' professional practices and, in some cases, drive journalists and news media to self-censorship (Feinstein, 2012:481;

⁵⁶ This study does not speak directly to the concept of risk society (Beck, 2002); however, this study recognises that the diminishment of the national state, as well as the changing nature of modern welfare, including the rise of so-called 'new wars', has posed new challenges to news journalists and, under certain circumstances, could increase the likelihood of journalists encountering violence and intimidation (for an explanation of this in the context of conflict reporting see Creech, 2017).

Waisbord, 2002). In addition, scholars have also identified an additional source of risk that emerges soon after being threatened or violently attacked due to a journalist's work – what Paterson (2014) calls the 'media response'. Media response after being attacked due to journalist's work will be particularly important in Chapter 5, when I analyse how different types of journalists respond to violence against them, and how these responses may increase (or decrease) the risks to which they are exposed.

Thus, following Bourdieu's field theory, in their model of social resilience Obrist et al., (2010:288) have suggested that in dangerous and adverse environments, journalists are unevenly exposed to risks of danger and violence depending upon their specific positions in the field. In a parallel interpretation, in his study on the role of capital in violent settings, Vandevordt (2017:609) has suggested that journalists' exposure to risks of danger and violence depend upon the kind and quantities of capital that they have acquired (Vandevordt, 2017:609). However, to date, few empirical investigations have gauged the role of types and quantity of capital in journalists' exposure to risk of danger and violence – a gap this thesis intends to address.

Regarding the role of cultural capital (operationalised as years of professional practice), existing research has shown that journalists with fewer years of professional practice are more susceptible to the risk of violence than experienced journalists (Hughes et al., 2017b; González de Bustamante and Relly, 2016a). When it comes to economic capital (operationalised as individual income and organisational support), empirical research has shown that journalists who work for an international news outlet or legacy news organisation commonly enjoy better training and resources to confront challenging situations in the field and reduce related risks for themselves (Cottle et al., 2016; Simon, 2014; Article 19 Mexico, 2016 and 2017). Regarding social capital (operationalised as membership of professional journalism groups),

research (Hughes et al., 2017b; Barrios and Arroyave, 2007) has shown that social reference groups have functioned as a protective factor for journalists working in violent settings. Finally, with regard to the role of symbolic capital (operationalised as professional prestige), different scholarly accounts (Cottle et al. 2016; Simon, 2014; Waisbord, 2000) have suggested that journalists with higher prestige and status (like investigative reporters) are more protected than local journalists who do not enjoy social recognition, such as crime beat reporters (Lugo-Ocando, 2018; Lara-Klahr, 2007).

The next section examines the role of journalists' capital in enabling strategic actions that aim to enhance professional output while reducing potential risks in the context of exogenous shocks to the field.

2.5.2.2 Strategies for safety autonomy during exogenous shocks

According to Fligstein and McAdam (2012:105), during exogenous shocks to the field, given their power and material advantages, it is expected that actors who possess higher amounts of capital will be more likely to resist and maintain their position in the field. As Bourdieu (1997) has suggested, actors' with higher amounts of capital are more able to use and convert these amounts of capital into specific resources and strategies as circumstances emerge. In addition, Fligstein and McAdam (2012:102) argue that actors will engage in creative strategies to improve their position in the field:

We should expect field actors to routinely engage in behaviours that are designed to improve their position in the field while guarding against any significant loss of strategic advantage. But even the most risk-averse actors can be expected on occasion to shift strategies, forge new alliances, or otherwise alter their patterns of interaction with key actors inside and outside the strategic action field

In addition to this quotation, media scholars have suggested that, albeit in difficult conditions, journalists working in adverse environments – in exogenous shocks such as wars or waves of criminal violence – have developed “creative strategies to gain and maintain autonomy” (Waisbord, 2013:44). In their investigation into journalists’ performance during the Iraq war, Robinson et al., (2010) found that, under certain circumstances, journalists and news organisations were capable of using their professional autonomy in order to create “pockets of resistance”. Such pockets of resistance are strategic actions and practices aimed at overcoming self-censorship and, indeed, journalists adopt day-to-day creative strategies to negotiate, maintain and enhance their professional autonomy (Vandevoordt, 2017:613; Waisbord, 2013:44; Kramp and Weichert, 2014:18).

In reference to these practices, in this thesis I have coined the term *strategies for safety autonomy*, which is defined as actors’ capacity to put their volumes and forms of capital to use in developing mental schemes, operational tactics and collective actions aimed at enhancing professional practice while reducing work-related risks. This term is largely inspired by Mellor’s (2009) concept of strategies for autonomy, which are discursive tactics that journalists deploy in order to enhance professional autonomy; “several Arab journalists have managed to assume a certain autonomy in their profession in order to show that they were not mere mouthpieces for their regimes” (Mellor, 2009:319). Mellor borrowed this term from Chalaby (1996), who suggests that the journalistic field, as a field of discursive production, develops its own discursive norms and values, which journalists reproduce depending on the social context and the “position the agent occupies in the field” (Chalaby, 1996:695). In contrast to Mellor’s term, which applies in autocratic contexts, the concept advanced in the present work incorporates the concept of safety, which refers to “the condition of being protected from or unlikely to cause danger, risk, or injury”

(“Safety”, Oxford Dictionary, 2017). This condition is essential for journalists aimed at providing information and news without “fearing for their security and life” (UNESCO, 208).

Based upon Fligstein and McAdam’s (2012) model of field theory, it is expected that journalists could use their volumes and forms of capital to develop strategies for safety autonomy and, more importantly, those journalists who possess higher levels of capital are more likely to adopt the aforementioned strategies. Key to the adoption of strategies for safety autonomy lie in the actors’ capacity to convert their capital into resources needed to create the aforementioned strategies. Drawing upon the applications and developments of the field perspective undertaken by media and communication researchers (Bourdieu, 2005; Benson, 2006; Powers and Vera-Zambrano, 2016; Vandevordt, 2016; Tandoc Jr., 2017), it is possible to operationalise into specific variables the four forms of capital under investigation in this research, namely: professional experience and previous experience with violence (a proxy of cultural capital); organisational support (economic capital); peer cooperation and trust (social capital); and professional prestige (symbolic capital)⁵⁷. For instance, journalists’ professional experience and prestige are key resources for developing strategies for sharing and receiving news beyond their local frontiers or to form critical news start-ups, among other outcomes.

In summary, this chapter has presented the theoretical bases that underpin this research. Based on the sociology of journalism, this chapter has introduced the theoretical assumptions and conceptual apparatus for understanding the complex

⁵⁷ As this thesis has concentrated on an actor-centred approach (Vandervoordt, 2017:613; Ryfe, 2017), these forms of capital were operationalised at the individual level.

relationship between journalism and the conditions in which it is practiced. Overall, the chapter has proposed that news production can be analysed by using field theory as a research tool, in particular using Bourdieu's concepts of field and capital (Bourdieu, 1997). In the discussion, I have supplemented Bourdieu's field approach with some elements of other versions of field theory, especially the organisational field approach (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) and the theory of strategic actions field (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012), as well as the applications and developments of the field perspective undertaken by scholars in political communication and journalism studies (Chalaby, 1996; Benson, 2004, 2006, 2010; Waisbord, 2013; Vandervoordt, 2017). Drawing upon the Mexican case, the chapter introduced and discussed conceptual elements central to the theoretical apparatus of this thesis, including field position, field logic, the relationship between the forms of capital and journalists' professional autonomy. Finally, based on the Mexican context, the chapter offered a theoretical apparatus for the analysis of journalistic practice in the context of conflict and violence.

Chapter 3

Methodology and research design

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study's methodology and research design. As a reminder, the study's main purpose is to investigate how do journalists operate in violent contexts? Therefore, this chapter aims to present the specific research methods and instruments (qualitative interviews) used to collect data to help answer this main research question. As explained in the Introduction, the two main empirical research questions of this study are:

- Considering Mexico's War on Drugs as an exogenous shock to the field, how do journalists' individual dispositions of forms and quantity of capital influence their exposure to risk in violent subnational settings?
- How do journalists' individual dispositions of forms and quantity of capital influence the adoption of strategies for enhancing their professional autonomy and safety in the aforementioned settings?

In accordance with the field approach taken in this investigation, these two research questions aim to capture how journalists' individual positions in the field both constrain (increase journalists' exposure to risk) and enable (foster the adoption of strategies for safety autonomy) journalistic practice in violent contexts. In order to answer these empirical questions, this study pursues a subnational comparative approach. As a research strategy, a subnational comparative approach aims to compare the risk mitigation practices and the adoption of strategic behaviour for continuing to publish while reducing work-related dangers among local journalists. As is detailed in this chapter, this study has followed a subnational comparative

strategy because the vast majority of assaults against the media occur at a local level, where the press is weaker (than at national level), and the media market is smaller. Additionally, this chapter explains why qualitative in-depth interviews were used in this study and, more importantly, how this technique was applied. In doing so, it is argued that in the context of risk and violence, in-depth interviews with key participants (like journalists) could offer very rich and valuable information that other approaches (like quantitative surveys) often miss. This chapter also details the key decisions made in order to contact possible participants for this study, as well as the ethical dilemmas and challenges encountered in the field.

In terms of structure, this chapter begins with a detailed explanation of the rationale behind this research design as well as how this strategy was implemented. From here, the chapter reviews the qualitative approach followed in this study and, therefore, the research instruments (qualitative interviews), sampling strategies and fieldwork are explained in detail. Additionally, this chapter reviews the process of processing and analysing data (around 38 hours of recorded material), and ends with a reflection on ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design: A Subnational Comparative Strategy

(following the most similar system design)

Comparisons are essential tools for analysis and are widely regarded as one of the most valuable research methods in social science (Lijphart, 1971:682; Collier, 1993:105). In the field of media and communication, comparative communication research refers to a study that contrasts at least one object of investigation (e.g. journalistic practices) embedded in at least two units of analysis (e.g. world regions,

countries, sub-national states) (Esser, 2013:115). The assumption behind this approach is that particular institutional contexts (e.g. Mexico's subnational states) shape the phenomena of scholarly interest (e.g. journalists' professional practice in violent settings) (Przeworski and Teune, 1970:552).

In their work on comparative media systems in western democracies, Hallin and Mancini (2004:1 and 3; also see Canel and Voltmer, 2014) distinguish two basic functions of the comparative tradition: on the one hand, this type of research "sensitizes us to variation and to similarity"; on the other hand, it allows the researcher to develop causal inferences. Indeed, the choice of study design allows, and aims for, comparative analysis that otherwise cannot be identified in a single unit of analysis. Specifically, in this study comparisons are employed to shed light upon similarities and patterns regarding journalists' risk exposure and journalists' adoption of strategies for safety autonomy. Regarding the second function (fostering causal inferences), Hallin and Mancini observe that the comparative approach allows the researcher to a "test hypotheses about the interrelationships among social phenomena" (2004:4). Indeed, the choice of study design aims to illuminate causal mechanisms behind the daily interactions shaping journalistic work in violent contexts. Specifically, in this study comparisons are employed for concept formation (e.g. strategies for safety autonomy) as well as for theory building (e.g. to test specific hypotheses and relationships).

For the comparative purposes of this investigation, the role of context is fundamental because comparative media research draws our attention to the explanatory relevance of the contextual environment when explaining political communication and journalism (Esser and Hanitzsch, 2012:6). The role of context in qualitative comparative analysis, however, needs to be understood in terms of two extreme poles: the universalistic approaches, on the one hand, and the cultural ones,

on the other (Voltmer and Kraetzschmar, 2015:11). The latter advocates for context-free explanations aimed at fostering universal patterns; while the former advocates for the pre-eminence of cultural case-based accounts and the impossibility of comparative analysis (Voltmer and Kraetzschmar, 2015:12; Hantrais, 1999). Thus, the comparative approach followed in this study sits in the middle of these two extreme poles, taking the position that the social and institutional context in which journalists operate matters (Reese, 2016), while also operating on the understanding that a level of abstraction is important in order to move from description to explanation to theory building (Sartori 1970; Hantrais, 1999).

In addition to the comparative qualitative research approach, this study follows a subnational research strategy (Snyder, 2001), defined as systematic analysis to investigate social reality in territorially-defined subnational cases (e.g. regions, states, provinces, cities) (Snyder, 2001). The main reason for the adoption of such a strategy is that the object under investigation in this study is the practice of local journalism in violent contexts across Mexican states.

To date, the vast majority of empirical research on conflict reporting has concentrated on accounts that focus on the national level of analysis (Kramp and Weichert, 2014; Vandevordt, 2017) or regional (Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014) or local case studies (Del Palacio, 2015). Likewise, just a few scholars have used a comparative subnational research strategy to analyse conflict reporting across subnational states in a country (e.g. Holland and Rios, 2017; Brambila, 2017b). Therefore, the subnational research design of this study aims to contribute to this approach in communication and journalism studies.

Key to the research strategy are the units of analysis. Following Snyder (2001) and others (Gibson, 2013; Durazo-Hermann, 2017; Salazar, 2017), this study used each of Mexico's 32 subnational states as units of analysis. As has been argued, it is

worth examining social dynamics within subnational states in Federal democracies (De Albuquerque, 2012) – like Mexico – where the research object under investigation (i.e. journalistic practice) may be shaped differently by subnational social, economic, political, media and criminal dynamics.

According to Snyder (2001), a comparative subnational strategy has two advantages in terms of research design and theory building. Firstly, it allows for the examination of the research phenomenon and tests hypotheses about the factors shaping conflict reporting in many cases (32 states) instead of just one (Mexico) (Snyder, 2001:93). Secondly, this research strategy makes it possible to advance more valid findings within homogeneous cases than in cross-national analysis, which are beset with problems of heterogeneity among their units of analysis (Snyder, 2001:93).

Contrary to other studies that have examined conflict reporting across subnational states in Mexico – especially Relly and González de Bustamante (2014), who conducted an analysis on conflict reporting in northern Mexican states – the present study examines journalistic practices across units of analysis distributed across the national territory (including states in the five regions of the country), carefully selecting cases in order to achieve this. While random selection of units of analysis is crucial to statistical analysis, it has been suggested that random selection may produce biases in small-N research (for example in 32 units of analysis) (King et al., 1994:125). Therefore, scholars have agreed that the analysis of a small number of cases (like the 32 subnational states) requires the cautious, informed and theoretically guided choice of non-random cases (Gerring and Seawright, 2008).

One way of achieving the cautious and informed selection of cases in comparative research is by following a control strategy. Indeed, the most crucial element in small-N comparative analysis is to foster controlling comparisons across units of analysis (e.g. Hallin and Mancini, 2004); as Sartori (1991: 244) has said:

“comparing is controlling”. Thus, in order to foster controlling comparisons, scholars have long used two types of research strategies: “most similar systems design” and “most different systems design” (Przeworski and Teune 1970:33). Drawing upon Mill’s method of difference, most similar systems design seeks to contrast units of analysis “that share a host of common features in an effort to neutralize some differences while highlighting others” (Todd, 2001:71) (e.g. most violent subnational states). Thus, in order to achieve this goal and in line with the specialised literature, in this study the most violent subnational states as a criteria for selection was chosen following the “most similar systems design”. The main reason for the adoption of such a strategy is that the object under investigation in this study is the practice of local journalism in violent environments across the Mexican states.

Thus, in order to achieve this research goal, this study examines and compares the perceptions and experiences of local journalists who live and work in ten (out of 32) of the most dangerous states in Mexico. Thus, in this study the heightened degree of violence in a subnational state was used as a criteria for selection. This criterion was supplemented by a selection of the two subnational states deemed to be most violent in each of the five regions in the country (for a total of 10 selected states out of 32). Thus, the selection of the ten selected states followed two steps.

First, this study follows regional differences as criteria for selection. This is because Mexico presents internal differences in terms of historical, political and media institutions (Lawson, 2002) and, as has been well documented, acts of aggression against the press follow regional patterns in terms of the form of violence and the type of perpetrator (i.e. criminals organisations, public officials, public security forces, social movements, etc.) (Article 19 Mexico, 2016 and 2017; Del Palacio, 2015). With this in mind, this research follows the division of Mexico into five geographical regions, carried out in 2013 by the Mexican government’s National

Public Security Council – the five regions, and the states within them, are as follows (see Figure 4):

1) *Northwest* (Baja California, Baja California Sur, Chihuahua, Sinaloa and Sonora);

2) *Northeast* (Coahuila, Durango, Nuevo León, San Luis Potosí and Tamaulipas);

3) *West* (Aguascalientes, Colima, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán, Nayarit, Querétaro and Zacatecas);

4) *Centre* (Mexico City, Estado de Mexico, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Morelos, Puebla y Tlaxcala); and

5) *Southeast* (Campeche, Chiapas, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo, Tabasco, Veracruz y Yucatán).



Figure 4 Geographical division of Mexico into five regions

Source: National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI).

Second, in addition to regional difference, this study selected the two most violent subnational states in each of the aforementioned five regions. According to academic research (Asal et al., 2016; Waisbord, 2002 and 2007; Nerone, 1994), violence against the press is positively related to levels of societal violence (for example average rate of intended homicides). In the Mexican case, both statistical analysis (Brambila, 2017b; Holland and Rios, 2017) and qualitative studies (Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014; Edmonds-Poli, 2013) have suggested that anti-press violence is more likely to occur in those subnational regions with higher levels of social violence. In her quantitative investigation, Brambila (2017b) shows that journalists are at greatest risk of being violently murdered in subnational polities with higher levels of violent deaths per population level – measured by the average homicide per 100,000 population per year by state (from 2010 to 2015). Based on this, the two most violent states (measured by the average intentional homicides between 2007 and 2015) for each of the five regions were selected for this study (Table 1 and Figure 5).

Level of violence*	Northwest	Northeast	West	Centre	Southeast
+2000	<u>Chihuahua</u>			<u>State of Mex Guerrero</u>	
1500-2000	<u>Sinaloa</u>				
1000-1500		<u>Nuevo León Tamaulipas</u>	<u>Jalisco</u>	Mexico City	
500-1000	Baja California Sonora	Durango Coahuila	<u>Michoacán</u> Guanajuato	Morelos	<u>Veracruz</u> <u>Oaxaca</u>
50-5000	Baja California Sur	San Luis Potosí	Nayarit Zacatecas Colima Aguascalientes Querétaro	Puebla Hidalgo Tlaxcala	Quintana Roo Campeche Yucatán

Table 1 Level of societal violence per region (average homicides rate 2007-2015)

Sources: National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI). *Average number of homicides per year 2007-2015.



Figure 5 Geographical distribution of the ten selected states

Therefore, based on the level of societal violence and the country's division into five regions, the two states that presented the highest levels of societal violence from 2007 to 2015 have been selected from each of the five regions. The selected states were: Chihuahua, Estado de México, Guerrero, Jalisco, Michoacán, Nuevo León, Oaxaca, Sinaloa, Tamaulipas and Veracruz.

As shown below in Table 2, these ten states experienced the highest rates of aggression against the press between 2007 and 2015. More specifically, between 2007 and 2015, these ten selected states accounted for 46 percent of aggression against the press in the country (e.g. injuries, threats or intimidations, among others), and 76 percent of violent murders of journalists. Furthermore, these states account for 70 percent (16 out of 23) of journalists that were reported missing between 2007 and 2015 (PGR, 2018); as well as 67 percent (27 out of 40) of violent attacks against media facilities between 2010 and 2015 (PGR, 2018). Overall, this set of 10 cases is assumed

to contain characteristic factors of influence that help to explain the similarities in the academic object of inquiry (journalists' risk exposure and professional performance). Additionally, these cases were selected in a way that provided diversity regarding local media systems and a wide variety of local institutional constellations. Finally, it is worth noting that the thesis does not intend to offer a robust state-by-state comparison. Instead, it has followed a research strategy and selection of units of analysis for analysing a broad range of experiences that are representative of the most dangerous assignments in journalism in Mexico.

State	Population (2015)	Violent murder of journalists (2007-2015)	Acts of aggression against the press (2009-2015)
Chihuahua	3,556,574	12	81
Estado de México	16,187,60	3	37
Guerrero	3,533,251	8	133
Jalisco	7,844,830	1	23
Michoacán	4,584,471	3	39
Nuevo León	5,119,504	3	31
Oaxaca	3,967,889	4	154
Sinaloa	2,966,321	5	61
Tamaulipas	3,441,698	5	63
Veracruz	8,112,505	11	240

Table 2 Statistics for crime and aggression against journalists in the ten selected states between 2007 and 2015

Sources: For population and violent murders see INEGI (2017); for violent homicides of journalists see PGR (2018), and for acts of aggression against journalists see Article 19 Mexico (2017).

In the next section I explain the rationale behind why qualitative interviews were used as the main research instrument in this study.

3.3 The Research Instrument: Qualitative Interviews

Although qualitative research may be criticised for the relatively small and limited number of cases it takes into account (Seawright and Gerring, 2008), scholars have argued that this type of research is actually more productive in analysing people's behaviour in violent and conflict settings, especially because this method offers a clearer picture about actors' perceptions and experiences in dangerous contexts (Malthaner, 2014; Kalyvas, 2006; Hannerz, 2004). In the field of media and communication, specifically in the sub-field of conflict reporting, some scholars have suggested that, as they produce important insights into the local causes and consequences of anti-press violence, qualitative methods are very well positioned to analyse journalists' performance in dangerous environments (Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2017b: 313). In this line of inquiry, one of the more common ways of doing qualitative inquiries on journalistic news production is by conducting long-term ethnographies on how news is made – such as by participant observation (Hannerz, 2004). However, one of the more prevalent barriers in following ethnographic perspectives for studying conflict reporting is the need to mitigate the exposure to extreme risk on the part of the researcher and participants in the field (Wood, 2006). To tackle some of these barriers and to minimise the risk level for the researcher and participants, I have relied upon qualitative interviews with journalists and key informants as the main research instrument of this type.

Qualitative interviews are a type of in-depth conversation that aims to produce knowledge about the phenomenon of inquiry and elicit accurate information about the personal, professional and social contexts of social actors (e.g. journalists, activists) (Hartin, 2004: 105; King and Horrocks, 2010: 17). In fact, scholars have long argued that interviews with participants involved in conflict settings offer an invaluable

source of information to explain their day-to-day practices and interactions (Kalyvas, 2006). Given these advantages and the long tradition in communication and media studies often relying upon qualitative interviews to develop foundational knowledge in the field (e.g. Tuchman, 1978), media scholars have used qualitative interviews to analyse news content and the practice of journalism during times of conflict and in violent settings (Tumber and Webster, 2006; Kramp and Weichert, 2014; Armoudian, 2016; Cottle et al., 2016; Lohner and Banjac, 2017). More importantly for us is the fact that one of the research methods most often used by scholars analysing conflict reporting from a field perspective has been the qualitative interview (Vandevordt, 2017; Robinson et al., 2010; Markham, 2011).

Among qualitative interview techniques (Edwards and Holland, 2013: 13; Lindlof and Taylor, 2011), this study has employed qualitative open-ended interviews; a type of semi-structured, in-depth interview chosen for this particular study because of their function as an exploratory, inductive means of fulfilling the research goals. As Lazarsfeld (1944:39) has commented, the name “open-ended interviews” refers to a crucial component of this qualitative technique; the fact that such tools “do not set fixed answers in terms of which a respondent must reply”; in other words, the name suggests that the goal of this technique is to “elicit open-ended responses” (Lindlof and Taylor, 2011: 179). Additionally, and contrary to closed-ended interviews, the open-ended interview allows the respondent to express their points of view without being pre-determined by a fixed set of answers (Schuman and Presser, 1979: 693).

As a qualitative tool, the “open-ended interview” can be divided into two categories: standardised and non-standardised (Fowler and Mangione, 1990). This study uses both categories – the former as a list of fixed questions (questionnaire) to minimise variations in the questions asked of the participants, and the latter to explore

and produce knowledge regarding information in order to gain a nuanced understanding of a specific situation or event. Both approaches belong to the category of “open-ended interview” because the interviewer can adjust topics and questions as the conversation progresses (as opposed to a fully structured questionnaire, in which no follow-up questions are allowed), while the interviewee has enough space for clarifications and to answer questions in their own terms. The main difference, however, is that the non-standardised approach aims to cover the *same* questions and topics (ideally in the same order) for a given population (e.g. journalists); while the non-standardised approach aims to cover *different* questions and topics among a diversity of social groups (e.g. journalists, activists).

Research Question	Empirical Research Questions	Main Research Method	Complementary Research Method	Chapter
How do journalists operate in violent contexts?	1: How do journalists' individual dispositions of forms and quantity of capital influence their exposure to risk in violent subnational settings?	Standardised open-ended interviews with local journalists in the ten selected states	In-depth open-ended interviews with key informants	Chapter 5
	2: How do journalists' individual dispositions of forms and quantity of capital influence the adoption of strategies for enhancing their professional autonomy and safety?			Chapter 6

Table 3 Methodological approach of this research

As detailed in Table 3, the standardised open-ended questionnaire employed by journalists was the main research method used in this study. Socio-demographic results and further descriptive analysis from the study's participants in the aforementioned standardised open-ended questionnaire are presented in Chapter 4.

This research method was complemented by a set of interviews with key informants (e.g. journalists, activists). Overall, both types of interviews (especially the standardised open-ended questionnaire) were used to answer the two empirical research questions in Chapters 5 and 6. Although the main research method followed in this thesis was standardised interviews with journalists based in different Mexican states, non-standardised interviews with key-informants provided the background and context in which the study is grounded (and also provided seminal information for the design of the questionnaire implemented in the set of standardised interviews).

The following section explains the sample methods employed, as well as how these interviews were designed, conducted and analysed.

3.4 Standardised Open-ended Interviews with Journalists Across Subnational States

Standardised open-ended interviews aim to minimise variations in the questions posed to participants (Fowler and Mangione, 1990). As such, these interviews could be catalogued as “respondent interviews” (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002: 179). Among the main goals of this type of interview (Lazarfeld, 1944: 44), the most relevant for this investigation is to determine what factors can influence a person to act in certain ways. The standardised open-ended interviews were conducted with 49 journalists who live and work in the 10 most violent states selected in this study (see section 3.2).

The main aim of the standardised open-ended interviews was to identify and analyse in a comprehensive manner the day-to-day interactions, practical factors and main strategies followed by journalists who work on dangerous stories and live in Mexico’s most violent states. This questionnaire was designed to cover the personal,

professional, media and contextual aspects of journalistic work in dangerous newsbeats and hazardous places (see Appendix D).

Following specialised literature on qualitative research about sensitive topics (Cowles, 1988:171; Malthaner, 2014), I aimed to create an atmosphere of trust by initially asking questions regarding interviewees' reporting practices and then, once the atmosphere was established, asking questions regarding their personal experiences with violence. The questionnaire therefore contained 18 questions focussing on two main dimensions: 1) Journalists' perceptions, experiences and points of view on risks, challenges and strategies for covering and publishing in conflict settings (questions from 1 to 8); and 2) journalists' perceptions, experiences and points of view on anti-press violence, journalists' and media houses' responses to media aggression, and journalists' and media owners' solidarity in situations of conflict (questions from 9 to 18) (see Appendix D).

The questionnaire was informed by the aforementioned set of interviews with key informants, as well as different strands of academic literature. The questionnaire was discussed with my principal supervisor and piloted with four journalists in Mexico in December 2015 (see Table 3). Following the pilot study, a few amendments were made to the final version before it was implemented (see Appendix D).

Of the ten selected states, five professional journalists were selected per state, with journalist defined as an individual who works for a news media organisation, and is involved in news production, editing or coordination⁵⁸. On the basis of this definition, at least three local journalists and two national correspondents were selected. Local journalists are defined as those who live in a subnational state and work for a news media that is also based there (e.g. *El Diario de Juarez* which is based

⁵⁸ The definition does not consider photo-journalists, video-journalists, or bloggers.

in the city of Juarez); while national correspondents are defined as journalists who live in a subnational state but work for news media in Mexico City (e.g. *La Jornada*). No study to date has systematically compared these two types of journalists in Mexico. Additionally, the inclusion of both local journalists and national correspondents in this sample was made in accordance with the field approach, which accounts for differences between actors in the field (Bourdieu, 2005), as well as spatial differences in the field between the centre and the regions (Benson, 2013:78).

Thus, a strategic sample was built for recruiting study participants. In accordance with the qualitative design of this study, the sample was made using purposive and snowball sampling methods (non-probability sampling techniques). In this sense, the sample aimed to “encapsulate a relevant range in relation to the wider universe, but not to represent it directly” (Mason, 2002:124) (more details about this are provided in the next chapter). This type of sampling enables the researcher to run cross-contextual comparisons and thus engage in theory building (Mason, 2002:124). From this strategic sample, it is argued, a deeper understanding of the practice of journalism in the most violent states could be generated. Although I exploited personal and professional relationships in order to contact the participants, a large proportion of them (around 40%) were contacted through a local NGO, *Colecitvo de Análisis de la Seguridad con Democracia (CASEDE)* [Democratic Security Analysis Collective], an organisation with proven experience in working with local journalists on security concerns. This decision was taken due to the common field entry barriers, especially in the context of violence and conflict (Malthaner, 2014; Peritore, 1990). In order to avoid selection bias and a loss of control over the respondent sample, I first selected the ten states and then asked the NGO for potential participants in each. In many cases, first contact with potential participants was established by the CASEDE. Where the NGO did not have participants from the selected states, I used personal relationships

and a snowball strategy to contact participants (around 60%). The snowball strategy was particularly useful when contacting national correspondents who worked for the same media outlet but were allocated across the national territory (e.g. *Reforma* and *Proceso*).



Figure 6 Distribution of study participants per state and media outlet

In all cases, after making first contact, I called each participant to establish whether they were willing to take part in the study. Next, via email I provided all of the information regarding the study's aims and purpose, along with assurances regarding confidentiality of information, a participant information sheet and a consent form (see Appendixes B and C). Overall, the vast majority were very willing to cooperate with this study; in total, I contacted around 55 participants and the response rate was over 85%. One of the reasons for the very high response rate was that all of the participants contacted through the NGO agreed to participate in this study.

49 open-ended questionnaires were provided to participants, either in person (on 5 occasions), via telephone (42), through Skype (1) or by email (1), from November 2015 to April 2016 (apart from two interviews that were carried out in

October 2015 with an earlier version of the questionnaire) (for the full list of interviewees see Table 4). With participants' permission, all interviews were audio recorded (see Appendix B). The participants were chosen for their experience of reporting on beats such as: local politics and corruption, security, justice, organised crime and human rights violations, from 21 cities across the ten selected states. These 21 cities included some of the most violent cities in the world⁵⁹. Although the 49 journalists worked mainly in print media outlets, Internet, TV and radio personnel were also included. The average duration of interviews was 25 minutes and the total time of the interviews was around 21 hours (1,260 minutes).

The sample includes national correspondents from the most prominent media outlets in Mexico (like *Reforma*, *La Jornada* and *Proceso*). Among the local media personnel, the sample includes numerous journalists from small to medium print and digital outlets (like *Tucán* [Toucan], from Guerrero; *Búsqueda* [Search] from Michoacán; and *Espejo* [Mirror] from Sinaloa), as well as from legacy newspapers (like *El Diario de Juarez* in Chihuahua, Guadalajara's *El Informador* [The Informant], *El Imparcial* [The Impartial] from Oaxaca or *El Mañana* [Tomorrow] from Tamaulipas) (see Table 4). The sample, however, did not include any photojournalists, videographers or fixers.

Ideally, the sample aimed to include at least two national correspondents and three local journalists. Although this goal was achieved in three out of the ten selected states (e.g. Guerrero, Michoacán and Oaxaca), this was different elsewhere. In some

⁵⁹ According to the Mexico's Citizens' Council for Public Security's annual ranking of the world's most violent cities for 2016, 6 out of 50 of the world's most violent cities were included in this study, namely: Chihuahua and Ciudad Juárez (in the state of Chihuahua), Mazatlán and Culiacán (in Sinaloa), Ciudad Victoria (in Tamaulipas), and Acapulco (in Guerrero) (Woody, 2017).

states the snowball process led to the selection of three national correspondents instead of two (e.g. Nuevo León and Veracruz); while in others just one national correspondent was selected (e.g. Chihuahua, Estado de México and Jalisco). In Sinaloa and Tamaulipas it was not possible to contact any national correspondents, as in the case of Tamaulipas for example, all national media outlets had removed their personnel due to security reasons. The only subnational state with less than five participants was the Estado de México, where it was only possible to contact four participants. In the end, the sample included 15 national correspondents, as well as 5 editors and 24 journalists working for local media outlets. It is worth noting that the sample includes three chief editors (one in Nuevo León and two in Sinaloa) and six free-lancers. In any case, this sample was very useful for investigating the practice of journalism in conflict settings, which is the main research object of this study.

For the purposes of this investigation, I have removed all identifying information from the data. Following the American Psychological Association citation guidelines, participants are referred in the oncoming chapters only by the code that I have assigned to them, followed by their job description (e.g. C5, Information Chief). Such a code is made up of the initial of the subnational state in which the participant works (e.g. 'C' for Chihuahua) followed by an assigned number (from one to five) (for the full list of interviewee codes see Table 4 overleaf). In just a few cases, when the information is relevant for the analysis, I have mentioned the names of particular news media organizations. In any case it is impossible to identify participants' identity.

Number	Code	Job description	Type of media	Date of interview	Length of interview (mins)
Pilot Study					
1	Pilot 1	National Correspondent	Print	1 December 2015	23
2	Pilot 2	Journalist	Print	1 December 2015	20
3	Pilot 3	Investigative Journalist	Agency	3 December 2015	50
4	Pilot 4	Journalist	Print	4 December 2015	18
Northwest					
Nuevo León					
1	N1	Editor-in-chief	Print	12 January 2016	26
2	N2	Journalist	Print	27 February 2016	0
3	N3	National Correspondent	Print	27 January 2016	23
4	N4	National Correspondent	Print	27 January 2016	18
5	N5	National Correspondent	Radio	28 January 2016	31
Tamaulipas					
1	T1	Journalist/Editor	Radio	4 December 2015	40
2	T2	Journalist	Print	5 December 2015	36
3	T3	Journalist	Print	10 December 2015	28
4	T4	Editor	Print	22 December 2016	41
5	T5	Information Chief	Print	12 January 2016	27
Northeast					
Chihuahua					
1	C1	Journalist	Radio	11 December 2015	33
2	C2	Journalist	Print	11 December 2015	19
3	C3	Journalist	Print	16 January 2015	20
4	C4	Journalist	Print	14 December 2015	12
5	C5	Information Chief	Print	22 January 2015	20
Sinaloa					
1	S1	Journalist	Print	7 December 2015	32
2	S2	Editor-in-chief	Radio	9 December 2015	16
3	S3	Editor-in-chief	Print	11 December 2015	29
4	S4	Journalist	Print	16 December 2015	31
5	S5	Chief Editor	Print	8 January 2016	25
West					
Jalisco					
1	J1	Journalist	Print	16 January 2016	41
2	J2	Journalist	Digital	19 January 2016	13
3	J3	Journalist	Print	26 January 2016	24
4	J4	National Correspondent	Print	27 January 2016	27
5	J5	Journalist	Digital	28 January 2016	20
Michoacán					
1	M1	National Correspondent	Print	14 December 2015	48
2	M2	Journalist	Digital	16 December 2015	35
3	M3	Journalist / Columnist	Digital	22 December 2015	41
4	M4	National Correspondent	Print	8 January 2016	34
5	M5	Journalist	TV	19 January 2016	21
Centre					
Estado de México					
1	E1	Journalist	Digital	14 January 2016	26
2	E2	Journalist	TV	21 January 2016	41
3	E3	Journalist	TV	27 February 2016	19
4	E4	National Correspondent	Print	20 March 2016	44
Guerrero					
1	G1	National Correspondent	Print	8 January 2016	23
2	G2	Journalist	Radio	20 October 2015	45
3	G3	Journalist	Print/ Digital	11 December 2015	20

4	G4	Journalist	Print / Digital	12 December 2015	15
5	G5	National Correspondent	Radio	8 January 2016	16
Southeast					
Veracruz					
1	V1	National Correspondent	Print	20 October 2015	16
2	V2	National Correspondent	TV	10 December 2015	20
3	V3	Journalist	Print	12 January 2016	11
4	V4	Journalist	Digital	29 January 2016	26
5	V5	National Correspondent	Print	8 April 2016	30
Oaxaca					
1	O1	Journalist	Print	8 December 2015	26
2	O2	Journalist	Print	11 December 2015	22
3	O3	National Correspondent	Print	14 December 2015	22
4	O4	Journalist	Print	8 January 2016	20
5	O5	National Correspondent	Print	8 January 2016	23

Table 4 List of interview with journalists

In addition to the set of 49 interviews discussed above, I also conducted non-standardised open-ended interviews with key informants. In the next section it is detailed how these interviews were conducted as well as sample techniques and questionnaire design.

3.5 Non-standardised open-ended interviews with key informants

The non-standardised open-ended interview aims to create knowledge under the assumption that the respondent is willing and able to provide accurate information about the phenomenon under investigation. As Lazarsfeld suggests (1944:40-49), non-standardised open-ended interviews are conducted to explore the research object and, here, to investigate the most relevant factors shaping conflict reporting within Mexico's subnational states. In that sense, the set of non-standardised open-ended interviews conducted for the purposes of this study could be catalogued as "informant interviews", because "informants" were interviewed "whose knowledge is quite valuable for achieving research objects" (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002:177). Thus, as

scholars have suggested, when it comes to studying topics concerning violence and conflict, a wide range of informants were selected in order to incorporate “as many angles of vision as possible to bear on the phenomenon” (Collins, 2009:32; for media and communication studies see Wolfsfeld, 1997:7).

As Lindlof and Taylor (2002:177-178) have commented, “good key informant[s]” are often “savvy social actors”, who “can speak knowledgeably” about the phenomenon under investigation and are “plugged into one or more key social networks”. Thus, the main criterion for selection of “key informants” was professional experience, especially in Mexico’s subnational states, around the topics of anti-press violence, conflict reporting and safety of journalists. Based on these assumptions, two types of key informants were selected: media personnel (12 participants) and activists (4 participants).

Similar to elite interviews (Harvey, 2011), access to informants in areas of conflict and violent settings is often a difficult task (Malthaner: 2014). In order to overcome such a barrier, I have relied upon personal contacts in the country (gained prior to Ph.D study, when I worked as a research assistant and in the media) as well as snowball sampling techniques to obtain access to the aforementioned informants (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). Networks of colleagues, friends or contacts who were connected to the field were particularly important because they helped to establish trusting relationships, which is usually very challenging in times of conflict and in violent settings (Malthaner: 2014). Although the two groups of informants – media personnel and activists – were approached by different means, in the vast majority of cases access to key informants was obtained after presenting myself as a scholar pursuing a doctoral degree in the UK, explaining (in person or remotely) the academic purposes of the study and guaranteeing anonymity (see ethical considerations below) (See appendix A and B).

Thus, for the purposes of this study, 16 non-standardised, open-ended interviews were conducted (for the full list of interviewees see Table 5 below). The 16 interviews were made up of 12 media personnel (editors-in-chief, investigative journalists and reporters) and four activists. Among the media personnel, the sample included four editors-in-chief from national (1) and local newspapers (3), six investigative journalists (all but one are based in Mexico City but usually are assigned to hazardous journalistic coverage around the country) and two columnists for local legacy newspapers. Overall, media personnel not based in Mexico City were located in Sonora (1), Coahuila (2), Guerrero (1) and San Luis Potosí (1). Within the set of activists, the sample included people from national and international press rights organisations – e.g. Reporters Without Borders and Centro de Derechos Humanos Agustín Pro [Human Rights Center Agustin Pro], among others. All activists were based in Mexico City, but they work in close relation with local NGOs in the country's interior. 15 out of 16 key informants were male. 13 of 16 key informants were Mexicans; one was a US citizen, one a British citizen and one an Argentinian citizen (all three have lived in Mexico for more than 15 years).

I developed a semi-structured interview for each informant because each of the 16 informants was chosen for their expertise and specific knowledge (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). During the conversations, interviewees were given the opportunity to comment and add any other information they considered important. Half of the interviews (8) were conducted in person in Mexico City; while the other half (8) were conducted via Skype. All interviews were conducted between September 2015 and February 2016 and lasted between 16 minutes and two hours, with the total duration of this set of interviews being around 17 hours (1,016 minutes). With the participants' permission, all interviews were audio recorded (See Appendix B). Although the main purpose of these interviews were used for triangulation of findings, they also served

to inform the design of the standardised questionnaire that will be introduced in the next section (See Appendix C). In addition to this, access to key informants functioned as an “entry point” to gain access to potential participants for the standardised open-ended interviews. Additionally, these in-depth interviews with key informants functioned as a tool for triangulation of information, data and findings.

Finally, for the purposes of this investigation I have removed all personal identifying information. Therefore, following the American Psychological Association’s citation guidelines, participants will be referred to in the following chapters by a number that I have assigned to them, followed by their job description (e.g. 2, Editor-in-Chief).

Number	Type of interviewee	Job description	Organisation	Date of interview (all in 2015)	Length of interview (mins)
1	Media personnel	Columnist and scholar	El Colegio de Sonora	15 September	23
2	Media personnel	Editor-in-chief	La Jornada San Luis	9 September	43
3	Media personnel	Investigative journalist	American newspaper	15 September	22
4	Media personnel	Investigative journalist	Freelance	11 September	31
5	Activist	Activist	Centro de Derechos Humanos AP	23 September	41
6	Media personnel	Editor-in-chief	El Siglo de Torreón	24 September	32
7	Media personnel	Investigative journalist	Freelance	29 September	42
8	Activist	Activist	Reporters Without Borders	17 November	38
9	Activist	Scholar and activist	El Colegio de México	17 November	16
10	Media personnel	Journalist and scholar	UNAM	18 November	40
11	Media personnel	Columnist	Milenio	19 November	39
12	Media personnel	Investigative journalist	AFP and Agora Guerrero	9 October	120
13	Media personnel	Editor-in-chief	National newspaper	1 December	22
14	Media personnel	Investigative journalist	Eje Central (digital magazine)	9 December	58
15	Media personnel	Editor-in-chief	National newspaper	5 January	25
16	Activist	Activist and journalist	Rory Peck Trust	15 December	35

Table 5 List of interviews with key informants

The following section aims to describe the analysis, interpretation and presentation of the resultant data, as well as the ethical considerations and measures taken to store and manage this data.

3.6 Analysis, Interpretation and Presentation of Data

After the 65 interviews were conducted, the audio files (containing around 40 hours of audio) were transcribed verbatim (in Spanish) (King and Horrocks, 2010:143) prior to analysis of the data. In order to conduct qualitative data analysis, scholars propose two main analytical approaches: deductive and inductive approaches (King and Horrocks, 2010). The former – deductive – is used when the researcher has prior knowledge of the key topics and the possible answers that participants have provided. This approach, however, can generate potential bias in the analysis, especially since the coding framework was chosen in advance. In order to mitigate such bias, I have followed an inductive approach to all 65 interviews, regardless of whether they were standardised or non-standardised interviews. This strategy allowed me to integrate data from both types of interviews in a process called data triangulation in qualitative research (King and Horrocks, 2010:164). I have conducted this “by hand”, meaning that I did not use specialised analysis software.

In qualitative research, one of the more common inductive approaches is thematic content analysis, consisting of analysing transcripts, identifying key themes and then gathering examples of those themes from the transcripts (King and Horrocks, 2010:149). In following this analysis type, and in order to achieve it, I have read all data in full and organised the most common key themes that have “emerge[d] from the data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006:89) – these included the main topics related to anti-

press violence and safety of journalists, which were mentioned by the 65 interviewees. At this stage, I also included personal notes that I wrote in my field diary during my time in Mexico.

Next, I conducted a line-by-line reading of the data in order to refine the more relevant themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006:91). This refinement was guided by looking for recurring regularities in the data. The regularities show patterns that can be organised into themes. In this way, the findings offered in the next section present evidence about regularities between individuals (Bazeley, 2013). For example, for the identification of the main safety strategies that journalists followed (which I explain in further detail in the next chapter), I make sure that each strategy was mentioned as being in at least half of the states in which this study was conducted. In this sense, the menu of strategic behaviour that I discuss in the next chapter aims to capture the main patterns and regularities regarding strategic behaviour between participants. The same can be argued about other findings, such as the risk that journalists encounter in their daily work, as well as the professional, organisational and social limits to strategic behaviour (such as the prevalence of: official sourcing; clientelistic relations; and sensitive topics at a local level and the rise of zones of silence). In all cases, the standard of evidence used was the number of regularities or patterns that participants mentioned.

In addition to this, the refinement about the more relevant themes was guided and designed to reflect the theoretical assumptions of this study. Therefore, I have concentrated on the constrainers or enablers of journalistic practice in violent settings, and on the four types of capital under study in this investigation – cultural, economic, social and symbolic. I also concentrated on the main strategies for safety autonomy that journalists applied. I then translated the selected material from Spanish to English. Finally, the thematic categories developed helped to write a draft of the findings and

later formed the major part of the two main empirical chapters in this investigation (Chapters 5 and 6).

Throughout this study, I also followed certain criteria for verification, which is defined in qualitative research as “the process of checking, confirming, making sure, and being certain” (Moore et al. 2002:18). In qualitative research, “verification refers to the mechanisms used during the process of research to incrementally contribute to ensuring reliability and validity and, thus, the rigor of a study” (Moore et al. 2002:18). Among the verification strategies applied in this study, I followed: *methodological coherence* (to ensure coherence between the research questions and the methods); *appropriate sampling* (which refers to selecting participants that represent or have knowledge about the research topic), and collecting and analysing data concurrently (to integrate and contrast data from different sources – also known as triangulation of qualitative data) (Moore et al. 2002:18).

Additionally, socio-demographic information and data about participants’ experiences with anti-press violence coming from the standardised open-ended interviews to 49 journalists were integrated into Chapter 4. This data was drawn from the personal profile of each of the participants and from the interviews themselves. This data is presented in Chapter 4 in relation to the specialised literature on this matter. Although this information is itself very relevant (like the form of violence and type of perpetrator), the main aim of Chapter 4 is to inform the reader about the personal, professional and institutional profiles of the participants, and to offer a more nuanced picture to contextualise Chapters 5 and 6, in which I answer the two main empirical questions that have guided this research.

3.7 Ethics, Data Storage and Data Management

Empirical investigations on conflict and violent settings represent not just methodological but ethical dilemmas and challenges to the researcher (Malthaner, 2014; Wood, 2006). As has been suggested (Wood, 2006:374), I took into consideration ethical dilemmas from the early stages of this research. Risk assessments were discussed with my main supervisor several times and I was guided by the ethical committee in the Department of Journalism at the University of Sheffield, UK, where I started this investigation in 2013. Ethical approval for conducting this research was granted on 18th May 2015 by the University of Sheffield (see Appendix A).

Following ethical approval guidelines, all interviewees were granted anonymity and confidentiality of information and received an information sheet and a consent form (in Spanish) (Kelman, 1972) (see Appendix B and C). At all times I presented myself as a young scholar pursuing a doctorate degree and, as scholars on field research in conflict zones have advised (Wood, 2006:380), at the beginning of each interview I ensured that participants understood the academic purposes of the study and the potential risks so that they could make an informed decision regarding whether to talk with me. With participants' consent, all interviews were also audio recorded. Therefore, prior to starting each interview, I ensured oral consent (which was audio-recorded) from study participants and emphasised the free and anonymous nature of their participation. Although anonymity was challenged by some participants (some local journalists who wanted to speak publicly about their cases), I persuaded them to follow the anonymity process as a cautionary measure. In the vast majority of the interviews, however, – in cases involving both journalists and activists – anonymity

was key to ensuring participation in this study. This is because they wanted to avoid repercussions (from their superiors or from third parties).

The ethical and privacy guidelines were also followed in relation to storing and managing the audio recordings, which were transferred to my laptop in the field and then deleted from the two recorder devices used. The laptop was password protected. Next, when I returned to the University of Leeds, I deleted all materials from my laptop and uploaded the recordings to the University's secure server (via my personal desk computer). At no point were any of the materials recorded made available to any person other than the researcher.

In addition to all of the above, I confronted additional ethical challenges that emerged during the course of this research. During the course of the research I noticed that the approval of and adherence to protocols was not enough to ensure full ethical behaviour; in fact, such protocols are aimed only at maintaining the minimal ethical guidelines and did not address the dilemmas and complexities of conducting research in settings of conflict and violence (Wood, 2006:380). Drawing upon my own experience, I have divided these further ethical challenges into two categories: 1) ethical dilemmas in the field; and 2) ethical dilemmas in the analysis of data.

Starting with the former (ethical dilemmas in the field), it should be noted that the often mentioned challenges in conducting fieldwork are "intensified" by the limited information and fast-changing and evolving environments in settings of conflict and violence (Wood, 2006:373). During the course of this research I therefore developed a type of "practical sense" to conduct my own investigation with the appropriate cautionary measures taken as required – what Bourdieu (1992: 66 and 81, cited in Baird, 2017: 6) has called "feel for the rules of the game". This feel and sensibility for conducting research guided my practical sense and ethical considerations throughout my fieldwork, applying for instance to a "practical sense"

on how to gain access to study participants. Quite early in the research I noticed that one of the main obstacles to pursuing my research was in gaining access to local journalists who work in violent settings and on sensitive topics. Therefore, following previous studies on the matter (Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014; Malthaner, 2014), I approached a large number of study participants through a local NGO with proven experience in working with local journalists on security concerns. This decision was very useful as an “entry point” (Malthaner, 2014) and enabled me to build a network for accessing potential participants across the country.

In addition to this, I also developed a “practical sense” of how to deal with emotional responses from study participants as they arose (Cowles, 1988:167). In that sense, as Cowles has noticed in his own research, my primary concern was human in nature: I was concerned about any unpleasant feelings that the participant might experience by reliving traumatic emotions and events. On several occasions during my interviews I emphasised the academic nature of the project and participants’ ability to discontinue the research if they wanted to avoid any particular subject. Although some participants talked about very sensitive, painful experiences, none of them evidenced emotional crises during data collection, one of the reasons being because in many cases journalists had already widely shared their experiences with local NGOs, international bodies and academic researchers. In that sense, they appeared to have developed a thick skin in talking about these topics.

Finally, I developed a “practical sense” in terms of personal security mechanisms. In that sense, some of the more relevant personal protection measures relied upon my knowledge of the current situation in Mexico’s journalistic field and, more importantly, from a trusted and extended network of allies in my country (e.g. academic colleagues, activists, journalists). Additional decisions, however, were taken to ensure my own personal security. One of the more relevant decisions was to

conduct the standardised questionnaire via telephone rather than in person. The main reason for this was because my personal safety could be compromised if I conducted research in some of the most violent cities in my country. Telephone interviews offered enough material for accomplishing the research objectives.

In addition to the ethical dilemmas in the field, I encountered further ethical challenges in the analysis of data. Given the fact that local actors could infer participants' identities with little circumstantial information (Malthaner, 2014), I have decided not only to omit any direct or indirect references to study participants, but also to refrain from publishing certain information. In fact, throughout the data collection process some of my participants shared with me specific and contextually sensitive information. In all cases, as Cowles has suggested (1988:173), I have omitted any reference to this information because it was irrelevant to the study's empirical questions.

Finally, as other scholars have commented (Cowles, 1988:173-175; Chaitin, 2003), I have experienced post-interview emotional responses due to the intense conversations with participants and due to having listened and read about violent experiences time and again. Although I have talked with my supervisors, experienced academics and widely read about my subject, I realised that all of this preparation was not enough to successfully deal with such emotions. In order to mitigate such emotions, I have developed coping strategies, such as sharing some experiences with trusted colleagues and trying to detach myself from participants' experiences.

In summary, this chapter has discussed the specific and detailed decisions, procedures and techniques involved in generating data for this study. The research design described in this chapter aimed to present the theoretical bases and rationale behind the empirical research adopted in this thesis. The research design aimed to develop a methodological apparatus to explore the practice of journalism in violent

settings from sociological and institutional perspectives. To this end, this chapter has made the case for a qualitative approach for exploring the research object. The chapter started from the premise that qualitative research on settings of conflict and violence offered invaluable information about participants' perceptions and experiences. Therefore, the research explained why qualitative interviews were chosen as the main method of analysis and how I put such a method into practice. The chapter has thus addressed the value and richness of in-depth opened-ended interviews to gather information from key informants and journalists who work on sensitive stories and in hazardous places. This chapter has provided a detailed explanation about the subnational analysis taken in this study. To this end, the chapter constructed the case for the relevance of the subnational state as a unit of analysis. I also reviewed some of the key decisions, challenges and ethical dilemmas concerning data analysis and interpretation faced in this research.

Overall, the data collection was successful and met the time schedule arranged by the researcher. The next chapters aim to offer data results, analysis and interpretation. While Chapter 4 offers socio-demographic profiles and results regarding participants' direct experiences with violence, Chapters 5 and 6 aim to answer the main research questions posed in this study. Chapter 7 integrates and discusses the key findings and, towards the end, offers lines for future research and policy recommendations.

Chapter 4

Socio-demographic background of journalists and violence against journalists

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents socio-demographic information and data about direct experience with violence that has been taken from standardised, open-ended interviews with 49 journalists. This chapter aims to inform the reader about the characteristics of the study sample and offers a clear picture of the participants' personal, organisational and institutional contexts. In addition to socio-demographic information, this chapter also presents and discusses participants' experiences with direct intimidation or physical attacks as a result of their work. The data and analysis presented here aims to provide context for the following two empirical chapters (Chapters 5 and 6), in which I use data gathered from the interviews (especially the patterns and regularities that emerged from the analysis) to answer the two main empirical research questions that have guided this thesis.

Socio-demographic data presented and analysed here includes age, gender, level of education, years employed as a journalist, current job position and type of media outlet worked for, among other aspects. The average study participant is male, in his early forties, holds a university degree in journalism, works for a print publication and has 19 years of professional experience. According to the theoretical and methodological bases of this work, throughout this chapter it is argued that the study sample "encapsulates" (Mason 2002:124) the population of Mexican journalists who work on sensitive or controversial issues in the most violent states in Mexico.

However, the study questionnaire does not intend to be statistically representative of the whole population of Mexican journalists.

Beyond the socio-demographic information presented and analysed here, this chapter also offers a clear account of the extent to which study participants had experienced direct intimidation or violent attack(s) as a result of their journalistic activity. Although academic and news media attention is often focused on the violent killings of journalists (Waisbord, 2002:94), these results suggest that those numbers manage only to “skim the surface” of the dangers to which many journalists are exposed on a daily basis. According to my study results, 60% (29 out of 49) of study participants had experienced violence against them in the course of their lifetime (the vast majority of these attacks occurred within the last ten years). This chapter also presents data about the forms of violence, the subjects that cause abuses, and the identities of suspected perpetrators. In addition to this, I present participants’ experiences about the impact of violence upon their professional activity. In order to place this information in the broader context of the wave of anti-press violence in Mexico these results are analysed in relation to some of the more comprehensive reports and academic studies on the matter. It is worth noting, however, that information about participants’ experiences with violence does not aim to explain the motives that elicit such attacks nor the psychological impact upon participants’ lives. Overall, this data aims to present the risks and dangers that study participants have encountered while fulfilling their professional duties and, more importantly for the purposes of this research, this information aims to contextualise the following two empirical chapters. In addition to this, the study results do not aim for the generalisability of the findings.

In terms of structure, this chapter is divided into two parts: the first presents study participants’ socio-demographic results, while the second presents data about

study participants' experiences with direct intimidation or violent attacks as a result of their journalistic activity.

4.2 Socio-Demographics: Standardised Open-ended Interviews with Journalists

As mentioned in the last chapter, standardised open-ended interviews were conducted with 49 journalists who work on sensitive topics (e.g. drugs, corruption and human rights abuses) and live in the ten most violent states in Mexico. As already noted, the study sample does not intend to be statistically representative of the population of Mexican journalists – the study sample was theoretically driven in the selection process and do not intent to offer generalisability within Mexico (See Chapter 3). In that sense, the study sample was “designed to encapsulate a relevant range in relation to the wider universe, but not to represent it directly” (Mason, 2002:124). In addition to this, the study sample was designed to reflect variation at the local level and to have a broad sense of experiences that are representative of some of the most dangerous contexts and assignments in journalism. Therefore, the study sample aims to encapsulate journalists who work on sensitive or controversial topics in the most violent Mexican states. To the best of my knowledge, there is no other qualitative sample in Mexico aimed at encapsulating this population of journalists across all regions in the country. In order to place the study sample in the broader context of the Mexican journalistic field, in the following section the study results are discussed in relation to the only national sample of professional journalists in Mexico (Márquez-Ramírez and Hughes, 2016 and 2017), alongside other relevant studies.

The following sections present participants' gender, age and years of experience, their levels of formal education and, finally, employment status, job position, and type of media outlets for which they work.

4.2.1 Participants' gender, age and years of experience

According to the study sample, 24% of the participants were female (12 out of the 49 participants), while 76% were male (see Table 6). Participants' gender proportion is similar to the population of Mexican journalists, which is comprised by 32% female and 68% male journalists (Márquez-Ramírez and Hughes, 2017:111). These two numbers are slightly above the average proportion of females who work in the country, which is 34%, according to the INEGI (2017).

Gender	Female	Male
N = 49	24% (12)	76% (37)
Note: N is the number of participants.		

Table 6 Participants' gender

The average age of the journalists was 43, and ranged from 24 to 62 years (see Table 7). Overall, participants' age proportion was slightly older in comparison to the average age of Mexican journalists, 38 according to a representative survey (Márquez-Ramírez and Hughes, 2017:111). In addition to this, participants' ages were proportionally divided within three age ranges: 40% (19 individuals) were between 36 and 50 years old; 31% (15) between 20 and 35 years old; and 29% (14) who were between 51 and 65 years old.

Age	20-35	36-50	51-65
N = 49	31% (15)	40% (19)	29% (14)
Note: N is the number of participants.			

Table 7 Participants’ age range

When it comes to participants’ years of professional experience, results ranged from 1 to 44 years with an average of 19 years (see Table 8). Overall, study participants were fairly experienced with 81% of journalists having undergone more than 10 years of professional practice. These results suggest that, on average, study participants were more experienced than the average Mexican journalist – according to a representative survey, just half of Mexican journalists have more than ten years of professional experience (Márquez-Ramírez and Hughes, 2017:115).

A clearer picture emerges when the results of the study are divided by age ranges (e.g. 1 to 5 years of experience; 6 to 15; 16 to 25, and more than 26). According to this split, 35% (17 individuals) had more than 26 years of experience; followed by 30% (15) who had between five and 15 years’ experience; 27% (13) had between 16 and 25 years of experience, and just 8% (4) had fewer than five years of professional practice.

Years of experience	1-5	6-15	16-25	More than 26
N = 49	8% (4)	30% (15)	27% (13)	35% (17)
Note: N is the number of participants.				

Table 8 Participants’ years of experience

4.2.2 Participants’ levels of formal education

According to the sample results, the “first socialization” (Fröhlich et al, 2013: 817) for almost all participants took place in the classroom as the majority of them had undertaken university education in journalism or communication. In accordance with

previous research (Márquez-Ramírez and Hughes, 2017; Mellado et al., 2012), these results suggest that the vast majority of the reporters interviewed are university educated. According to the study sample, two-thirds of the 49 journalists (30) held university degrees, being 61.2% of the overall sample. One-third of the total (15), held higher education degrees, either Master's (13) or a PhD (2) degrees. Just 8% of participants held only a high school degree (see Table 9). Of those respondents who held a university degree, the majority of them (around 70%) had specialised in either journalism or communication, or both, and the rest held a university degree in other subjects, such as law or politics. These results were not surprising, as according to a representative survey, around 80% of Mexican journalists hold a university degree either in journalism or communication (Márquez-Ramírez and Hughes, 2017:113).

	High School	University degree	Post-graduate education
N = 49	8% (4)	61 % (30)	31% (15)
Note: N is the number of participants.			

Table 9 Participants' level of formal education

According to the study sample, the level of educational training among study participants is equally distributed across the five regions in the country (see Table 10). That is to say that, in general terms, there is some evidence to suggest that journalists who are based in more wealthy subnational states (like Nuevo León or Jalisco) do not exhibit greater levels of university education than those who work in the rest of the country. It is worth noting, however, that three out of four journalists who held a high school qualification worked for publications based in some of the less economically developed states, such as Guerrero, Oaxaca and Veracruz – all three of which have reported some of the highest rates of poverty among Mexican states (INEGI, 2017).

Table 10

N = 49	Northeast	Northwest	West	Centre	Southeast
High School	None	None	None	4 % (2)	4 % (2)
University degree	14 % (7)	10 % (5)	12 % (6)	14 % (7)	10 % (5)
Higher education	6 % (3)	10 % (5)	8 % (4)	None	6 % (3)
Note: N is the number of participants.					

Participants' levels of formal education by region

4.2.3 Participants' employment status, job position, type of media outlet and assigned beat

As the primary research object in this investigation is a full time journalists who work on sensitive topics, almost all participants held a full-time position in a media outlet, or worked full-time as freelancers. When asked to state their job position, approximately 90% were reporters (either local or national correspondents); while the rest were editors (4%) or information chiefs (6%). When asked to state their position type (e.g. national correspondents, local journalists or freelancers), 57% (28 individuals) were local journalists, followed by 30% (15) who were national correspondents and 13% (6) who stated that they were freelancers (see Table 11). Of those (28) who were local reporters, 20 individuals work for a legacy news media; while eight work for a digital publication (mostly digital news start-ups). These results are in line with the research design of this investigation, which aimed to compare the experience of different types of journalists, especially between those who work for news media based in subnational states, and those who work for news media based in Mexico City.

In terms of their socio-demographic profile, these three groups of journalists – national correspondents, local journalists and freelancers – exhibited similar features though few differences could be noticed. On average, the three groups have similar

average ages (around 42 years old) and years of professional experience (19 years for national correspondents and 20 for local journalists and freelancers). These three groups also exhibited some differences: the vast majority of national correspondents (85%) and local journalists (62%) were men, whereas 50% of freelancers were women.

	Local journalists	National correspondents	Free-lancers
N = 49	57 % (28)	30 % (15)	13 % (6)
Note: N is the number of participants.			

Table 11 Types of media participants

When asked to state the platform type they worked in (e.g. print, broadcasting, or digital), almost three-quarters said that they worked for a print publication (71%); 20% for an electronic media outlet (TV or radio); and 10% for a digital outlet. These results contrast to the majority of Mexican journalists, who tend to work for electronic media (Márquez-Ramírez and Hughes, 2017). The fact that the majority of study participants were print journalists could be explained, in part, because the snowball sampling led to the overwhelming selection of participants from print media. In any case, this sample was very useful for analysing the practice of journalism in violent settings.

Though the vast majority of journalists work primarily for just one media outlet, they work across more than one platform. This is to say that, as other scholars have found (Márquez-Ramírez and Hughes, 2017; Meneses, 2010), Mexican journalists tend to be based in one media outlet but usually produce stories to be displayed on different platforms – for example, print journalists who simultaneously produce news stories for the print and digital editions. Moreover, in addition to their full-time position in a media outlet, one quarter of study participants have started their own

digital newspaper in recent years. Those journalists who started a digital news media were local journalists and none of them were national correspondents. The absence of national correspondents as digital entrepreneurs can be explained, in part, because a national correspondent's monthly income is higher (by about one-third) than the income of a local journalist. Another reason is that, under the excuse of exclusivity agreements, some national legacy newspapers (e.g. *Reforma*) often prohibit their correspondents from opening their own digital publications.

Similar to the average Mexican journalist, who mainly works on various beats and topics (Márquez-Ramírez and Hughes, 2017), the vast majority of study participants (52%) usually covered a wide range of topics (see Table 12). This is because all national correspondents (15 out of 49) covered a full range of journalistic areas, from politics and crime to culture and sports, among others. Also, the questionnaire results suggest that journalists in small-to-medium cities (less than 200,000 inhabitants) tend to cover all subjects at the same time. While the rest of the participants (48%) are specialised and devoted to work on a specific beat, some of them were specialised in more than one subject at the same time (e.g. a journalist who simultaneously covers politics and drug-related stories). According to study results, 29% specialised in politics, 18% in crime, drugs or security, and 18% stated that they specialised in other topics, such as human rights violations and social movements. Overall, the study sample was very useful for exploring news production on sensitive topics, which is the main research interest of this study.

	All subjects	Politics	Crime, drugs or security	Others
N = 49	52 % (26)	28 % (14)	18 % (9)	18 % (9)
Note: N is the number of participants. May add up to more than 100% because more than one category may apply in some cases, except in all subjects.				

Table 12 Participants' journalistic beats

So far, this section has offered some socio-demographic characteristics of study participants. The next section aims to offer a nuanced picture of the threats and violence that study participants have experienced due to their occupation.

4.3 Participants' Experiences with Anti-press Violence

In this section I present the key findings regarding study participants' direct experiences with anti-press violence. Throughout this thesis I have defined anti-press violence as physical attacks and threats against journalists and news media as a result of their professional practices (Waisbord, 2002:92). In addition to presenting a more nuanced account of the extent to which study participants have experienced direct anti-press violence, this section also offers data about the forms of violence, the subjects that trigger abuses, suspected perpetrators, and participants' experiences regarding the impact of violence on their professional activity.

First, I present the extent to which the study participants have experienced direct violence as a result of their work; I then offer additional details about geographical location and the forms of violence that participants have endured, the topics they have covered, the subjects that have elicited violence, and the impact of such attacks upon participants' professional practices.

4.3.1 Participants' experiences with direct threats and violence as a result of their profession

The questionnaire revealed a high level of violence against journalists, with 60% (29) of study participants having experienced direct intimidation or violent attack as a

result of their journalistic activity during their lifetime. On average, study participants who had experienced violence were male (89%), held a university degree (62%), and had 19 years of professional experience.

Given the snowball and purposive sampling used in this study, the results showing the proportion of Mexican journalists who have experienced anti-press violence cannot be generalised across the population of Mexican journalists. Thus the extent to which this information is representative of the daily attacks against journalists in the country remains unclear. However, this data is an indicator of the threats and dangers encountered by Mexican journalists who work and live in the most violent states in the country.

Overall, the very high number of journalists who have experienced anti-press violence mirrors what other scholars have found in other qualitative studies. Feinstein (2012), in a survey of 104 journalists, found that more than 50% who reported on drug news stories had been threatened by the cartels. Sierra (2013:7), in a digital survey of 102 journalists who work on sensitive topics, reported that 70% of participants “have been threatened or been the victim of an attack”. More recently, in a digital survey of 60 journalists, it was stated that 61% of participants were victims of physical, psychological, legal or digital intimidation due to their work (Guerrero-Martínez, 2017:92). Overall, the study results bring additional evidence to these previous qualitative reports, reinforcing the position that journalists who cover dangerous newsbeats from hazardous settings are very likely to encounter anti-press violence. A more detailed account of participants’ geographical locations is presented in the next section.

4.3.2 Participants' geographical location

The geographical distribution of participants who have experienced anti-press violence suggests that journalists were targeted across the five regions of the country (see Table 13). According to the geographical location of the participants, 31% of journalists threatened or violently attacked live and work in the southeast region – especially in cities like Xalapa (in Veracruz); Acapulco, Chilpancingo and Tlapa (in Guerrero); and the city of Oaxaca. 20% (6) of participants live and work in the northeast region, half of them from Ciudad Juarez (Chihuahua), a city that in recent years has suffered one of the highest rates of intentional violent homicides per population in the world (Woody, 2017). 17% of participants who endured attacks work in the north-western region; the majority based in Ciudad Victoria (Tamaulipas) and in Monterrey (Nuevo León). 17% work in the western region, especially in cities like Guadalajara in Jalisco and Morelia in Michoacán. Finally, 13% (4) of journalists who had suffered attacks work in the central region; 3 out of 4 based in the Estado de México – a subnational state where the same party has ruled for more than 80 years.

	Northeast	Northwest	West	Centre	Southeast
N = 29	20 % (6)	17% (5)	17% (5)	13% (4)	31 % (9)
Note: N is the number of journalists who have received threats or violence due of work					

Table 13 Participants' experiences with anti-press violence per region

Even when the questionnaire applied in this study is not representative of the national population of journalists, the study results may add further evidence to other academic accounts (Article 19 Mexico, 2016; Flores et al., 2012) that have suggested anti-press violence in contemporary Mexico is not exclusively an issue targeting journalists in northern states, as some previous investigations posited (Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014), but a widespread phenomenon across all five regions

of the country. As mentioned in Chapter 2, one of the reasons for the wide distribution of violence against journalists across all regions is because, since 2007, when the government launched a military strategy to weaken drug cartels, criminal alliances and criminal activity have been destabilised (Schedler, 2015 and 2016). In this context, scholars have argued (Guerrero-Gutiérrez, 2017; Enciso, 2017a and 2017b; Schedler, 2015 and 2016) that the geographical location of criminals and crime (including crimes against the press) have targeted populations in regions and locations distributed all over the national territory. Some regional differences, however, could be observed with regard to the form of violence. These differences, among further results, are discussed in the next section. In any case, further research must analyse in a more detailed way to what extent violence against the press has become a widespread phenomenon in contemporary Mexico.

4.3.3 Forms of anti-press violence

While 29 out of 49 participants had experienced some form of anti-press violence, 41 had experienced threats or violent attacks. This is so because one-third of victims (10 out of 29) had experienced more than one form of violence. In the majority of these cases, as other scholars have suggested (Waisbord, 2002), victims have first been the subject of intimidation or threats and were then targeted with a more severe attack (e.g. physical violence). In other cases, however, the abuse was received without previous threat. In two of the 29 cases, participants had experienced up to three violent attacks during the course of their lifetime.

According to the results, half of the 20 violent attacks could be catalogued as threats, either by telephone or online abuse. The other half (21 incidents) were more

extreme forms of violence, such as physical aggression, abduction, torture, among others (see Table 14). I will refer first to the former (threats and intimations).

	Threats	Physical aggression	Abduction or illegal detention	Attack on media facility	Robbery	Torture	Attempted murder	Harassment	Death of a family member
N = 41	50% (20)	12.5% (5)	12.5% (5)	10 % (4)	5 % (2)	2.5 % (1)	2.5 % (1)	2.5 % (1)	2.5 % (1)
Note: N is the number of violent events. It may add up to more than 29 because more than one violent event was experienced by the same person									

Table 14 Form of threats and violence

The questionnaire results suggest that the most common forms of violence visited upon participants were threats. In this study I have followed the Oxford (2017) dictionary definition of threat as “a statement of an intention to inflict pain, injury, damage, or other hostile action on someone in retribution for something done or not done”. The fact that most participants have experienced threats is in line with available information about the form of violence on Mexican journalists. For example, Article 19 Mexico (2016) stated that, from 2009 to 2015, 30% of acts of aggression against the press could be catalogued as threats or intimidations. According to the Mexican government, threats constituted 38% of acts of aggression against journalists between 2010 and 2015 (CNDH, 2016). Survey results indicate that threats against journalists were present in all five regions of the country; however, the western and southern regions experienced more than half of such threats (especially in Michoacán, Oaxaca and Veracruz).

Although no question was asked about the form of threats that study participants had experienced, throughout the interviews it could be inferred that journalists had

experienced threats via two types of media: telephone and online. Threats by phone were more commonly referred to by journalists, while online abuse was not mentioned as often during the interviews. It is worth noting that, as other studies have found (Sambrook, 2016:29; Löfgren and Örnebring, 2016: 884; Sierra, 2013), participants commented that in recent years online abuse has become a more common form of violence. In addition to this, study participants suggested that threats were perpetuated by a wide range of actors, which primarily included drug traffickers and public officials (local mayors or local police officers). In the majority of these cases, study participants stated that threats aimed to prevent them from pursuing information or disclosing some sensitive data.

Beyond threats and intimidation, the other half of violent incidents (21) constituted more extreme forms of violence. For instance, participants reported that they had suffered physical aggression (12.5%), abduction (10%), attacks on their media facility (10%), torture (2.5%), attempted murder (2.5%), and/or the violent death of a family member (who was also a journalist) (2.5%). In terms of proportion, physical aggression (especially injuries) were the most common type of violent attack against journalists. As analysed in the next chapter, physical aggression was common for journalists who travelled to dangerous zones (like national correspondents) and who carried out street reporting (especially *policiaico* reporters).

After physical aggression, the rest of the violence represented more extreme forms of violence. Among these, the two most common forms of violence experienced by journalists were abduction or illegal detention (experienced by five journalists), and attacks on their media facility (experienced by four journalists). In concordance with press rights organisation reports (Article 19 Mexico, 2016 and 2017), these two forms of violence were geographically concentrated. Abduction mainly happened in Michoacán (in three out of five cases), while attacks on media facilities mainly

happened in Tamaulipas and Sinaloa (in all cases). According to study participants, the suspected perpetrators in both types of violence were organised crime cells (although one participant suggested that illegal detention was perpetrated by local police officers).

Finally, participants noted that violence was perpetrated along all stages of the news production process (Hoxha and Hanitzsch, 2017); that is to say journalists experienced violence before running a story, while researching a report (especially for those doing street reporting), and after publishing a news story. This finding reinforces quantitative investigations (Hughes et al., 2016) which have suggested that journalists perceive external influences (including violence against them) during different stages in the news production process.

4.3.4 Subjects that trigger attacks

The extent to which violence was presented differed between different groups of journalists. Of those who experienced violence, 59% (17 out of 29) covered all types of stories; 24% (7) were assigned to politics; 10% (3) covered crime, drugs and security; and 6% (2) covered other newsbeats, such as human rights violations and social movements. The fact that the majority of journalists were assigned to general information (all sources) could be explained, in part, because this number included the 10 national correspondents, who were targeted with violence and usually assigned to report from the more dangerous places in the country. Given previous research that has stated that local journalists who work for local media outlets were more likely to be targeted with violence (Waisbord, 2002), it was expected that national correspondents would have experienced lesser levels of violence than local journalists. However, the results do not sustain this expectation, showing, on the

contrary, that 66% of national correspondents have experienced violence due to their work (the implications of this will be revisited in further detail in Chapter 5).

In addition to this, a closer examination of the victim profiles reveals a more nuanced picture. 66% (6 out of 9) of journalists specialised in crime and security were threatened or violently attacked, with crime reporters and journalists working on drug trafficking and security issues experiencing the highest incidence of psychological and bodily harm. 50% of political reporters (7 out of 14) were psychologically or physically attacked. These results suggest, as others have pointed out (Article 19 Mexico, 2016; Edmonds-Poli, 2013), that reporters covering dangerous newsbeats (crime, security and politics, etc.) are more likely to suffer violent attacks.

	All subjects	Politics	Crime, drugs and security	Others
N = 29	59 % (17)	24% (7)	20% (3)	14% (4)
Note: N is the number of participants. It may add up to more than 100% because more than one category may apply in some cases, except in all subjects.				

Table 15 Subjects that trigger threats and violence

4.3.5 Impact of violence upon participants’ professional work

Although the purpose of this study is neither to analyse the psychological impact nor the traumatic emotions derived from participants’ direct contact with violence, throughout the course of the conversations many participants commented on the impact of such violence upon their professional work.

It can be suggested that those journalists who have experienced direct attacks or threats – and those who were assigned to dangerous newsbeats or worked in violent places – were more likely to adopt self-censorship. In Michoacán, one national correspondent, who was targeted with violence, commented on this: “They self-censor you, you self-censor yourself because if you say something, they know the names of

your family, your children, your wife, where they go to school, where they work. That's how they threaten you” (M1). This testimony indicates that adoption of self-censorship has become one of the most common tactics for ameliorating the risk of violence. A representative survey of Mexican journalists showed that 67% of journalists have adopted self-censorship as a protective factor (Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2017b:308). From a more societal perspective, it could be argued that these violent attacks limit the free press practice of journalism, jeopardise access to valuable public information and, in turn, constitute a serious threat to press freedom and to the right to communication.

In summary, throughout this chapter I have presented some results of the standardised open-ended interviews with 49 journalists. Specifically, this chapter has reviewed study participants’ socio-demographic profiles and experiences with direct intimidation or violent attack(s) as a result of their professional work. Throughout this chapter I have argued that the questionnaire sample is composed of a group of 49 journalists who “encapsulated” (Mason 2002:124) the population of Mexican journalists that work on sensitive stories from hazardous places. Although the study sample does not aim to be statistically representative of the entire population of Mexican journalists, the results presented in this chapter do suggest that the average journalist who participated in this study has some features that resemble the typical profile of a Mexican journalist (Márquez-Ramírez and Hughes, 2017). Among these similarities, on average a journalist who participated in this study is male, of a mature age, and holds a university degree in journalism or communication. Some differences, however, were highlighted: in contrast to the typical journalist in Mexico (Márquez-Ramírez and Hughes, 2017), journalists who participated in this study tended to be more experienced, working mainly for a print publications, specialising and working

in a specific beat and, more importantly for this research, had experienced direct intimidation or violent attack as a result of their professional work.

Moreover, the chapter reviewed other features about participants' experiences with anti-press violence. One of the key results presented in this chapter was that 60% of study participants had experienced direct intimidation or violent attack as a result of their professional work. Half of those attacks were direct threats or intimidations. The other half of the attacks varied from physical violence to attempted murder to torture and abduction, among others. These results added further evidence to academic accounts (Waisbord, 2002:94) that have suggested the violent killings of journalists just skim the surface of the aggression encountered by Mexican journalists on a daily basis. In addition to this, the study results yielded some revealing findings: violence against journalists is widely distributed across all five regions of the country; journalists who work on crime and politics were far more likely to encounter violence than others; the survey also revealed that, contrary to conventional wisdom, the majority of national correspondents have also experienced violence due to the nature of their work.

Chapter 5

Journalists' Uneven Risk Distribution

5.1 Introduction

In Mexico, there is an uneven distribution of risk if you are a journalist.

Mexican newspaper editor-in-chief

This chapter aims to respond to the first empirical research question: *Considering Mexico's War on Drugs as an exogenous shock to the field, how do journalists' individual dispositions of forms and quantity of capital influence their exposure to risk in violent subnational settings?*

Based on the data gathered as well as on the patterns and common regularities across study participants, the main argument in this chapter is that exposure to risk is unevenly distributed across reporters in the field and, more importantly, this uneven distribution corresponds to the differences in journalists' individual disposition of volumes and types of capital. Guided by the field approach taken in this study (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012), the working hypothesis is that journalists who possess lower levels of capital will be at greater risk of danger and violence than journalists who possess higher levels of capital. This is because journalists who possess more capital have more resources to maintain their position in the field and mitigate risks and dangers, whereas journalists who possess less capital lack the resources that allow them to react to adverse contexts and, ultimately, to confront exogenous shocks to the field (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012:97). In order to analyse this, the chapter focuses on risk mitigation and reactions soon after being threatened or violently attacked due to their work.

In order to offer evidence in support of the aforementioned relationships and hypothesis, I have drawn upon the open-ended interviews with 49 journalists. As complementary evidence, I have used the set of 16 in-depth interviews with key informants and have additionally positioned these findings in relation to existing scholarly literature on conflict reporting and journalism studies. Overall, the set of interviews that I have conducted provided a very good insight into the risks to which conflict journalists are exposed and about how the forms of capital under investigation can exacerbate or possibly reduce their exposure to the risk of danger or violence. However, given the relatively small number of participants from each of the subnational states (5 for each of the 10 states selected), instead of concentrating on the specifics of each of the 10 states selected, in this chapter (and the following) I have focused on general patterns concerning the relationship between the amount of capital that journalists have gathered and the uneven distribution of risk. Throughout this chapter I do, however, note certain differences influencing journalists' exposure to risk within the subnational states.

First, this chapter reviews the role of cultural, economic, social and symbolic capital in influencing journalists' exposure to risk. In order to elucidate this, each of the four types of capital were operationalised into specific variables and the results discussed. Next, the chapter discusses the main findings and their theoretical, analytical and contextual implications.

5.2 The Role of Cultural Capital in Influencing Journalists'

Exposure to Risk

Cultural capital refers to the possession of competence and skills and the accumulation of knowledge of particular relevance for professional journalists to produce news stories (Vandevoordt, 2017:613). Drawing upon the applications and developments of the field perspective undertaken by media and communication researchers (Benson, 2006:189-190; Bourdieu, 2005), I have operationalised cultural capital at individual level as the number of years of professional practice. Guided by the theoretical framework of field theory and, in particular, the main hypothesis that underpins this chapter, the main argument advanced in this section is that local conflict journalists who possess lower levels of cultural capital will be at greater risk than journalists who possess higher levels of the aforementioned forms of capital. Based on the study results, this is because, with the exception of novices, journalists have acquired certain skills and, throughout the years, developed their own mechanisms to mitigate risks and dangers. The data gathered, however, offers a more nuanced and complex picture than this. Although experienced reporters were more skilled in dealing with hazardous situations, they were also more likely to present a “normalization of risk” (Simon, 2014:28).

As established during interviews, study participants’ “first socialization” (Fröhlich et al, 2013: 817) often took place in the classroom, as 92% of journalists (45 out of 49) have undertaken university or postgraduate education (mainly in journalism or communication). However, study participants have commented that they did not receive special training on gathering of news in violent contexts during their years at university. Therefore, the results suggest that professional practice for reporters

covering sensitive topics is relevant in the first place as they have learned their profession by practicing and by observing more experienced reporters⁶⁰.

For example, at the beginning of the 2000s, one local journalist (T1)⁶¹ undertook her undergraduate study in journalism in the city of Tampico (Tamaulipas). She never received special training in gathering news in violent contexts, even when drug-related violence rose in Tampico around the same time that she undertook her studies. Furthermore, this lack of specialised training, she said, is still absent at universities that offer degrees in journalism or communication in Tamaulipas – despite the fact that this state has been where 15% of journalists have been violently killed since 2000, and where 75% of violent attacks against media facilities have occurred since 2007 (Article 19 Mexico, 2016).

The situation described by the journalist (T1) from Tamaulipas was also observed by other participants who work in southern states like Guerrero and Oaxaca – interviewees G3 and O3. In addition, academic literature suggests that this could be a general pattern across subnational states. In their investigation on conflict reporting among northern Mexican states, González de Bustamante and Rely (2016a:691) found something similar: “[the] theoretically driven degrees did not have a sufficient number of journalism courses to prepare them for the field, much less for the conditions”. This situation has been further mentioned in the literature (Rodríguez, 2015; Rodelo, 2009).

⁶⁰ In this sense, it is worth mentioning that study participants were fairly experienced, with 81% of journalists having more than 10 years of professional experience, with an average of 19 years working as a journalist.

⁶¹ All codes are listed in Table 4 in Chapter 3.

In this context, as other media scholars have argued (Breed, 1955:328; Gans, 1979), the data gathered suggests that professional experience is inherently important for journalists as they have come to learn their craft by professional practice. As Voltmer (2013:197) has said in the context of new democracies: "...most journalists learn their profession on the job by observing peers and being supervised by their seniors". Study participants commented widely on this, and the following testimonies help to illustrate these assumptions: "Truth is that I have acquired my knowledge by experience" (M3, journalist and columnist); "We have learned along the way" (C1, journalist). Some study participants provided more details. For example, the relevance of professional practice was also mentioned by a crime beat reporter from a TV chain based in the Estado de México, and by an editor-in-chief from a radio station in Mazatlán (Sinaloa):

No, in fact they hire you because of what you know, [...] I am a reporter who basically trained himself in the streets [...] but they did not hire me because I have not finished my degree; still they are interested in my profile, for they see me as a reporter that was conceived in the streets (E3).

Usually in the security source, yes. In the case of Culiacán [Sinaloa], which is the most complex source, we have someone with more than 30 years of experience and he has helped us to train some of the newcomers (S2).

These testimonies summarise very well how local journalists have acquired and refined their profession by practice. In addition, as the testimony of the editor-in-chief from a TV station in Sinaloa indicates, some study participants commented that they had used experienced journalists to train novice journalists in the perils and crafts in the field. More details about this were given by a young crime beat reporter who works for legacy newspaper *El Informador* in Jalisco:

When I began working with them [crime reporters] they sent me with the security reporter who was on call, so that he would explain to me the processes I had to follow;

they did not send me to cover news stories on security just like that. I went with him to see how they covered news stories and I learned working next to my colleagues, it was all by my own means; let's say that there was somewhat of a training (J3).

As this testimony suggests, novice reporters are usually assigned with experienced ones at the beginning of their careers. As I shall show below, this type of training is quite relevant for journalists as the vast majority have not received any further risk mitigation or high-risk training from their media houses.

Conversely, study participants also suggested that new journalists felt more at risk than experienced ones, especially when conducting high-risk coverage (like covering zones with a high criminal population, or investigations on drug trafficking and human migration). According to the study, this is because new journalists have not yet developed the professional skills and abilities to confront perilous and risky situations that more experienced colleagues have.

For example, in Tamaulipas, a young reporter for newspaper *El Mañana*, with six years of professional practice working on drug trafficking and human migration stories, commented that he felt much more exposed to risk than his more experienced colleagues, who have, on average, more than 10 years of professional experience: “I feel it is risky for those [the novices] who do not know the thin network that exists [...and] surrounds these topics” (T3). He also commented that, despite the fact he had not received any training in gathering news in violent contexts, he led a group of web reporters in an investigation on human migration along the US-Mexican border⁶². During the interview he recognised that, by pursuing such perilous coverage, he had

⁶² Human migration is considered a high-risk assignment because undocumented human migration, especially in Tamaulipas, is under the control of different organised crime cells and local corrupt public officials (Enciso, 2017b; Turati, 2011; Osorno, 2011).

jeopardised his life and his colleagues' well-being. In line with the literature (Cottle et al., 2016:135), this testimony shows that the sources of risk among young reporters comes not only from their lack of experience and training, but also because covering dangerous stories is a way for many journalists beginning their careers to make their names in the field.

Overall, the testimonies and results presented thus far are in line with other academic investigations and resemble, for example, what Rodelo (2009:113) has found: young journalists covering crime beat news in Sinaloa could have less expertise than veteran reporters and, consequently, be more prone to risk. These results also are similar to what Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez (2017b:311) have found: "Youth also appears to put journalists at greater risk". In a complementary way, these results have offered a more detailed account than previous studies about how less-experienced local journalists in Mexico may be more prone to the risk of danger or violence.

In addition to all the above and in agreement with the main argument in this section, the data gathered also suggests that, by amassing higher levels of cultural capital through years of professional experience, journalists are more likely to gain skills to protect themselves and mitigate risks and dangers than those with fewer years in the profession. For instance, when I asked an experienced crime reporter for *El Diario de Juárez* in Ciudad Juarez (Chihuahua): "To what extent is it risky (or not) to cover crime news in one of the world's most dangerous cities?" she replied with the following:

The people who are in that line of work know how to take care of themselves. For example, they know not to publish their source when dealing with dangerous subjects or topics related to drug trafficking, it stops being a problem (C4).

As this quote illustrates, experienced journalists have learned how cover areas and subjects of conflict and, in doing so, have been able to develop mechanisms aimed at mitigating risks and dangers. Study participants from almost all states made frequent reference to this phenomenon, as the following examples indicate: “Honestly no, I have never had real risk training, I think it is more about using my common sense” (J2 - a freelance journalist based in Guadalajara); “But some of us still do not know how, because we have not received any direct training, we have learned along the way” (C1 - a TV reporter based in Ciudad Juárez). These testimonies offered additional evidence to other studies (Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2017b), which together suggest that, across all Mexico’s states, local journalists with more years of professional practice have acquired knowledge and skills to ameliorate risks and dangers.

Until now, the empirical data discussed has suggested that journalists with fewer years of professional experience are at greater risk of violence and danger than journalists with more years of professional practice. The data gathered also offers evidence to suggest that experienced journalists have acquired skills and developed safety mechanisms aimed at mitigating risks and dangers. Evidence from the interviews, however, offers a more complex picture than this. Although experienced journalists have gained more professional skills to confront perilous situations, some journalists have “normalized” their daily risks (Simon, 2014). According to Simon (2014:28), “normalization of risk” is a condition developed by conflict reporters “after years of living in an environment in which threats and violence are routine” (Simon, 2014:28). A long serving newspaper editor for legacy newspaper *Noroeste* (which is based in Mazatlán, Sinaloa, and routinely publishes drug-related news) stated the following:

I have been a journalist for more than 20 years. I have received threats; my newspaper was shot at in Mazatlán. We have had complex situations, we have needed to send people abroad due to security reasons, but I am now accustomed to this, and all this has not yet made an impact on me (S5).

These testimonies suggest that, after spending so long working in hazardous environments, journalists have internalised risks and dangers. In addition, these findings could imply a more worrisome situation. As Feinstein (2013) has commented in the Mexican context, journalists who have dedicated years and decades to covering painful and dangerous stories are more likely to develop psychopathologies (such as post-traumatic stress disorder). As Feinstein (2013) and others (Flores et al. 2012 and 2014) have commented, these psychological disorders could have negative effects upon journalists' wellbeing.

In summary, study participants offered qualitative evidence to support the argument that journalists who possess lower levels of cultural capital will be at greater risk than journalists with higher levels. One of the reasons for this, according to the empirical data, is because experienced journalists have gained more skills to confront dangerous situations. However, the data gathered also suggests that journalists who have covered sensitive stories (especially related to drug trafficking) could develop a normalisation of risk, which, in turn, could have negative consequences upon journalists' wellbeing.

5.3 The Role of Economic Capital in Influencing Journalists'

Exposure to Risk

Economic capital is defined as the material means and organisational assets that individual journalists rely upon to produce journalistic works (Vandervoordt,

2017:613). Drawing upon the applications and developments of the field perspective undertaken by media scholars (Tandoc Jr., 2017:8; Vandervoordt, 2017; Marlière, 1998), I have operationalised economic capital as the level of individual salary, professional equipment and management support from media houses. Guided by the theoretical framework of field theory and by different strands in the literature of conflict reporting (Tandoc Jr, 2017: 6; Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014), the main argument advanced in this section is that journalists who possess lower levels of economic capital will be more prone to risk of danger and violence than journalists with higher levels of economic capital. Based on the study results, this is because journalists who experience precarious workflows usually have less financial and material resources, and lag behind in terms of management support. However, it is worth mentioning that journalists who possess higher amounts of economic capital face important limitations as well. According to the study results, 90% of journalists interviewed reported that they have not received any specialised training in high-risk coverage from their media companies.

For analytical purposes, the participants were grouped into high (between \$601 and \$1,000 monthly) and low (between \$25 and \$600) categories based on their individual salary levels⁶³ – minimum family income in the country is around \$600 per

⁶³ During the interviews I asked some participants about their individual income. Guided by what they said, and from consultation of further literature on this topic (Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2017b; Márquez-Ramírez, 2015; Rodríguez and Quintanar, 2016; Rodríguez, 2015; Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014), I have created two broad categories. Although these categories tended to obscure further differences regarding journalist' individual income beyond these two categories, in this study I have followed Tandoc Jr.'s (2017:8) analysis of the role of economic capital in gatekeeping. The reason for this is because two categories (low and high incomes) clearly elucidate the impact of economic capital upon journalists' risk exposure.

month, according to INEGI (2017)⁶⁴. The first category (high individual income) is made up of 35 journalists, including both national correspondents who work for news media based in Mexico City (like *Reforma* and *Proceso*), and local journalists who work for legacy media outlets (like *El Diario de Juarez* in Chihuahua, Guadalajara's *El Informador*, *El Imparcial* from Oaxaca or *El Mañana* from Tamaulipas). The second category consists of 14 journalists, including both freelancers and local journalists who work for small media outlets (usually digital news start-ups that commonly have three or four journalists) (examples of this kind of publication are the following digital magazines: *Tucán* [Toucan], from Guerrero; *Búsqueda* [Searching] from Michoacán; and *Espejo* [Mirror] from Sinaloa). As a monthly average, journalists who work for these kinds of publications earn between \$100 and \$400 monthly. Freelancers, who often earn above the minimum wage, could be paid around \$5 to \$20 per publication. Contrary to national correspondents and local journalists for legacy media outlets, journalists in the second category do not have fixed contracts or social security and lack safety equipment and management support (like continuous management monitoring) for high-risk coverage (like visiting mountain ranges in Chihuahua, Michoacán, or Sinaloa, or municipalities in Tamaulipas or Veracruz with very high levels of criminality).

In addition to enjoying a high individual salary, national correspondents and local journalists for legacy newspapers have fixed contracts and labour rights. “Of course, working for this newspaper, we have labour rights, which are respected” (G1), commented a national correspondent (for a legacy national newspaper) based in Chilpancingo (Guerrero). “If the media is strong, that reassures their workers” (C5),

⁶⁴ Figures quoted are in US dollars.

said an information chief who works for *El Diario de Juárez* in Ciudad Juarez (Chihuahua). National correspondents and journalists for legacy media organisations mentioned these findings across the 10 subnational states. It is worth mentioning, however, that there were some journalists, such as some in the Estado de México (E1 and E2), who do not enjoy a fixed contract despite the fact that they work for an established national TV chain.

National correspondents and local journalists for legacy newspapers have also observed that they have received safety equipment to conduct high-risk reporting. One editor-in-chief (13) from a national legacy newspaper noted that the newspaper provides safety equipment as an internal policy for journalists who cover drug-related crimes or conduct special investigations in hazardous contexts. A national correspondent from the same newspaper, based in Morelia (Michoacán), confirmed that: “The newspaper has given us support, tools, advisory services at different times...” (M4). Local journalists for legacy newspapers also highlighted the provision of safety equipment. These testimonies supported comments made by other local journalists for legacy newspapers.

However, the data gathered offered a more contradictory picture than this – both national correspondents and local journalists for legacy newspapers highlighted the lack of specialised training to develop high-risk coverage. Thus the same national correspondent commented: “I think it’s been missing, especially in recent years, the need to care about the idea of receiving more training and preventive and coverage measures for specific areas in the country like Michoacán, Guerrero, Tamaulipas or Veracruz” (M4). This testimony suggests that although journalists in the higher salary category have higher levels of economic capital, there are important gaps regarding support and responsibility from media companies (Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014; Feinstein, 2013).

Contrary to national correspondents and local journalists for legacy media, freelancers and local journalists who work for small media outlets neither have fixed contracts nor social security. In fact, journalists interviewed very much exemplify what Voltmer (2013:210; see also Lugo Ocando, 2008) has observed: “Poor journalists usually work for poor media”. For example, a chief editor for a radio station said that labour precariousness and lack of social security is an extensive reality among local reporters and freelancers in the state of Sinaloa:

Not long ago, I went to an event where I met many colleagues from all over the state. I was shocked when learning that many of them lost their health insurance without being notified about it until they had an emergency. If you want to be a reporter here, if you really do, you have to scratch your own back, because companies neither protect you nor do they offer you the right conditions to do good journalistic work (S2).

This testimony summarised what other local journalists said during the interviews and reinforces previous research (Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014:117) that has found similar evidence across Mexican states. In addition to this, study results suggest that levels of labour precariousness among local journalists who work for small media outlets were very similar to those facing freelancers. A key informant, a veteran freelance investigative journalist, commented: “The range is from \$70 Mexican pesos [5 USD] per news story, and \$1,500 [100 USD] when it's the main story in the local or national media, without labour agreement, without benefits by law, because they are not their employees” (7). Something similar was mentioned by a freelancer based in the city of Xalapa (Veracruz): “Your own media outlet does not offer you benefits, money for travel expenses, equipment [...] most of us have our own equipment and we save money for it” (V4). Overall, these three testimonies offered novel evidence from the Mexican case to the extensive impression that freelancers (like local fixers) working in dangerous settings need to pay for their

own material resources, security and further expenses (such as travel expenses) (D'Arcy, 2015).

In addition, freelancers and journalists who work for small media outlets also said that they lag behind in management support and safety equipment for reporting on high-risk stories (e.g. human trafficking) and from hazardous places. A local reporter in Jalisco who usually covers a dangerous newsbeat (like crime reporting, street reporting on social mobilisations and the like) for a local newspaper *Vanguardia* said:

You go to a danger zone to cover a news story and nobody cares about your safety [...].

You can be in the middle of a confrontation between anti-riot shields and street traders, where they are fighting with stones, bottles or whatever, and there's no guarantee that if something happens to you, your newspaper is going to back you up, or offer you a vehicle with no mechanical problems, or give you any kind of protection if you are in the middle of a confrontation, such as a bullet-proof vest or essential things needed when you cover a high-risk situation (J1).

A TV reporter from the Estado de México also commented on the dangers that faced local freelancers who reported on crime and security, saying: “If something happens to you, if you get killed, the company avoids responsibility, claiming that you don't have an agreement with them [...]. It is very easy for them to avoid responsibility; they just cop out” (E2, TV reporter). A freelance journalist, who usually covers human rights abuses from Guadalajara (Jalisco), commented: “The media does not offer any safety guarantee to carry out this profession. I am not just talking about safety matters, but also about the constitutional guarantees a worker may have or health insurance, or housing” (J5, digital journalist).

Local journalists for small media outlets and freelancers from almost all states also commented on the lack of specialised training from the media companies they work for. Journalists' own words help to illustrate these ideas: “Many times we see

the companies don't look after our safety, and they don't offer us workshops” (E1, digital journalist); “No, as far as I have known there is no a single company that offered specialised training on conflict reporting in Veracruz” (V4, freelance journalist). As other investigations have suggested (Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014), the lack of safety equipment for freelancers and local reporters could be a generalised pattern across Mexico’s states.

Contrary to news producers and media workers in other countries in the region (e.g. Brazil) (Ringoot and Ruellan, 2007; Lugo-Ocando, 2008), Mexican journalists do not have an independent national union to advocate for their rights as media workers. “Unfortunately, I consider journalists work in worse conditions than a simple worker; at least, workers belong to a Union, they have benefits” (E2, TV journalist), said a journalist based in the Estado de México. In addition, this thesis found that the precarious nature of news workers has intensified with the advent of the digital trend: “We request a revision of the journalists’ labour conditions. After the transformation of multimedia enterprises, now a reporter works for different media (internet, radio, television, newspapers) for only one salary” (N2), said one freelance reporter based in Monterrey (Nuevo León). As was mentioned in the last chapter, this is not an exception as while the vast majority of journalists work primarily for just one media outlet, they work across more than one platform (e.g. print, radio and internet all at the same time). Study participants also noted that labour precariousness has a negative impact upon the quality of their work. Journalists’ words help to illustrate these ideas: “It is a state with many economic problems; therefore, if the media doesn’t pay you, it is very difficult to carry out your work”, said a TV journalist based in Morelia (M5); “this type of salary forces you to do a mediocre job and not really provide any new information at all, you end up compiling the information offered by the government; you end up reproducing newsletters”, said a national correspondent for a political

magazine (J4). As I discuss in the next section, local journalists across Mexico's states have started to organise in national and local movements in order to mitigate such precarious conditions.

The data gathered suggests that disparities in individual incomes and low management support brings to light further inequalities and absences that, under certain conditions, may increase journalists' risks to danger. In this vein of thinking, I agree with some media scholars associated with the political economy tradition who have suggested that: "The increased bodily risk faced by [conflict] journalists echoes other forms of labour precarity" (Creech, 2017:2; Paterson, 2014). I argue that one form in which this "labour precarity" can be manifested is in the uneven distribution of management support after being threatened or violently attacked – what Paterson (2014:106-129), in the context of war correspondents covering Iraq, has called "media response". Indeed, data gathered suggests that journalists who belong to the first category – national correspondents and local journalists for legacy media outlets – have received organisational support after being threatened or targeted with violence. Whereas journalists who belong to the second group – local journalists working for small media outlets and freelancers – who operate without strong media companies to financially back them, have not received organisational support after being violently attacked.

When I asked one key informant and editor-in-chief from a national legacy newspaper based in Mexico City about the safety protocols, if any, that the newspaper has implemented after any news worker – especially national correspondents – suffered a violent incident, he said:

The first reaction is to give them support, especially medical, relief aid and human support, only for what regards their own safety. We want them to feel that we have their backs and to feel supported by the institution to which they belong to, that's regarding

what they must do. As for the journalistic coverage, in general, without making this a big deal, we seek to confirm the facts for official purposes and make a record of the aggression, and eventually go to the authorities to file a complaint on the incident (13, editor-in-chief).

This testimony echoes a national correspondent (based in Morelia, Michoacán) from the same newspaper, who fled his home state when he received death threats after publishing a story on local crime organisations, said:

When the narcomantas [banners used by cartels to communicate publicly] emerged and then later came the threats, my bosses ordered me to suspend work completely, to leave with my family, abandon our home and seek safe refuge; we were going to wait and see what happened, and the next instruction was to flee the State. Flee the State and maybe go to Guadalajara or some other place in the country where we could be more calm, and in case the threats continued, we would determine with them what measures we should take. There was constant communication over the phone (M4).

This testimony also reinforced what other participants said. A national correspondent for a national radio chain based in Monterrey (Nuevo León), who was threatened by local authorities after publishing a story on local corruption, also commented:

Well, what my boss chose to do was to be cautious. He didn't want to be alarmed. He asked me to properly analyse the situation. He helped me get my daughter out of the country and we filed the complaints to the PGR [Office of the General Prosecutor] (N5).

Similarly to national correspondents, journalists for local legacy newspapers often received support from their superiors and companies; this situation enables local journalists for legacy newspapers to take on more risk in covering sensitive stories. One journalist (C3) from a legacy newspaper in Ciudad Juárez, who was intimidated by a local politician, said that she always felt protected by her media company: “I could tell you about my experience working for *El Diario de Juárez*: from my perspective it has been very supportive, very understanding and looking out for its

team, its people”. Something similar was mentioned by a TV local journalist who was beaten by local public officials during coverage of a social protest in the Estado de México:

Yes, they knew about it; they talked about taking me to seek justice, about wanting to know how I was, they were in constant communication with me and there is a certain protection, a type of shelter in the media and yes, they were aware of it and they knew; so there is always a response from them, when something happens to us, we always communicate with them (E3).

It is worth mentioning, however, that study participants have stated that organisational policies were developed just after their colleagues and companies were attacked; in other words, media companies have not yet developed long term safety plans for their own staff. “It was not until then that the reporters were given a course on journalist protection and only to the ones working in the crime news, when the shooting happened in the [legacy newspaper] building, the whole company” (S4), commented one journalist based in Mazatlán (Sinaloa) (in the quotation she referred to a gun attack against a local legacy newspaper that happened in 2010). A key informant, investigative journalist and activist, who has worked for *Rory Peck Trust* in training local journalists across Mexico’s states, also commented on this: “the [news] organisations tried to create courses that would raise awareness, but as long as the media didn't go through something bad, there was no sensitivity on the matter” (16). These quotations echo what other studies have found (Cottle et al., 2016:149). For example, in the Mexican context, Relly and González de Bustamante (2014:115) “found that most news organization owners, top editors, and producers interviewed for this study had developed policies that were, in large part, reacting to the violence and economic downturn rather than setting visionary goals”. This claim is still true in many states in the country (like Chihuahua, Sinaloa and Tamaulipas), after a decade of living and working in the middle of a wave of criminal violence. However, as I

shall argue in the next chapter, long-term contingency plans and editorial policies have been developed by certain actors who could be categorised as institutional entrepreneurs (Di Maggio, 1988) and who held internal authority (usually owners, editors-in-chief and editors), generating some editorial policies aimed at ameliorating risk and ensuring continuity of reporting in violent settings.

Contrary to the safety equipment, organisational support and reactive measures that national correspondents and journalists for legacy newspapers enjoy, the data gathered suggests that management support after violent attacks is almost completely absent for those journalists grouped in the second category – freelancers and local journalists for small media outlets. In this sense, the data has provided additional evidence to suggest that local journalists are at greater risk when they receive low support from supervisors and media companies (Weidmann et al., 2008). This is a situation that Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez (2017b: 313) also mentioned in a recent study: “The study also found that economic risk stemming from the financial position of a media firm compounds physical risk and promotes censorship”. This situation, in turn, has limited journalists’ professional practice by imposing further restrictions (like fear) when reporting on sensitive issues. For example, a national correspondent who was freelancer for a while shared his experience after receiving threats due to a publication on local corruption:

During that time I was working as a freelancer, so I didn't have any company to at the very least support me as a way to say, "I'm a journalist". There is no company here that will support you, they don't let you be a journalist, [and] it's not very common. What I did was to stop addressing those topics until I had a company again (N4).

For an editor-in-chief of a legacy newspaper based in Coahuila (*El Siglo de Torreón*), the lack of support for journalists who have experienced an attack is an extensive problem among local news media companies:

And there's also the internal part, the one where the owners consider how necessary and important it is to invest in the safety of the media, why other media owners in other parts of the country don't want to do it; I don't know if it's mere stinginess, or being miserly, by not appreciating the value of the media, and just seeing it as a political instrument (6).

As these testimonies exemplify, and as other research has suggested (Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014:117; Estévez, 2010), the lack of support from media houses can be explained, in part, by a lack of commitment and responsibility by media owners, editors-in-chief and editors. The previous testimony, however, also suggests that a second reason for this is the prevalence of clientelistic relations between the news media and local government. This situation was mentioned by local journalists who did not receive any management support after being attacked by a local authority (such as local police officers or politicians), who usually interfered and controlled local media via discretionary spending of public advertising and bribes (I will develop this topic in the next chapter) (Guerrero-Martínez, 2010 and 2017; Valdez, 2016; Del Palacio, 2015; Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014; Hughes, 2006). For example, in Tlapa (Guerrero) an investigative journalist – who was severely injured by local police officers following an order by the City mayor – commented: “It had an impact in the media outlet where I worked, they fired me; for some reason, as I understood it, there was some deal with the mayor; that I would leave and there would be some propaganda in his favour” (G3). A local TV crime reporter who was injured by police officers while covering a street demonstration in the Estado de México mentioned something similar:

Like in our case when we were (attacked), our media outlet did not give us any support; nothing, absolutely nothing at all. On the contrary, they wanted to fire us because they said, "well, they are starting to have problems with the police, it's no longer profitable (E2).

Overall, these testimonies suggest that, in situations of risk and violence, clientelistic relations and media instrumentalisation (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos, 2002) can diminish organisational support to critical reporting and organisation in the event of violent attacks from a politician or police officer. Thus, these findings suggest that, in Mexico's states, violence and public insecurity often overlap with clientelistic relations and instrumentalisation which, in turn, may increase risk of violence and foster self-censorship.

In summary, based on the results of the study, it appears that local journalists who possess lower levels of economic capital are at greater risk than journalists who hold higher levels of such capital. Study results suggest that one of the reasons for this is that journalists with a precarious work status usually have less financial and material resources and lack management support.

5.4 The Role of Social Capital in Influencing Journalists' Exposure to Risk

Social capital can be defined as the level of professional solidarity shared with peers (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). As previously stated, solidarity in the journalistic field could be defined as the sense of horizontal and mutual support among field members (e.g. journalists, photo-journalists, editors). Drawing upon the literature of media and communication studies (González de Bustamante and Relly, 2016a; Hallin and Mancini, 2004), I have operationalised social capital as individual membership of a local professional journalism organisation. Local professional journalism organisations are independent and horizontal professional organisations that group local journalists in order to foster professionalisation and safety (González de

Bustamante and Relly, 2016a; Edmonds-Poli, 2013). Therefore, the main argument advanced in this section is that journalists who possess lower levels of social capital are at greater risk of violence than journalists who possess higher levels of social capital. Data gathered suggests that one of the reasons for this is because journalists who belong to professional organisations foster a web of support aimed at ameliorating risk and increasing peer support and solidarity.

The first important finding concerning journalists' social capital is that study participants agreed that peer organisations are very important resources for ameliorating risk. When I asked journalists: "Do you think local professional journalism organisations are important for reducing risks and dangers?", 90% of study participants (27 out of 32)⁶⁵ responded that peer organisations are a key resource for ameliorating risks. Some study participants summarised this impression as follows: "I think it is very important because if we do not take care of ourselves, do not protect ourselves among colleagues, no one will" (E3, local TV crime journalist); "I think it is fundamental that female and male journalists become organised. The unity that we portray will always be a key factor that will strengthen and contribute to us having protection or risk prevention tools" (N2, local freelance journalist); "That disorganisation, that scattering, makes it easier for them to infringe on our profession, because they see us unprotected, isolated" (S3, editor-in-chief).

Despite the recognition of the importance of peer organisation for ameliorating risk and danger, the study results show that the level of professional solidarity among Mexican journalists is still rather low. Journalists' words help to illustrate this situation as well: "Generally, we are not united, we don't trust each other, we are

⁶⁵ This question was not asked to six of the participants due to time constraints during the interviews.

apathetic, very individualistic” (N2, freelance journalist); “We have not been supportive to each other” (M3, local journalist); “Unfortunately, there's no union. I can assure you there's no union among colleagues” (E3, crime reporter). These findings are consistent with those from previous literature on the subject (Márquez-Ramírez and Hughes, 2017b; González de Bustamante and Relly, 2016a; Edmonds Poli, 2013; Hughes, 2006; Hallin and Papathanassopoulos, 2002), which has suggested that, historically, Mexican journalists exhibit very low levels of peer support. In addition to this, the data gathered suggests that among the variables working against journalists’ solidarity, rivalry and competition were a key factor, as well as distrust and lack of confidence.

To start with, journalists from almost all states in which this study was conducted said that rivalry and competition are some of the most common barriers to professional solidarity: “It is a very distant profession; there is a lot of professional envy” (J1, local journalist); “There's a lot of envy in journalism, instead of supporting each other, we block each other with natural envy, publishing envy, professional envy” (M5, local journalist). These findings are not surprising because as actors in the field, journalists usually compete to gain as many resources and capital as possible (like competition for scoops, among other things) (Benson, 2006:190). In this context, as other scholars have suggested (Graves and Konieczna, 2015: 1970; Gurevitch and Blumler, 1990), the economic logic that drives the journalistic field enhances competition (rather than cooperation) among field members.

In addition to rivalry and competition, study results suggest that another common barrier to peer-committed support is the lack of trust among colleagues. This lack of trust derives, in part, from the prevalence of clientelistic relations between patrons and actors in the field (journalists, editors, media owners, etc.) (Hallin and Mancini, 2004:59). As Waisbord (2013: 166) has suggested, “When members of an

occupation explicitly promote subordination to other fields, they weaken professional boundaries”. Interviews conducted for this study offer empirical evidence that support Waisbord’s claim. In fact, the study’s findings suggest the prevalence of clientelistic relations has been a long-lasting barrier working against horizontal organisation and peer support. For example, “Suspicion is another barrier we find within media” (M4 an experienced national correspondent based in Morelia, Michoacán). A local journalist based in Veracruz – a subnational state in which local incumbents have spent millions of pesos in discretionary allocation of public advertising (Del Palacio, 2015) – commented:

Lack of trust is a factor as well, because there are those who at a certain point collaborated with someone or received some type of benefit, economic or from someone working in the government, and then people don’t trust them anymore (V3).

As this testimony suggests, political and economic interferences upon journalistic logic were a source of lack of trust and confidence among peers. In addition to this, as other scholars and journalists have found (Del Palacio, 2015; Priest, 2015; González de Bustamante and Relly, 2016a; Edmonds-Poli, 2013), in the context of Mexico’s so-called War on Drugs, study participants in Ciudad Juárez (Chihuahua), Nueva Italia (Michoacán) and Ciudad Victoria (Tamaulipas), suggested that direct bribes to journalists are not just paid by political elites but also by drug traffickers. An information chief for a legacy newspaper based in Ciudad Victoria (Tamaulipas) has commented the following:

Among colleagues, sometimes it’s inevitable to be linked to one another, either by force or obligation. That’s what has happened in many cases when there are attacks, they are linked to crime organisations; it’s important to clarify, and I’d like to be clear on this, that most professionals who have links with organised crime are forced to do so, there’s no other option; either you’re in or you’re out, and if you’re out you are an enemy (T5).

As this testimony suggests, clientelistic arrangements between criminals and journalists are imposed by force or coercion (I will develop this topic in the next chapter). Additionally, study participants suggested that criminal interference in the journalistic field does not occur only because of the prevalence of criminal clientelistic arrangements as some study participants in Tamaulipas and Michoacán have suggested, but because the journalistic field has been infiltrated by drug trafficking organisations, who impose their logic and interests upon the professional logic of the field. As has been documented by news reports (Valdez, 2016; Priest, 2015), criminal infiltration often occurs inside newsrooms. An editor-in-chief for a local newspaper in San Luis Potosí has described the situations as follows:

A writing partner next to your cubicle comes and tells you: "Hey, I met with a friend, and he was mad because you published that story. I am his friend and I am your friend too; so, I'm just letting you know because he is really upset." In your own writing, a colleague who knows what you write, where you come from and go to, who knows everything that is happening. It is easy to think that if there is infiltration of organised crime at high national political levels and even at high state political levels, it has most likely occurred as well in the newspapers (2).

A crime reporter based in Tampico (Tamaulipas) before moving to Mexico City described something similar:

We noticed many colleagues or strangers arriving to our media outlet, at the beginning, we didn't understand, we thought they were the government's "ears". "Here comes an "ear", we have to be careful." Then, we learnt they did not belong to the government. They were "ears", but were narcos' ears. Then, we had to be more careful because they started taking our pictures, and you didn't feel safe anymore (T1).

In summary, as the above examples suggest, in the context of Mexico's so-called War on Drugs, journalists' solidarity is undermined not only by the interference of the political field, but also by interference from the criminal world. As some authors have documented (Schedler, 2016), during epidemics of criminal violence, confidence

and trust among members of a given community (like members of the journalistic field) tends to decrease.

Thus, given the aforementioned context of a prevalence of clientelistic relations between patrons (either politicians or criminals) and high levels of rivalry and competition among journalists, peer solidarity among journalists has been very low. The study finds that this low level of peer solidarity materialises in a very low level of peer support in the aftermath of an act of aggression or violent attack (e.g. a violent killing). When I asked journalists: “What has been the reaction of fellow colleagues when an act of aggression against journalists has occurred?”, study participants often used terms like “lack of support”, “apathy”, “individualistic”, “indolence”, “indifference”, “divided” and “disunity”. Some study participants summarised this impression as follows: “Generally, we are not united, we don't trust each other, we are apathetic, very individualistic” (N2, local journalist); “I guess I can say there is indifference” (V5, national correspondent); “For the most part, the response you get is apathy. Usually the colleagues, myself included, think ‘that won't happen to me’” (O1, local journalist).

In the context of this lack of support, rivalry, competition, clientelistic relations and criminal interference, it is easy to understand why journalists' individual membership to professional journalism organisations was rather low. In fact, around 30% of the participants interviewed (13 out of 43⁶⁶) reported that they were associated with this kind of organisation. This finding is in line with other studies, reporting for example that 25% of journalists interviewed belonged to a professional organisation (Márquez-Ramírez and Hughes, 2016). The data gathered offers a more nuanced

⁶⁶ This question was not asked to six of the participants due to time constraints during the interviews.

picture on this matter, finding that despite all the adversities and limitations mentioned above, journalists have exhibited peer solidarity, empathy, and under certain circumstances have created independent networks and professional organisations aimed at creating a web of support and fostering safety mechanisms for reporters (Brambila and Lugo-Ocando, 2018; González de Bustamante and Relly, 2016a; Relly and González de Bustamante, 2017; Segura and Waisbord, 2016). As Fligstein and McAdam's (2012:23-26) model of field theory suggest, actors were driven by a fundamental desire to interact socially with others which, in turn, allows for cooperation and collaboration between them.

Indeed, study participants said that solidarity networks (Castells, 2015) have emerged among peers, especially between close colleagues who have exhibited reciprocity, support and commitment when a grievance⁶⁷ against fellow journalists or news media organisations has occurred. These solidarity networks are not very large, failing to encompass all journalists working in a single city, but there are small networks composed of close colleagues who have expressed their solidarity either in person or in remote or digital forms. Relevant statements from participants included: "There is solidarity among the closest colleagues" (N3, national correspondent); "Depending on who gets attacked, a certain solidarity emerges" (M5, TV reporter); "The journalist guild's response is scant, it is sometimes based on prejudice and sometimes you only get it from your immediate networks of colleagues that you trust" (J1, local journalist).

⁶⁷ According to Snow (2013), grievances are the common feelings that accumulate around social movements (e.g. violent killing of a journalist), and this condition can be associated with feelings of dissatisfaction, fear, indignation, resentment and moral shock.

Very often, a grievance perceived as legitimate among local journalists leads solidarity networks to convert into more systematic groups. In these cases, small numbers of journalists (between three and eight) have come together to create independent, horizontal, trust-led organisations at a subnational level (Tavera, 2017). As has been documented in the literature (González de Bustamante and Relly, 2016a), in Ciudad Juárez (Chihuahua) in 2011, a small group of female professional journalists organised themselves into a local organisation (*Red de Periodistas de Juárez*) [Network of Journalists in Juárez] after the killing of two fellow reporters (Armando Rodríguez and Carlos Santiago, killed in 2008 and 2010 respectively). This experience was repeated in other subnational states. In Veracruz, a local journalist mentioned (V2) an informal support group of local reporters (*Voz Alternativa*) [Alternative Voice] that formed after the killing of a national correspondent (Regina Martínez in 2012). In Coahuila, a group of journalists created an organisation (*Redes Irritilas*) [Irritation Networks] after the violent killing of one political reporter (Eliseo Barrón in 2009). One key informant who participated in such groups made the following comment:

After Eliseo went down, I became the person who sought signatures of solidarity from colleagues to publish a spread about his murder the next day; I am the one who convened a protest in which we went out to the streets for the first time, I am the one who spoke to other colleagues about what we could and must do (11).

The rise of independent organisations can follow different paths, and in some cases it has taken many such grievances for some to form. This was the case for *Red de Periodistas del Noroeste* [Network of Journalists from the Northwest] in Nuevo León (founded in 2013), which came together after numerous attacks and acts of aggression against journalists and media outlets in Monterrey, as a participant and founding member commented in an interview (N3). In Oaxaca, a group of journalists

started an organisation (*Grupo Prensa Oaxaca*) [Oaxaca Press Group] in 2014, after the kidnapping and attempted murder of two colleagues in 2011 and 2013, respectively. In Michoacán, a group of journalists led by a veteran reporter (M2, local journalist) organised a network of journalists in 2014 (*Encuentro Estatal de Periodistas y Editores de Michoacán*) [State Meeting for Journalists and Editors of Michoacán] after the violent killing of five colleagues within the space of a few years.

In some cases, organisations of journalists that already exist at local level have taken on a more independent and active role in recent years (Tavera, 2017). This change has happened, in part, as a reaction to increasing violence against journalists. Examples of such groups are the *Asociación de Periodistas y Comunicadores 7 de Junio* [June 7 Journalists and Communication officers Association] in Sinaloa (founded in 1999) and the *Sindicato Nacional de Redactores de Prensa Sección XIII* [National Union of Writers for the Press Section XIII] in Guerrero. The latter was created in 1929 during the years of electoral authoritarianism but has taken a more independent and active role in recent years.

In line with the findings of other scholars (for example, González de Bustamante and Relly, 2016a; Tavera, 2017), the study results suggest that, contrary to the old clientelistic organisations that emerged during the period of the hegemonic party rule (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos, 2002), the aforementioned professional journalism organisations and networks are based on horizontal mutual recognition and trust, common professional interests and in service of a shared vocation (Tavera, 2017; González de Bustamante and Relly, 2016a; Edmonds-Poli, 2013).

The study results suggest that one of the ways in which membership of these professional groups can ameliorate risk is in providing peer-professionalisation and safety training for their members. In this sense, local professional journalism organisations, in many cases with support from civic allies (like *Article 19 Mexico*

and *Reporters Without Borders*), have organised dozens of safety courses, specialised workshops, activities and talks. “La Casa de los Derechos de Periodistas [House for Journalists’ Rights], Freedom House and CASEDE [Democratic Security Analysis Collective] are the organisations that have reached out to Nuevo León, to the journalists’ professional association to offer them this type of training”, noted a local journalist based in Monterrey (Nuevo León) (N2), who has participated in and helped to organise such workshops. In other cases, press rights organisations and international advocacy groups have offered these kinds of courses to local journalistic organisations in charge of disseminating these initiatives among their states. This is especially true in subnational polities with internal heterogeneity in terms of indigenous population and cultures (like Oaxaca, Guerrero and Michoacán). One journalist for a public radio station based in Chilpancingo (Guerrero) commented:

When there is a workshop or there is going to be a conference given by an expert, which takes a lot of effort to bring here to Chilpancingo or any other part of Guerrero, we announce it, and thirty people might sign up but at the last minute, only half or less show up, because there will always be some news to cover (G2).

According to the study results, 60% of participants (29 out of 49) received specialised training to work in hazardous settings from civic organisations. Peer professionalisation and training in safety mechanisms are particularly relevant in Mexico, where the vast majority of journalists have not received sufficient safety training from their media houses (Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014: 117). Indeed, 90% of journalists interviewed reported that they had not received any safety training from their media companies (the potential influence of this collective training in the way journalists report and share news will be analysed in the next chapter).

Providing first aid to peers who have been attacked is another task that professional journalism organisations have deployed. In many cases, as the

representative of an organisation of journalists in Chihuahua noted, they have offered first aid and legal support when media companies have not: “The first ones to jump ship are the companies, which leaves journalists’ associations like ours”, said a local TV journalist based in the city of Juárez (in Chihuahua) (C1) and who also worked with a local professional group of journalists giving first aid and support to colleagues. In Oaxaca, a journalist who was attacked commented that she contacted one journalist professional organisation seeking support after the incident: “For example, in my case the association known as *Grupo Prensa Oaxaca* [Oaxaca Press Group] got in on it, I went to Artículo 19, to Periodistas de a Pie [Journalists on Foot], and La Casa de los Derechos de los Periodistas [The House of the Journalists’ Rights]” (O2). This example is not exceptional in Mexico, but rather forms part of a pattern across states in which professional journalism organisations have emerged. One activist interviewed in Mexico City commented: “In every case, what seems to work from the beginning is networking, meaning the contacts that become a network to give you a minimum of coverage and protection” (8).

Although first aid provided by these groups and associations cannot substitute formal protocols that should be developed internally within media houses (Feinstein, 2013), this collective response has functioned as the first destination for journalists seeking support. In this sense, these findings add further evidence to the suggestion that the support of colleagues is a key resource “in providing advice, support, and encouragement in the field” (Novak and Davidson 2013: 19). Thus the findings suggest that social capital is key to managing and reducing risk. In Nuevo León, one study participant summarised this finding as follows: “The unity that we display will always be a key factor that strengthens us and contributes to us having protection or as a risk prevention tool” (N2). In the next chapter I explain how journalists who possess higher levels of social capital were more likely to use online (WhatsApp and

Facebook groups) and offline networks aimed at developing a set of networked strategies and tactics to allow them to keep reporting while reducing work-related risks.

In summary, study participants offered qualitative evidence to support the argument that journalists who possess lower levels of social capital are at greater risk than journalists who hold higher levels of such capital. The empirical data suggests that one way of ameliorating risk “may be stronger social connections” (Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2017b:311).

5.5 The Role of Symbolic Capital in Influencing Journalists’

Exposure to Risk

Symbolic capital refers to the form that economic, social and cultural capital take once they are perceived and recognised as legitimate by others in the field (Bourdieu, 1997). In the case of the journalistic field, journalistic capital can be closely connected to the notion of peer recognition. Among media and communication researchers (Marchetti, 2005: 69; Benson, 2006), one of the ways in which symbolic capital can materialise in the journalistic field is in a journalist’s type of newsbeat. This is because, as Voltmer (2013:198) has suggested, “divisions of labour [into specific newsbeats] also create hierarchies and unequal allocation of professional prestige both within the field and within individual news organisations”. Following this idea, I have operationalised symbolic capital as the type of newsbeat journalists are assigned.

For analytical purposes, in this section I have concentrated on analysing the role of symbolic capital in journalists assigned to two different types of beat, namely crime beat reporters (9 journalists), and national correspondents (14 journalists). The

reason for this is that, according to media and communication researchers (Smith, 2018; Lara-Klahr and Barata, 2009; Martínez, 2005; Del Castillo, 1997) these two types of journalist are placed at two extreme poles in terms of prestige in the field. On the one hand, crime beat journalists are often considered a lower status reporter, involved in reporting the worst atrocities in society (e.g. violent killings) from sensationalist angles – what Hallin (2000b:268) has labelled the “pornography of violence”. On the other hand, national correspondents are regarded as experienced reporters or investigative journalists who belong to national media outlets based in Mexico City and who usually are closer to the centres of power (like political and economic elites), and also enjoy better labour conditions and individual income.

As in previous sections, the main argument here is that journalists who possess lower levels of symbolic capital (crime beat journalists) will be more at risk of danger and violence than journalists with higher levels of symbolic capital (national correspondents). Based on the findings, this is because lower-status groups (crime beat journalists) tend to be more exposed to hazardous journalistic assignments (such as covering crime scenes), tend to be in closer contact with violent actors and, under certain circumstances, are more prone to criminal ties⁶⁸. That said, the data gathered has offered a more complex picture: journalists who possess higher prestige are not necessarily exempt from risk and violence.

According to different press rights organizations reports (Article 19 Mexico, 2016; CNDH, 2015), the vast majority of journalists violently killed in Mexico were crime beat reporters. In a recent study, after comparing different databases, Brambila

⁶⁸ As I have explained in the past section, one example of this could be the local beat crime reporters who have been forced to work for local organised crime cells (Estévez, 2013; Edmonds-Poli, 2013).

(2017b) found that 56% of the 41 journalists killed in Mexico between 2010 and 2015 covered crime beats⁶⁹. Study participants reinforced these findings. In fact, experiences and opinions from study participants from almost all states agreed that crime beat reporters – often called *policiazo* reporters – were the most at risk of danger and violence. Journalists’ words help to illustrate these ideas: “Those journalists who do cover *policiazo* without a doubt are more exposed” (J1, local journalist); “Reporters who do coverage [of violent incidents] during the night are the ones who are more exposed to danger”, (M1, local journalist).

The fact that crime beat journalists are more prone to risk was reflected in the survey’s empirical data, which suggests that journalists who cover crime and drug-related stories are also more likely to be threatened or wounded due to work. In fact, 66% (6 out of 9) of journalists who specialise in crime and security interviewed for this study reported that they had been threatened or violently attacked. These findings mirror those of Relly and González de Bustamante (2014: 120) and by Flores et al., (2014: 178), who found that crime beat reporters are more exposed to risk than any other type of journalist.

Study participants also commented that, in comparison to other journalists (like national correspondents), crime beat reporters are usually viewed with less professional prestige by their peers, as they work with some of the more sordid and “dirty” topics in society (e.g. violent murders) (Lugo-Ocando, 2018). One

⁶⁹ 41 percent covered local politics and 12 percent covered human rights abuses. An additional 12 percent used to work in other areas (including culture and sports) (Brambila, 2017b).

investigative reporter and activist, who has worked extensively with local crime reporters, has commented that:

[...] local crime beat journalists are much undermined, they are much forgotten [in their newsrooms]; they are people without much training, especially in the outer states. They are often seen as very close to the police, to the criminals, and to the worst and dirty things in society (16).

Thus, similar to what Martinez (2005) has suggested about *policia* reporters during the time of Mexico's electoral authoritarianism (that these journalists held less prestige), empirical data suggests that contemporary *policia* reporters also lack the prestige of other reporters who have higher symbolic capital (such as investigative reporters). More important for this investigation, however, is the fact that lower levels of prestige can overlap with the wide range of risks and dangers such reporters confront on a daily basis.

According to empirical data, the reasons for the increased risks confronting crime beat reporters are numerous. Study participants in every state, however, suggested that the most dangerous situations occur when crime beat reporters are doing street reporting, which includes covering crime scenes and violent homicides and other high-impact crimes, to reporting on violent confrontations between gang cartels, among other events (like streets blocked by criminals in states like Chihuahua, Tamaulipas and Michoacán). "When you cover a homicide, an execution, there's risk because you never what is going to happen", said a local crime beat reporter from Ciudad Juarez (Chihuahua, 1).

According to study participants, the first danger that crime beat reporters face comes from different actors who have approached them to influence their journalistic coverage of violent events. In regions with higher levels of criminal violence – like Michoacán (in cities like Nueva Italia) and some places in Tamaulipas (Ciudad

Victoria, Reynosa, Matamoros and Nuevo Laredo) – study participants suggested that when a violent incident occurred, they often received direct instructions from drug trafficking groups or the government dictating what to report. In Nueva Italia (Michoacán), a local journalist and columnist who has received constant intimidations from local drug traffickers commented:

[...] they asked me to suppress some information, I told them: "I cannot commit to you because I am a simple columnist, I'm a journalist and I send my material to [name of newspaper], they review it, and if they don't like the information, they don't publish it. I would then be in a difficult position with you, that's why I ask you to leave me alone regarding that situation. I can't support you, and I would never do it". So, they get mad and upset when you are of no use to them and their interests (M3).

After this, this reporter suffered an attempt on her life by local criminal bands. One information chief from a newspaper based in Ciudad Victoria (Tamaulipas) said that these threats came from either the drug-trafficking organisations or the local government:

It is very common when a site "heats up" and there are many confrontations. There are phone calls where they tell you: "publish this, don't publish that, publish this, but not that [...] and that information is published or not. I'm talking about phone calls from government and organised crime; usually they have that in common. Sometimes, they coincide in certain stories and request not to publish them. There are times in which the government asks you to release a story, but the other party tells you not to do so. Obviously, we don't release it because no one can guarantee our safety (T5).

The situation described above was mentioned by participants in Ciudad Juárez (Chihuahua), Culiacán (Sinaloa) and Torreón (Coahuila). As I shall argue in the next chapter, some journalists and editors have been able to overcome this situation by fostering certain strategies in order to continue reporting and publishing.

In addition to this, study participants in some cities in states like Tamaulipas and Michoacán have suggested that as the criminal world has infiltrated almost all

social sectors, they are safe to report on other issues (e.g. car accidents). As one editor has said: “There are minor things that have a deeper background” (T5). A local journalist in Nuevo Laredo (Tamaulipas) has commented on this:

For example, those who cover a car accident don't know who was involved in the accident. Many times, the ones involved are people that belong to organised crime, and you arrive to take photographs and it's common that they threaten you with a gun, accuse you of meddling where you don't belong, they ask you to leave. As a reporter, you suffer those kinds of threats, and you have to withdraw from it, for your own safety and not cover that story (T3).

Although this situation was widely commented on by local crime reporters in this study, this finding has not yet been widely mentioned in the academic literature (for an exception see Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014; for a journalistic account on this see Valdez, 2016). What is important about this is that the criminal wave of violence that has shocked the journalistic field has, in fact, disturbed other social connections and groups. In this context, these findings suggest that, in certain subnational states like Tamaulipas, doing journalism (even on topics of low sensitivity) can still be a dangerous occupation.

In almost every state, study participants suggested that they faced increased danger of bodily harm when they arrived at crime scenes, not just because criminals commonly prowled crime scenes after a violent murder occurred, but also because public security forces – like police officers, the navy and the military – often lack training to deal with the press. In Ciudad Juarez (Chihuahua), the city with the highest murder rate in the country in 2011, a TV journalist suggested that criminals often protected crime scenes as a way of controlling the flow of information:

Covering a news story on an execution is risky, because you don't know if among the people involved, there is someone interested in the people covering the story or that don't want that story to be known (C1).

Something similar was suggested by an experienced editor-in-chief and investigative reporter based in Culiacan, Sinaloa:

It's very risky when the reporter is on the streets, when they go to shootings, or to cover the death of a person in a risky area, or when someone is killed; you find the police officers, the reporters, gossipers and many times the criminals come back to finish off in front of every one (S5).

As other studies (Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014) and reports (Article 19 Mexico, 2016 and 2017; RWB, 2018) have indicated, the risks confronted by crime beat reporters working at crime scenes also come from public security forces impeding their professional activity. Some journalists commented: "The first barrier you encounter is the police, they do not allow you to work, they don't allow you to take photographs, they intimidate you, they push you; they try to take your equipment away" (1, Estado de México, crime beat reporter); "Municipal police and authorities; they intimidate and sometimes attack reporters, photographers and cameramen, and damage their equipment" (2, Nuevo León, freelance journalist).

The data gathered also suggests that proximity to the criminal world has increased risks and dangers for crime beat reporters. Study participants from states like Tamaulipas, Chihuahua and Michoacán have suggested that, under certain circumstances, journalists have been injured or killed because they have links to criminal organisations. "Sometimes, some are killed because they were involved in those organisations or become victims of a kind of revenge, complaints or anger in that perverted relationship", said a key informant, an editor-in-chief (2) of a local newspaper in San Luis Potosí and columnist for a national newspaper based in Mexico City. This finding mirrors that made by Holland and Rios (2017), who suggested that drug trafficking organisations have used violence against journalists as a communication tool over rival actors and to impose control over specific territories.

In contrast to *policiaico* journalists, national correspondents often enjoy higher levels of social prestige and are less prone to risk as they enjoy social security, support from their media companies and tend to not develop close connections with the criminal world. One national correspondent (G1) from Chilpancingo (Guerrero) said that he felt safer not only because his newspaper gave him social security, but also because he works for a prestigious media outlet: “I haven't received any threats or been attacked because I work for [name of a legacy newspaper], which is a national newspaper and it backs you up”. A TV reporter (M5) based in Morelia (Michoacán) summarised this idea as follows: “Here, the national journalists are the privileged ones. They are well recognised, and are less prone to being attacked”.

The strong perception among study participants that national correspondents were less at risk than *policiaico* reporters echoes some data gathered from press rights organisations working in the country. For example, according to Article 19 Mexico (2017:28), among all cases of anti-press violence perpetuated in the country in 2016, only 3.5% were reported to have been carried out against national correspondents. According to the CPJ (2017), since 1992 only 10% (4 out of 41) of journalists killed have been national correspondents. Although this general trend is true, recent cases of lethal attacks against journalists and results from this study suggest that journalists who possess higher levels of symbolic power are not exempt from violent and lethal attacks. For example, in the last five years, two national correspondents and one photojournalist from a national magazine were violently killed in Veracruz and Sinaloa. One of these cases was *Proceso* national correspondent Regina Martínez, whose body was found in her home in Xalapa, the capital of the Gulf Coast state of Veracruz. Her violent murder set an important precedent regarding violence against journalists in the country. One of her colleagues commented:

She is the first reporter from the general press to get killed. I would dare say that she is the first reporter from a national media outlet, a respected outlet in Veracruz, Mexico, Latin America and Spain, to get killed. And a reporter whose ethical, moral and personal conduct was impeccable [...] so it has a great impact, there is a before and an after Regina (V1, national correspondent).

In addition, as I will develop in the next chapter, contrary to *policiano* reporters, national correspondents are not exposed to violent crimes on a daily basis, in fact, they enjoy more time and autonomy to prepare their journalistic work, including developing contacts for conducting high level coverage and time for checking sources. As symbolic capital refers to the form that the economic, social and cultural forms of capital take “once they are perceived and recognised as legitimate by others in the field” (Bourdieu, 1989), journalists who possess higher amounts of symbolic capital usually receive additional monitoring to conduct high-risk coverage and enjoy safety mechanisms implemented by their news organisations. All of this, in turn, reduces their exposure to risk while reporting.

In summary, study participants offered qualitative evidence to support the argument that journalists who possess lower levels of symbolic capital will be at greater risk than journalists who hold higher levels of the aforementioned forms of capital. One of the reasons for this, according to the empirical data, is that journalists with lower levels of symbolic power (like *policiano* reporters) are positioned at greater risk of violence and danger than any other type of journalist in Mexico. However, the data gathered also suggests that, in the context of the so-called War on Drugs, journalists who possess higher amounts of symbolic capital (like national correspondents) are not exempt from violent and lethal attacks due to their work.

5.6 Discussion

Based on the literature and the study results, this chapter started from the premise that news production about sensitive topics and reporting in conflict settings is intrinsically dangerous (Cottle et al., 2016: 2); in this sense, local journalists who work on sensitive topics in unsafe democratic settings like Mexico are always a potential casualty in their role. Beyond this initial assumption, the chapter has argued that journalists' risk exposure is unevenly distributed across the journalistic field and, more importantly, that this uneven distribution corresponds to the differences in journalists' individual dispositions of volumes and types of capital. Guided by the theoretical framework provided by field theory, especially the concept of capital, this chapter has offered strong qualitative evidence suggesting that journalists with lower levels of capital (cultural, symbolic, economic and social) are at higher risk than journalists who possess higher levels of such types of capital. Based on the results of this chapter, the volume and type of journalists' capital can offer important insights about how and why journalists are unevenly exposed to risk. In particular, this chapter has argued that the journalists who are more prone to risk of danger and violence are those who have fewer years of professional experience (cultural capital); lower levels of individual income and lack of management support (economic capital); lower levels of peer solidarity (social capital); and lower journalistic prestige (symbolic capital).

In general, the chapter offers a clearer picture about the complexities and different dimensions that influence conflict journalists' calculations of risk. In that sense, the empirical and theoretical accounts developed in this chapter help to shed light on the different kinds of risk that different kinds of local journalists' face, a distinction often obscured by academic works which tend to generalise about the risks

that local journalists encounter (e.g. Armoudian, 2016). In addition to this, the chapter aimed to offer evidence about ‘regularities’ between individuals. Thus, the standard of evidence presented in the chapter related to regularities and patterns across participants regarding risk mitigation and risk exposure.

Regarding the role of cultural capital, this chapter has suggested that, contrary to experienced journalists who have acquired skills and developed safety mechanisms aimed at mitigating risks and dangers, new journalists are more prone to risk of danger and violence because they lack the skills to successfully mitigate dangers when reporting on sensitive topics and from violent settings. Regarding the role of economic capital, this chapter has suggested that, in opposition to journalists who enjoy better material and organisational conditions, journalists who have a precarious work pattern are often more prone to risk. This is because they lack organisational support and safety resources from their media companies. When it comes to the role of social capital, this chapter has suggested that contrary to journalists who have organised around independent professional organisations, journalists who have remained in isolation perceive greater dangers and have not benefitted from safety training provided by independent organisations. Regarding the role of symbolic capital, this chapter has argued that contrary to national correspondents, who often enjoy a higher status in the field, crime beat journalists are often more exposed to risks and dangers.

In addition to this, this chapter has added evidence to the extensive literature on journalism studies and conflict journalism regarding the role of professional practice and prestige in situations of risk and danger. As per other investigations, this chapter has suggested that professional skills and empirical practice, as well as prestige and type of newsbeat, are important dimensions influencing journalists’ risk exposure in dangerous settings. Far beyond existing literature, which has tended to be very media-centric, this chapter has suggested that other elements such as journalists’

material and organisational resources, as well as peer solidarity and social capital play an important role in influencing risk exposure and mitigation. In particular, this chapter suggests that peer solidarity has played a vital role in enhancing safety and support among local journalists (like first aid responders when a colleague experiences an attack).

Overall, qualitative data has provided enough evidence to support the aforementioned hypothesis and relationships. Some considerations, however, are made throughout this chapter. First, in conditions of ongoing conflict and violence, journalists who possess greater amounts of capital are not necessarily exempt from risk and violence against them; in fact, the study concludes that it is almost impossible to eradicate risks when reporting on sensitive stories from violent settings. Overall, as has been observed by others (Waisbord, 2013), the data gathered suggests that the environment of risk and danger may function as a containing force working against journalists' professional autonomy. Second, risk exposure is "reproduced" among journalists with lower amounts of capital; in other words, the journalists with less of one form of capital (e.g. prestige) are more likely to possess less of another kind of capital (e.g. organisational support). This situation, in which lower volumes of capital overlap each other, leads to greater exposure to risk and violence. This chapter offers additional evidence to other investigations, which have suggested that "the complexity of pressures on national journalists in dangerous contexts, because threats and prolonged risk of violence overlay norms and structural conditions of media systems" (Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2017a: 513). Third, despite all the adversity, the study found that journalists were able to some extent mitigate risk, for example, by turning (or converting as Bourdieu suggests) their professional solidarity with peers into collective protection mechanisms. Finally, the data gathered suggested that, in addition to the role of capital, there are other dimensions that have played an

important role in journalists' exposure to risk and danger. In particular, the study found that geographical factors (e.g. zones of silence or regions involving disputes between drug cartels) could influence journalists' risk exposure (for a quantitative explanation on this see Holland and Ríos, 2017).

The findings of this explanatory study should be considered in the context of several limitations. Firstly, the forms of capital under investigation were operationalised in specific variables. Although this operationalisation was based upon academic literature, these forms of capital also have other empirical manifestations. Second, all variables were explored at the individual level and did not consider the forms of capital of news media organisations.

5.7 Answering the First Empirical Research Question

This chapter aimed to provide an answer to the first empirical question: *Considering Mexico's War on Drugs as an exogenous shock to the field, how do journalists' individual dispositions of forms and quantity of capital influence their exposure to risk in violent subnational settings?* The working hypothesis in this chapter is that exposure to risk is unevenly distributed across conflict reporters in the field and, more importantly, that this uneven distribution is related to differences in individual journalists' possession of volumes and types of capital. More precisely, it is argued that conflict journalists who possess lower levels of cultural, economic, social and symbolic capital are at greater risk than journalists who hold higher levels of aforementioned forms of capital.

Overall, qualitative data has provided enough evidence to sustain the hypothesis that journalists who possess lesser amounts of capital are more exposed to risk; while journalists who possess higher amounts of capital can ameliorate their risk exposure

and are better equipped to respond to such dangers. Some considerations, however, are made in closing. First, lower amounts of one specific form of capital may lead to lower amounts of other forms of capital; in other words, journalists who are already exposed to risk because they possess less of one type of capital can increase their risk exposure because they also lack other resources. Second, in conditions of ongoing conflict and violence, journalists who possess higher amounts of capital are not necessarily exempt from risk and violence against them. Finally, the data gathered suggests that in addition to the role of capital, there are other dimensions – like those of time and space – that also play an important role in influencing (either increasing or decreasing) journalists' exposure to risk.

Chapter 6

Strategies for Safety Autonomy

Of course, we are all afraid, of course we are all frightened, but we have always thought that to stop making journalism would be the worst thing that could happen, even with the death of your colleagues.

Mexican journalist

6.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to respond to the second empirical research question: *How do journalists' individual dispositions of forms and quantity of capital influence the adoption of strategies for safety autonomy?*

Guided by the field approach that underpins this study (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012), the main argument in this chapter is that journalists who possess more capital have more resources to maintain and increase their position in the field and, therefore, will be more likely to adopt strategies for safety autonomy⁷⁰ (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012:97). Throughout this chapter, it is also argued that the type of strategy for safety autonomy that journalists develop depends on the type and volume of capital that journalists have gathered (for example, journalists who possess higher amounts of cultural capital will be more likely to develop so-called safety practices and devote greater attention to accuracy of facts, while journalists who possess higher

⁷⁰ Strategies for safety autonomy are defined as actors' capacity to put their volumes and forms of capital to use in developing mental-schemes, operational tactics and collective actions aimed at enhancing professional practice while reducing work-related risks.

amounts of social capital will be more likely to develop collective monitoring and collectively create news startups, for example) (Vandevordt, 2017:613). In addition, this chapter will explore journalists' dilemmas in adopting and employing strategies for safety autonomy both for newsgathering and publishing (Hughes, et al. 2016). This chapter also argues that the roles of capital and strategic behaviours have some limitations that are largely shaped by journalists' journalistic routines (for example, official sourcing), the organisational constraints in which they operate and the unsafe and constraining local environment to which they must adapt.

By way of evidence to support the aforementioned relationships and hypotheses, I have drawn upon open-ended interviews with 49 journalists and, complementarily, also drawn upon a set of 16 in-depth interviews with key informants. As in the preceding chapter, the standard of evidence is regularities and patterns between participants. In addition to this, interviews with key informants were particularly valuable for the analysis presented in this chapter as they offer additional context and information about how Mexican journalists have adopted and used these strategies beyond the 10 states in which I conducted the standardised interviews. In particular, the 16 in-depth interviews offered additional information about how journalists have developed the aforementioned strategies in subnational states like Coahuila (a subnational state with heightened levels of criminal violence, but which were not included in the sample of ten selected for this study). Additionally, the 16 in-depth interviews also functioned as a means of triangulating the findings.

This chapter will first review the role of cultural, economic, social and symbolic capital in influencing journalists' adoption of strategies for safety autonomy. In order to elucidate this, each of the four types of capital have been operationalised in specific variables and the results discussed. This chapter then presents some

imperatives (or limitations) for the adoption of strategies for safety autonomy and discusses the main findings and their theoretical and analytical implications.

6.2 The Role of Cultural Capital in Fostering Strategies for Safety

Autonomy

As discussed earlier in this study, cultural capital refers to the possession and accumulation of competence, skills and knowledge of particular relevance for professional journalists producing news stories (Vandevordt, 2016:613; Benson, 2006:189-190; Bourdieu, 2005). Drawing upon this literature, in this section I have operationalised cultural capital at an individual level as an accumulation of life experiences, especially those relating to assault or violent attack due to working practices (Novak and Davidson, 2013:318).

Thus, guided by the theoretical framework of field theory and, in particular, the main hypothesis that underpins this chapter, the main argument advanced in this section is that local journalists who possess higher levels of cultural capital will be more likely to adopt strategies for safety autonomy, both for developing (such as cautious practices) and publishing news (such as adopting accuracy and rigour in publishing). Based on the study's results, empirical evidence suggests that this is because journalists who have experienced traumatic events (such as violence against them) were capable of learning from such experiences and, ultimately, able to use this experience to create safety strategies to continue reporting and publishing while avoiding further negative consequences.

Empirical findings from my fieldwork added additional empirical evidence to this claim, suggesting that journalists who have experienced traumatic events (like

violence) were very resilient and capable of learning from negative experiences by developing mechanisms and strategies for enhancing professional practice (Novak and Davidson, 2013; Soerjoatmodjo, 2011; Feinstein, 2006). For example, during an interview with a veteran editor-in-chief and investigative reporter for legacy newspaper *Noroeste* (in Sinaloa), who was threatened due to his work, I asked if the attack that he had experienced while reporting had forced him to stop doing his work: “On the contrary, the more things that have happened, the more I insist on doing a good job” (S5). This testimony reinforced the idea put forward by Soerjoatmodjo (2011) and others (Feinstein, 2006) of ‘What does not kill journalists makes them stronger’. In reference to this process, some psychologists speak of a kind of meaningful resilience, the mechanism that individuals (like journalists) who have experienced a traumatic event apply to persist, adapt and learn from such a situation (Novak and Davidson, 2013).

Based on empirical findings, meaningful resilience occurred more frequently among journalists who expressed strong adherence to their role performance (especially for those expressing a strong adherence to a role as watchdog or change agent) (Novak and Davidson, 2013:313). In arguing this, I have followed Novak and Davidson (2013:4), who in their study on journalists’ reporting on hazardous events found that journalists constructed protective factors within their professional performance:

The journalists described the importance of prioritizing the job over other commitments in order to achieve, for example, in making sacrifices in their personal lives and the necessity of going to hazardous situations and being exposed to danger.

Empirical findings gave additional support for Novak and Davidson’s argument. For example, a crime beat journalist from *El Diario de Juárez* in Ciudad

Juarez (Chihuahua), whose husband (an experienced crime beat reporter) was shot dead outside his home seven years ago, commented:

Of course, we are all afraid, of course we are all frightened, but we have always thought that to stop making journalism would be the worst thing that could happen, even with the death of your colleagues (C2).

Other journalists, who also showed a strong adherence to their professional role performance, noted something similar. One key informant and investigative journalist from Acapulco (Guerrero), who suffered an attempted murder four years ago after publishing in his digital newspaper a set of journalistic pieces on local drug traffickers operating in the port, said: “Despite all those circumstances you have to keep on fighting” (12). One editor-in-chief from Mazatlán (Sinaloa), who received death threats after exposing local corruption and collusion between organised crime groups and politicians, said: “Well yes, to at least understand it, accept it, bear it and continue working [...] in those circumstances, you carry on, it's part of the risks of our profession” (S2). In Oaxaca, a national correspondent for a national political magazine, who often criticised local government in his journalistic pieces, and who was beaten and psychologically tortured for about 12 hours in 2008, spoke about how he received a lot of support from his community at the time. At that moment, he said, he realised the relevance of his work for his community and felt motivated as a result:

After I was abducted and then freed, the next day it was like a party at my house because even people who I didn't know came by, organisations, religious people would tell me "well, we heard what happened and we came to tell you that we are with you and we support you." That's when I felt that my work had a purpose, that it had some leverage, some influence and that people think it's important, that motivated me a lot and it made me believe “this is where I belong” (O3).

Overall, these testimonies suggest that identifying with their role performance made participants more able to identify a positive outcome from these traumatic experiences and, ultimately, to keep performing their professional role (Novak and Davidson, 2013:313).

Empirical findings also suggested that many participants were not only very resilient but were able to learn how to be more cautious in order to avoid risk of violence while reporting. In Sinaloa, one editor-in-chief who was also threatened three times (twice by local authorities and once more by local traffickers) due to the nature of their work mentioned that he had learned a lot from these traumatic episodes: “They have no reason to detain you or anything like that, you simply learn to be more responsible and more cautious” (S2). Based in Morelia (Michoacán), a national correspondent for a legacy newspaper who was abducted while covering local drug trafficking activity commented that he continues to do journalistic work, but follows some precautions. “Now, as a result of those incidents, I have maximised my precautions, what I do now is to take my own measures” (M4). Based in Oaxaca, an experienced political beat reporter for legacy newspaper *El Imparcial*, who has lost a number colleagues while doing their work, said the following:

Sometimes, it can be a week or a few days when I start to think about it a lot, but sometimes I also say to myself, "no, you have to carry on, you chose this profession, you do it with passion" and every time I try (O2).

Overall, these testimonies suggest that journalists were able to learn from their negative experiences and, even when they have taken some ‘special measures’ or precautionary actions, they continued to do their work. In addition to the above, the empirical findings suggest that journalists were able to transform these forms of cultural capital into specific strategies for newsgathering. In light of this, the following sections provide empirical evidence of how journalists translated their personal

experiences with violence, as well as further experiences from other colleagues, into creative strategies to continue reporting while avoiding further negative consequences.

6.2.2 The role of cultural capital in influencing strategies for safety autonomy in developing news

In addition to the above, the empirical findings suggest that journalists were able to transform these forms of cultural capital into specific strategies for newsgathering. Among other things, study participants noted that after they were harassed or experienced a violent attack, they developed a set of logistical tactics, including changes in personal and work transport routines.

Study participants – especially crime beat reporters and national correspondents who often covered risky stories and/or were harassed or assaulted due to their work – mentioned that they had learned to use multiple entry and exit routes as a strategy to continue reporting while increasing their personal safety. An experienced political beat reporter based in Oaxaca, who has worked for more than 10 years for legacy newspaper *El Imparcial*, observed that since she has received intimidating calls from politicians she has taken more precautions: “I am usually careful and change routes”, she said (O2). Crime beat reporters and national correspondents who have suffered anti-press violence also had similar reactions. “We have obviously learned to change our routes, to always be on the lookout for suspicious people near our homes and neighbourhoods. These are some measures and protocols we have established” (M4), said a national correspondent who was threatened and abducted while covering a news story related to local criminal gangs. Something similar was mentioned by an editor for a legacy newspaper in Sinaloa (who

was also threatened by local officials after publishing a story on collusion between local politicians and drug lords):

We have learned to change routines and routes to and from work and home often; this has even become a habit for us, not to go to cafés at night, not to be alone at night except when on call working on tough topics related to possible corrupt governments, which is when we start to feel the pressure (S5).

He commented that he has taken additional measures: “Changing my security protocols, my routes, being careful in the streets and with my emails”. He summarised how his experiences have impacted on the measures he has taken: “The more things happen to me, the more adamant I am in doing my job well” (O5).

These testimonies suggest that, among other things, using multiple entry and exit routes has been a tactic applied by journalists wanting to continue reporting while enhancing their personal safety. Additionally, these testimonies may provide some explanation of the fact that different studies and journalistic accounts have found that Mexican journalists working in violent settings have changed routes as a precautionary strategy to ameliorate risk (Hughes and Márquez, 2017b; Rely and Gonzalez de Bustamante, 2014:115; Carter and Kodrich, 2013: 334; Del Palacio, 2015; Rodelo, 2009). In addition, these testimonies may also add some qualitative support and a more in-depth explanation of a recent quantitative investigation (Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2017b:308), which found that “chang[ing] work transport routines” was one of the different safety actions to ameliorate risk adopted by Mexican journalists – in fact, a representative survey of Mexican journalists showed that 15% of journalists have changed work transport routines as a protective measure (Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2017b:308).

6.2.2 The role of cultural capital in influencing strategies for safety autonomy in publishing news

Interviews suggest that journalists were also able to develop safety strategies for presenting and disseminating news – what has been called autonomy for publishing. In this regard, journalists have noted that they have learned to devote greater attention to accuracy of facts while reporting on sensitive topics such as crime, corruption and drugs. In fact, the study participants mentioned precision, accuracy and rigour as the most recurrent strategies for enabling them to continue publishing while trying to mitigate risk of danger.

For example, a political journalist for Oaxaca's *El Imparcial*, who has received intimidating calls and claims from political actors after publishing sensitive material, commented how these incidents have led her to be more rigorous with the information that she published.

That (intimidating calls) has helped me become more meticulous with my own work.

If I missed a source here, it won't happen to me next time; I have to have every voice so that no one tells me 'hey, I did not include you' or 'why did you not include me?' (O2).

Some journalists have learned to be more rigorous and precise when presenting findings after experiencing more extreme forms of violence. In Apatzingán, a small city in the central Mexican state of Michoacán, a political reporter and columnist received anonymous intimidating messages in 2006 after reporting on criminal violence in the community. After this, he was kidnapped and beaten by local drug traffickers. During the interview, he commented how these episodes forced him to be more accurate when publishing information about sensitive topics:

I still do the same but with a security protocol now, although it is a bit modest, with everything that entails. However, I am more objective in my notes and I give them

a more informative context now, so if they want to contradict what I say they can do it with the right of reply that every good or bad public official has (M3).

In Ciudad Juarez, one political reporter – who was threatened by a local politician – mentioned something similar:

Personally, I think that being as rigorous as possible is my way of protecting myself. As for political topics and corruption, I try to corroborate the information I have, one way or another, and not run on hearsay, but to strike a balance, have both sides of the story. I think that is the best shield I can self-impose on myself (C3).

All these testimonies suggest that, instead of passively adopting a kind of detached journalistic coverage close to the professional notion of journalism in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, in the Mexican context journalists have adopted accuracy and rigour as survival mechanisms and risk reduction practices (Gonzalez de Bustamante and Relly, 2016:692). In this sense, these testimonies also indicate that verification of news and facts is not only a political and a professional accomplishment, as Tuchman (1978:179) rightly comments, but a safety strategy. These testimonies also challenge safety manuals (Howard, 2009:14), which propose a somewhat naïve adherence to balance and rigour as normative aspirations in conflict reporting. Additionally, the above description of journalists adopting accuracy and balance as survival mechanisms may provide an explanation for the findings of other quantitative investigations. In fact, these testimonies add qualitative support and explanation to a recent investigation (Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2017b:308), which found that “paying attention to accuracy” was one of the most extensively used measures to ameliorate risk among Mexican journalists, with a representative survey of Mexican journalists showing that 91% of journalists have devoted greater attention to accuracy of facts as a protective measure (Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2017b:308).

In summary, study participants offered qualitative evidence to support the argument that journalists who possess higher levels of cultural capital (in the form of meaningful resilience) will be more likely to adopt and develop strategies for safety autonomy. One of the reasons for this, according to the empirical data, is that journalists who have been harassed or assaulted due to their work have learned from such horrific experiences and, in turn, applied strategies to keep reporting.

6.3 The Role of Economic Capital in Fostering Strategies for Safety

Autonomy

Economic capital refers to the material and organisational resources that individual journalists use to produce journalistic works (Vandervoordt, 2017:613; Bourdieu, 2005). Drawing upon the applications and developments of the field perspective undertaken by media scholars (Tandoc Jr, 2017:8; Vandervoordt, 2017; Marlière, 1999), in this chapter I have operationalised economic capital as the management support and organisational resources available to journalists from media companies. As in previous sections, the main argument advanced in this part of the chapter is that journalists (local journalists or editors) working on sensitive stories who possess higher levels of economic capital (such as management authority) will be more likely to adopt strategies for safety autonomy for both developing (such as management monitoring) and publishing news (editorial policies such as anonymising publications).

In Chapter 5, I argued that journalists who possess higher levels of economic capital – especially national correspondents and local journalists for legacy news media – were less prone to risk, as they usually enjoyed higher levels of organisational

support and organisational risk mitigation techniques; for example, journalists who enjoyed higher levels of economic capital also enjoyed higher salaries and labour rights, as well as safety equipment for conducting high-risk coverage. Chapter 5 also showed that journalists who possess higher amounts of economic capital have received organisational support after being threatened or targeted with violence. Drawing upon these findings, in this section it is argued that journalists with higher volumes of economic capital – especially those in management positions such as editors and editors-in-chief – were more likely to convert this capital into strategic tactics for increasing professional autonomy inside their own media organisations.

Supported by the above, this section argues that editors-in-chief, editors and journalists working for national and local legacy newspapers have developed a set of organisational strategies to continue reporting amidst violence and risk. Empirical findings suggested that, in turn, journalists working for these types of publications benefit from the application of safety mechanisms and tactics at the organisational level. To start with, the empirical evidence shows that some local news media – local legacy newspapers based in cities with higher levels of criminal violence like Ciudad Juárez (Chihuahua), Culiacán (Sinaloa), and Torreón (Coahuila), among others – have been through a process of “organizational learning”⁷¹ (Schulz, 2002). In this context, organisational learning occurs when, after a direct attack against colleagues or media facilities, members of a professional organisation learn from the experience and incorporate additional safety practices and strategies into their daily routines.

⁷¹ Drawing upon the organisational field model developed by DiMaggio and Powell (1983 and 1989), Schulz (2002) argues that “organisational learning draws much of its appeal from the presumption that organisations are capable of intelligent behaviour and that learning is a tool for intelligence, though sometimes an intriguingly unreliable one”.

Based on the fieldwork developed for this thesis, it can be argued that organisational learning happens mostly within local legacy print publications that favour independent and critical coverage, like *El Diario de Juárez* (Chihuahua), *El Siglo de Torreón* (Coahuila), *Noroeste* and *El Debate* (Sinaloa), as well as *El Expreso* and *El Mañana* (Tamaulipas), among others. Empirical evidence suggests that these publications, which work in a context of criminal violence, have learned to protect themselves and develop special tactics and mechanisms to continue reporting. As one experienced editor from *Noroeste*, a critical and independent newspaper that focuses on reporting corruption and drug-related stories in Culiacan (Sinaloa), commented: “First, the institution learned to prepare itself” (S5).

One of the more notable examples of organisational learning occurred at *El Siglo de Torreón*, a legacy newspaper based in Torreón, Coahuila. Until 2007, Torreón, an industrial city with around one million residents, was known for its manufacturing, mining and farming industry. Between 2006 and 2011, Torreón experienced a dramatic rise in drug-related violence (according to official information, in the Torreón metropolitan area, 990 violent killings occurred in 2011, up from 62 in 2006) and in 2011, this city had the second-highest homicide rate across all of Mexico. Following different reports, one of the reasons for this is that, given its geographical location (between Mexico’s Pacific states and Ciudad Juarez and Monterrey), Torreón has long been a strategic hub for drug traffickers. Between 2007 and 2011, different drug organisations, including the *Zetas*, violently fought each other across the territory, while at the same time reporters were murdered, kidnapped and beaten and news media organisations were repeatedly attacked (Enciso, 2017b; Article 19 Mexico, 2017; Osorno, 2011). One of the news organisations that experienced the most violent attacks was *El Siglo de Torreón*, one of the few outlets which reported on violence and crimes during this period, which saw its media

facilities attacked four times between 2008 and 2012. One key informant (6), a former editor-in-chief of *El Siglo de Torreón* between 2007 and 2011, commented that this violent context not only challenged their professional practices, but also forced them to learn how to operate and continue reporting in such adverse conditions. For him, the newspaper survived because they went through an organisational ‘learning curve’: “It was a curve ball, it was like when you thought you already had the solution to a situation you were facing, the last challenge, the last difficulty or the last problem, another would come up” (6). In his interview, he recalled the importance of internal solidarity and commitment to carrying on amidst violence and attacks:

Maybe the journalists from the company, the reporters and editors could assume it was an inherent risk, most of the staff are people without that kind of training or education: press operators, accountants, designers, managers, salespeople [...] who could work doing just that in any other business field and yet, they decided to work there for the newspaper; it wasn't in their mind-set, however it was admirable the way they reacted because it showed solidarity within (6).

The same participant also highlighted the relevance of the support provided by the media owner:

But there is also the internal part, the part where the owners decide how important it really is to invest in the security of the media outlet, and in that sense, I believe the reason behind why some media in other parts of the country do not want to do it, comes from stinginess, being miserly, and not seeing the true value of the media outlet, but seeing it as a mere political instrument. As for the newspaper *El Siglo* ["The Century"], owned by a very traditional and committed family, they saw that it was truly necessary (6).

During fieldwork for this study, the case of *El Siglo de Torreón* was not the only example of organisational learning, as empirical evidence suggests that a number of other publications working in a context of criminal violence have learned to protect

themselves and develop special tactics and mechanisms to continue reporting. In fact, these findings show that this organisational learning occurred both within some legacy national publications – notably the newspaper *Reforma* and magazine *Proceso* – and at local legacy newspapers, like *Noroeste* (in Sinaloa) and *El Diario de Juárez* (in Chihuahua), suggesting that journalists and editors inside these media outlets have learned to work in close collaboration to reduce work-related risks (Barrios and Arroyave, 2007; Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014). In this context, the set of editors-in-chief and editors who have developed such strategies could be defined as institutional entrepreneurs (Di Maggio, 1988), as they were visionary actors who initiate and participate in change to an organisation. The data suggests that media organisations have developed such strategic actions in large part as a reaction to the violent context in which they operate.

6.3.1 The role of economic capital in influencing strategies for safety autonomy in developing news

In terms of strategies for developing news, one of the most commonly referenced is establishing constant communication with colleagues and editors to regularly update their location when conducting street reporting or high-risk coverage – what I have called management monitoring. Study participants observed that management monitoring had become one of the most-used strategies applied by journalists working for (national or local) legacy newspapers based in states with heightened levels of criminal violence. This is especially true for journalists covering risky stories in their own states, as one crime beat reporter for Jalisco’s legacy newspaper *El Informador* said: “If it is about a place where we could be at risk, we should at least send a WhatsApp message with our location to our editor” (J2).

In Ciudad Juarez, which had the second-highest homicide rate in the country between 2009 and 2011, *El Diario de Juarez*, a legacy newspaper and one of the few publications which published sensitive information about drug traffickers and collusion with local governments, has learned to prepare their own reporters. A political reporter for the newspaper commented: “The newspaper itself has provided everyone with mobile units and cell phones to be in touch in case something happens” (C3). A former news editor of this newspaper commented that when levels of criminal violence were at their highest, they implemented management monitoring as a default safety mechanism: “To be in constant communication, to say “I am at this location, if I move I will go to this other location”. To continuously report your status so they know nothing bad will happen. Mostly that” (C5). Journalists from this newspaper supported this, with one crime reporter commenting how mobile communication has enabled her to be in constant communication with her editors at the newsroom: “Let him know when we go to municipalities close by here in Juárez, to do some coverage on political news stories, just let our bosses know what we are up to, and our location”, she said (C2). At *El Diario de Juarez*, it is not only political reporters using management monitoring, but also journalists working on crime stories: “For instance, I let my boss know, I activate the location mode on my phone so they can locate me using that”, said a crime reporter (C2) from this newspaper. At *El Diario de Juárez*, management monitoring is useful not only for keeping track of journalists’ locations, but also for making decisions in case something happens. Former editor for *El Diario de Juárez* said:

If you detect or you receive a strange call that might represent a threat or a risk, or when you interview someone and feel some tension that might generate an act of aggression or something of that sort, you have to report it immediately, and then a decision on whether to continue or not is made (C5).

Empirical findings suggest that this management monitoring has been implemented by national legacy publications (like *Reforma*, *La Jornada* and *Proceso*) as a tactic to enhance journalists' safety. In the magazine *Proceso*, the most important political magazine in the country, for which a Veracruz national correspondent killed in 2012 had worked, national correspondents commented that since that incident they have usually maintained continuous communication with the newsroom in Mexico City. In Michoacán, the national correspondent commented on this:

I am constantly sending an update on my status [...]. They are always watching out for us when we go to those areas, by us I mean when I go with a photographer; or when I go alone they are just in contact with me. When I do not inform them about where I am, they are constantly trying to locate me no matter what (M1).

In legacy newspaper *Reforma*, a critical publication which has published several corruption scandals occurring at a local level (Hughes, 2006) and for which national correspondents have been assaulted at least four times since 2006 (conversation with a key informant and editor-in-chief), national correspondents also commonly used management monitoring as a strategy for safety autonomy. Its national correspondent in Oaxaca said the following:

They have made some recommendations, they insist a lot in staying in constant communication with them, especially when covering this type of complex situations; before we move out, before anything happens, we are instructed to first consult with management (O5).

As this testimony suggests, management monitoring does not just include an update on the geographical location of the journalist; in fact, this tactic may include management consultation before/after any kind of movement made by reporters in the field. "By following this tactic, they can also do a proper evaluation of the situation, and give their recommendations in a more direct manner in regard to whatever case we are talking about", added the national correspondent (O5) based in Oaxaca. At the

same newspaper, the national correspondent based in Morelia (Michoacán), who usually reported on drug-related stories and violence, commented: “If the situation requires it, we communicate the situation to our editors so that they know every step of the way what is happening while covering violent stories” (M4). However, as some studies have suggested (Cottle et al., 2016; Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014), the data gathered suggests that management monitoring is a safety strategy which is only enjoyed by journalistic staff working in legacy news organisations. As I shall later argue, freelance journalists and journalists working for small media outlets could supplement such monitoring by enhancing a type of collective monitoring among peers and colleagues.

Interviews suggest that journalists who enjoy higher levels of economic capital are also able to develop safety strategies for presenting and disseminating news – what has been called autonomy for publishing, an idea reviewed in the following section.

6.3.2 The role of economic capital in influencing strategies for safety autonomy in news publishing

With regard to the role of economic capital in developing strategies for safety autonomy in publishing news, empirical findings suggest that one of the most-frequently mentioned strategies was the development and application of specific editorial policies, including special editorial meetings to consider what elements or information to include in a news story, strategic news frames regarding violent and risky stories and an anonymity policy regarding drug trafficking and crime stories – all of which I have called editorial policies.

At legacy newspapers based in subnational regions with heightened levels of criminal violence – like Ciudad Juarez (Chihuahua) or Culiacán (Sinaloa) – study

participants – especially those in a management position like editors and editors-in-chief – noted that they have developed special editorial meetings to decide what kind of information can be published about drug-trafficking. A former deputy chief editor of legacy newspaper *El Diario de Juárez* commented on the internal decision-making process before publication of any story related to drug traffickers:

If it is related to drug trafficking and all that, you always have to check with the chief of information or the director, there is even a round table to talk about the implications that this topic might have and if it is too risky (C5).

Other participants also mentioned these kinds of meetings, referencing the management team deciding whether and how to publish sensitive material of this kind. In that sense, study participants – especially those in management positions – commented that their news organisations had learned to frame sensitive information about drug-traffickers and criminal activity in certain ways. A former editor-in-chief for *El Siglo de Torreón* said: “It is how you manage a news story to avoid a violent repercussion from a criminal group; it is all related to how you deal with a story” (6). He said that, at the time of the most intense criminal violence in Torreón, they did not publish the specific cruelty of the murders and of the criminal attacks, instead publishing drug-related information in a more “even-handed” manner, avoiding any kind of sensationalism:

The mechanism used in that case was: let's write an even-handed story, trying not to announce from the top, in the headlines, the cruelty with which the crime was committed, and instead use description in the centre of the story, and being careful when choosing the pictures that would be published. [...] You had to think about every situation in accordance with that (6).

This testimony offers a rare counter-example in the Mexican context of what academic research has noted about media organisations covering the so-called War on Drugs that are guided by market-driven journalism, which is distinguished by the

spectacularisation of the information through dramatisation and over-simplification of criminal conflicts and security issues (Hernández-Ramírez and Rodelo, 2010; Osorno, 2011; Corchado, 2013).

Study participants offered further examples of strategies for safety autonomy when publishing these kinds of stories. An editor for legacy newspaper *Noroeste* in Culiacán – a publication well known for its work on drug trafficking in the state of Sinaloa, home of Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzman and El Cartel de Sinaloa (Osorno, 2009) – mentioned the following:

Everything that is published related to violence, organised crime and even corruption, we put it under a magnifying glass, even in the use of commas and removing adjectives [...] meaning that we search for every adjective that might be written unconsciously, we locate it and erase it. In that sense, we try to make the publishing as cold as possible, as a delicate documented subject (S5).

Also in Sinaloa, this editor commented that beyond removing adjectives and the like, they have developed some strategic framing for journalistic coverage of drug-related stories. According to the editor in question, between 2009 and 2011, when drug-related violence peaked in the city (Enciso, 2017b), the newspaper stopped making specific references to the activities of criminal organisations. As with other newspapers in northern Mexico, they decided to follow official information and later decided to keep publishing stories about the so-called War on Drugs, but with a different framework. An editor for this newspaper commented:

A few years ago, here in the newspaper, we decided to cover the topics of security and justice, but from a socio-political perspective. In other words, we attend to the victims, and give a wide coverage to the topics of forced displacement, torture and forced disappearances (S5).

As this testimony suggests, editors at local legacy news outlets may carve out professional autonomy for publishing information on sensitive stories by implementing a strategic news frame. Again, this testimony is a very unusual case in the Mexican context, where the vast majority of news reports and stories on the so-called War on Drugs reflect a narrow agenda, using official sources, focusing largely on the ‘government’s achievements’, while civilian casualties are ignored (Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2017b; Valdez, 2016; Turati, 2011; Rodelo, 2009).

Another of the strategic policies most often mentioned by study participants for continuing reporting was that of anonymously publishing information concerning drug traffickers and violence. Between 2006 and 2010, when drug violence increased dramatically in the north-eastern region – including states like Nuevo León and Tamaulipas – many local media organisations started adopting an editorial policy of publishing anonymously. One editor-in-chief for a local newspaper in Monterrey recalled this situation: “At the beginning, what happened here was to stop putting an individual name on news stories. Everyone started doing it and it was a good thing, because now you would not leave a trace” (N1).

Usually, an anonymity policy has applied in cases in which journalists could be in danger and this situation was commented on by journalists in other subnational states. A correspondent for a national radio chain and journalist for legacy newspaper *El Diario de Xalapa* in Veracruz commented on this tactic:

In general, I no longer use my own name if I have to cover and send stories. For instance, recently I was asked to do some work on a forced disappearance. I interviewed the families and I did feel vulnerable at some point, because there were historical figures and even the army involved, and I put my name to one of the interviews and it created some waves and they began to investigate. Although nothing major happened, I felt that could have been a big risk for me (V2).

For some news organisations, an anonymity policy is in operation every time they publish information about violent murders or attacks. As one national correspondent (G1) based in Chilpancingo (Guerrero) commented: “If they believe the story is too dangerous they do not put their name it, they use anonymity to protect us, especially from drug traffickers”. An editor of a national legacy newspaper commented that they have followed this tactic as a way of ameliorating the risk of violence to national correspondents who are based in violent subnational states: “In every organised crime situation, we try to never compromise the safety of our reporters and correspondents. Thus, there are many news stories attributed to the editorial department in Mexico City and not to the individual journalists” (13). In other cases, the decision to publish anonymously is left up to the journalists. An editor-in-chief for another national legacy newspaper based in Mexico City said: “It is left to the discretion of the national correspondent, if they want to put their name to the news stories then we warn them that it could be a delicate piece. It is attributed only with their consent” (15).

Empirical data suggests that editorial policies for publishing anonymously usually benefit journalists who work for legacy news organisations. Overall, these testimonies added qualitative support and explanations to a recent investigation (Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2017b:309), which found that to “publish anonymously in media outlet” was one of the most extensively used measures for ameliorating risk among Mexican journalists – one representative survey of Mexican journalists, for example, showed that 41% had published without a by-line or credit in their own media outlet as a protective mechanism (Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2017b:308).

In summary, empirical findings suggested that legacy newspapers working in contexts of threats and violence – like *El Siglo de Torreón* (In Coahuila), *Noroeste* (in

Sinaloa) and *El Diario de Juárez* (in Chihuahua), as well as the magazine *Proceso* and newspaper *Reforma* – were able to develop organisational mechanisms for both developing and publishing news. Empirical findings further suggested that the personal commitment of media owners, editors-in-chief, editors and journalists were a key element in developing such mechanisms; by doing so, it has been argued, these actors may be defined as institutional entrepreneurs within their own newsrooms. Empirical findings also suggested that strategies for safety autonomy at the organisational level were developed as reactive measures, rather than as a preventative long-term measure (Relly and González de Bustamante, 2016). Finally, empirical findings suggested that organisational safety strategies raised in specific organisational and institutional contexts were not easily replicated within other local media outlets; in fact, empirical data suggested that these kind of editorial policies (specially the so-called strategic news framing) are very rarely implemented as editorial policies among local media organisations. The next section will explore the role of social capital in influencing the adoption of strategies for safety autonomy in more detail.

6.4 The Role of Social Capital in Influencing Strategies for Safety

Autonomy

Following suggestions made in Chapter 5, social capital in the journalistic field can be defined as the sense of horizontal and mutual support among field members (such as journalists). Drawing upon the literature of media and communication studies (González de Bustamante and Relly, 2016a; Hallin and Mancini, 2004), I have operationalised social capital as individual membership of local professional journalism organisations. In Chapter 5, I stated that despite the prevalence of

clientelistic relationships and a lack of trust among peers and of a professional sense of competition, journalists have been able to foster networks of support and solidarity, especially between close colleagues who have exhibited reciprocity, support and commitment when an attack against fellow journalists or news media organisations has occurred (Brambila and Lugo-Ocando, 2018; Segura and Waisbord, 2015; González de Bustamante and Relly, 2016a and 2016b; Tavera, 2017). In the long term, these support networks have transformed into more institutionalised professional groups across various states in Mexico that have demonstrated support when an act of aggression against them has occurred and, more importantly, have organised and disseminated safety training courses for journalists (for example, *Red de Periodistas de Juárez* [Network of Journalists in Juárez] in Chihuahua; *Voz Alterna* [Alternative Voice] in Veracruz, and *Redes Irritilas* [Irritation Networks] in Coahuila).

Empirical data suggests that, among other things, these independent professional groups and networks have created close groups through social media (like WhatsApp and Facebook) in order to keep each other informed about possible dangers in specific regions or to share information about attacks against colleagues. Based on these findings, this section will thus argue that local journalists who have participated and collaborated in these digital networks, collective initiatives and professional groups are more likely to develop a set of networked strategies and tactics in order to continue reporting while ameliorating risk, both for developing (such as collective monitoring) and publishing news (such as forming news start-ups). This argument is in line with recent investigations (Graves and Konieczna, 2015; Van der Haak et al., 2012), which suggested that in recent years journalists have developed a kind of networked journalism in order to be able to continue delivering information of public interest.

The data suggests that the set of digital groups used to develop the aforementioned strategies did not emerge in a vacuum, but rather were the product of collective efforts to share experiences of violence and show support when an act of aggression has occurred (as has been detailed in Chapter 5). As one key informant and veteran freelance journalist put it: “One thing to have emerged is that, professionally, journalists have begun to organise differently to before” (7). One national correspondent for a political magazine said something similar: “ Everyone in the middle of this situation organised themselves. They were basically journalists who had the same beliefs” (N3). This testimony resembled what González de Bustamante and Relly (2016a) found among northern cities in Mexico, where journalists working in violent environments foster networked organisations in order to increase professionalisation of newsgathering and publishing in dangerous scenarios.

Empirical findings suggested that by sharing good professional practice, journalists were able to foster collective trust and further develop their collective professional practice. In Ciudad Juárez (Chihuahua), a group of journalists created *La Red de Periodistas de Juárez* [Network of Journalists in Juárez] in 2011, after years of bloodshed and the killing of two colleagues. Since the very beginning they have tried to create collective professional strategies to keep reporting (González de Bustamante and Relly, 2016a). One of the founders of this organisation said: “We established ourselves in 2011 after the assassination of our colleagues Armando and Luis Carlos, and we were in a very critical stage of violence. Therefore, this topic was fundamental for us, the handling of information ensures our own safety” (C2). Founding members of this organisation said that they were forced to create it because no one was making any effort to establish collective strategies for increasing safety or for allowing journalists to keep reporting: “The work we have been doing (in Juárez) is because no one else is doing it; not even the companies that work here intercede”,

said another founding member (C4). For them, one of the clearest goals of the organisation was to increase the professionalisation of journalists:

We also had to work at professionalisation, always with the clear goal that we had to be more professional to be able to take care of ourselves, to shield ourselves a little more because we were also in the middle of journalistic malpractice, so we had to protect ourselves (C2).

As other studies have found (Del Palacio, 2015), empirical findings suggested that in Chihuahua and in other states journalists also used these professional groups for sharing experiences with violence, as well as for sharing professional tactics for hazardous reporting. In Apatzingán (Michoacán), a political reporter and columnist (M3), who was kidnapped and beaten after publishing sensitive information on local drug traffickers, commented about sharing his experience with colleagues in order to foster increased safety between them: “I got invited to do some work on journalists' protection, to tell my story, to tell the story about what we as journalists often refuse to understand: that we have to be more professional.” During the interview, he commented that between 2007 and 2010, he and other colleagues created a professional organisation, *Encuentro Estatal de Periodistas y Editores de Michoacán* [State Meeting for Journalists and Editors of Michoacán], which, among other purposes, aims to share experiences of violence among reporters from different regions in Michoacán. This kind of experience summarises very well how Mexican journalists have shared their experiences of violence in order to increase safety among colleagues. Participants in this kind of initiative have also noted that they benefited from these practices. In Oaxaca, for example, a local journalist who belonged to a professional network commented:

What's important, and I would say it's probably the most important thing, is that the colleagues share their experiences. Because, let's be honest, the organisations may share or talk about a topic, but they are not the ones doing the daily work of a

journalist, and many times they are unaware of certain actions, like for example what can be or actually is happening, I don't know. I consider it very valuable, but what our colleagues share with others, that to me is essential (O1).

Overall, this testimony indicates that by sharing their own experiences of violence, journalists from different parts of the country were able to learn from their colleagues and increase their levels of trust and reciprocity. A local journalist based in Oaxaca, who is part of the professional group *Grupo Prensa Oaxaca* [Oaxaca Press Group], said: “Associating is the best, the solidarity; telling your colleagues that they are not alone. The most important thing is that you are truly in contact with everyone, even if it is at a minimal level” (O4). In the Estado de México, where a group of journalists created *Reporteros en Movimiento* [Reporters in Movement], one participant commented on the relevance of journalistic organisation for increased protection:

In an organisation they taught me or told me how to protect myself, about the journalists' protection agencies. I realise that the organisation is very important so that the journalists can protect themselves, not only in the Estado de México, but all over the country (E1).

This testimony is an excellent example of the relevance of independent organisations for sharing professional practices and personal safety and demonstrates in this context how journalists from different states have created close groups (both on and offline) in order to stay informed about dangers in their states and acts of aggressions against colleagues. A veteran journalist based in Acapulco (Guerrero) observed how they had created groups on different social media sites in order to keep themselves informed about journalists' safety in their states:

We have exchanged information with colleagues through mail, information about aggression all over the country, in a journalists' network. We have also shared in networks created in WhatsApp, in groups [...] we have "Periodistas en Acción"

[Journalists in Action], we have a group named "Buzón de Emergencia" [Emergency Inbox], another one called "Denuncias Públicas" [Public Complaints], and another group of journalists, "¿Qué está sucediendo en Guerrero?" [What's happening in Guerrero?]. These are groups in which we communicate through WhatsApp (G4).

The kinds of digital groups mentioned by this local journalist functioned as catalysts for sharing information about aggression against journalists. In addition, users of this kind of digital group usually trust the information shared through these networks as they know that is 'reliable' information. Study participants said that they had taken action after information had been disseminated through such groups, while in Ciudad Juárez (Chihuahua), one local journalist who participated in this kind of group commented that this type of communication had enabled them to be in contact with colleagues who had been involved in an incident. She commented on this:

We are in close contact with other colleagues from different states, which allows us to activate ourselves in alert situations, of something happening in other cities in the state, and be informed of what is going on and see how we can help out from Juárez (C2).

This testimony also indicated that such digital groups have helped journalists to communicate between themselves in different cities in one single subnational state. This is especially important in subnational states like Guerrero, Michoacán, Oaxaca and Veracruz, which are internally very heterogeneous. In Oaxaca, a journalist noted how these groups have enabled communication between journalists based in different parts in the state:

We have created networks [...] If something happens in the coast area, I know who to talk to; I know it's a reliable information source and I know that it's a person that does journalism and that's how we create our networks. Yes, we are now at a state level and continue to grow. This dialogue and outreach has allowed our regions to

form their own organisations, and that is great because they can start from being local and grow to a state level (O3).

In summary, by creating and participating in these digital groups, journalists were able to keep themselves informed about safety issues and show support when an adverse situation occurred. In addition, these findings illustrate very well Fligstein and McAdam's (2012) argument that actors in the field are motivated by a basic social interest of fostering social relations and cooperative tactics with others. What these testimonies have also added, is that actors in the journalistic field were able to develop such networks and groups amidst unexpected levels of criminal violence and other barriers (like low trust among peers). In the following section, I argue that journalists who participate and collaborate in these (on and offline) networks are more likely to develop a set of networked strategies and tactics to allow them to keep reporting while reducing risk, both for developing (collective monitoring) and publishing news (forming news start-ups).

6.4.1 The role of social capital in influencing strategies for safety autonomy in developing news

Regarding strategies for safety autonomy for developing news, the empirical data suggests that one of the most commonly used tactics was collective monitoring: a collective scheme in which journalists maintain continuous communication with colleagues in order to update them on their location when involved in high-risk coverage. One freelance investigative reporter based in Guadalajara (Jalisco) – who usually reported on human right abuses – summarised this strategy as follows: “I share these protocols with a group of colleagues I trust, especially to monitor ourselves, by

telling each other where we go, under what circumstances, what time we arrive and what time we leave” (J5).

According to study participants, journalists who used mobile digital communication with peers were able to keep each other informed about their location when involved in dangerous coverage. Usually, journalists shared their location, pictures of the sites that they had visited and other information in order to keep in contact with each other. “We always let each other know where we will be by giving our location and sending a photo. All of this with the sole intention of establishing a security code”, commented a crime beat journalist based in the Estado de México (E4). Similarly, in Ciudad Victoria (Tamaulipas), an information chief for a legacy newspaper commented:

When I know I will be doing something high-risk, I usually let one or two people know, close friends or colleagues that we are in touch with through the mobile networks, who will know exactly where I am going to be and what I am working on (T5).

In Nuevo León, an investigative reporter and national correspondent commented that he had created a digital network of colleagues to keep each other informed when doing journalistic coverage in risky zones:

So, we created a digital network just to keep an eye on each other. For instance, when I leave town and I go to a risky zone, I have to communicate with colleagues every two to four hours and tell them where I am and how I am moving around (N3).

Collective monitoring was commonly mentioned by crime beat reporters; however, journalists working on human rights abuses and national correspondents also mentioned this practice. “We let our colleagues know when we go up to the mountain range or the coast”, commented a national correspondent (G5) based in Guerrero. In Michoacán, an investigative reporter and national correspondent also

observed: “It is about letting people know, like some trusted friends, where you are, where you will be, what time you will arrive at that place and when you leave there; letting people know you are no longer there” (M3).

Empirical evidence suggests that collective monitoring also works in situations in which journalists do not enjoy the benefits of management monitoring, or communication established between journalists working in the field and editors working from the newsroom. A freelance journalist based in Jalisco said that collective monitoring is a way to let people around you know where you are working: “Letting people around you, people you trust know about your day, that is what we try to do” (J5). Another freelance journalist (N4) based in Nuevo León commented: “To know that someone has a copy of the information and the activities we will be doing on that day [...] It is about keeping someone informed.”

These testimonies suggest that journalists who had established close communication with colleagues were able to create a network of support and caring in order to increase their safety when reporting from crime scenes or conducting high-risk coverage. All these testimonies suggested that in moments of heightened criminal violence, journalists’ collective strategies for newsgathering are key resources to continue publishing (González de Bustamante and Relly, 2016a). While this finding has not yet received sufficiently wide coverage in the academic literature, the data gathered for this study suggests that collective strategies for newsgathering (in particular for monitoring when doing newsgathering) are present among all states in which this study was conducted. The data gathered also suggested that, under certain circumstances, this kind of collective strategies could supplement some organisational deficiencies among reporters, especially among local journalists and freelancers (who do not enjoy management monitoring from their media houses).

6.4.2 The role of social capital in influencing strategies for safety autonomy in publishing news

The interviews suggest that journalists who possess higher levels of social capital were also able to develop safety strategies for presenting and disseminating news. Regarding this, journalists have commented that there were two networked strategies for publishing information: a collective agenda and the creation of collective news start-ups in order to continue publishing sensitive information. A collective agenda is a shared agenda that journalists have developed in order to publish the same information in different media outlets in order to avoid retaliation from criminal bands, while online news start-ups refer to digital sites which are not affiliated to legacy news organisations, but seek to be recognised by their peers as digital platforms to share news (Powers and Vera, 2017:859; Bruno and Nielsen, 2012).

Starting with the so-called collective agenda, data suggests that study participants – especially those in management positions like editors and editors-in-chief – who developed close connections with each other (among different newsrooms) and fostered strong ties were able to escalate their levels of collaboration in order to foster some shared arrangements for publishing similar information about criminal bands, illicit activities and drug trafficking. Study participants commented that this tactic started around 2010 and 2012 among journalists working in some cities in Tamaulipas, like Ciudad Victoria. A news editor for a legacy newspaper based in Tamaulipas (T4), who has reported extensively on local crime, commented that between around 2010 and 2012, when criminal violence increased dramatically in this city (Enciso, 2017b; Osorno, 2011), crime beat reporters and editors from different publications came together in order to increasingly publish similar information regarding criminal bands. He said that it was:

Through those years that I am telling you about and the ones I want make an emphasis on: 2010-2012, there was a solidarity among the crime reporters and the newspaper editors in not handling more nor less content. It is a protection mechanism for all the media (T4).

During the interview, this editor explained that this tactic emerged at the same time between different journalists and news media in Tamaulipas. He said permanent online communication among editors and journalists was key to the process of ensuring safe working conditions, explaining it as follows:

The truth is that it started along the way [...]. It first started with the crime reporters [...], which were the first contacts with the gangsters, they were the first ones to get together and talk about how they would handle those topics, and then it was the editors. So, the editors started to create a communication network through email and digital media because it is very risky to do it in person. It was through those means that we began to have a symbiosis and a synchrony. We all work collectively in handling the same information (T4).

The above testimony in particular demonstrates how digital communications enable a ‘symbiosis’ between different publications regarding a similar news agenda, which is something that has been found among journalists and news organisations elsewhere (Cottle et al. 2016: 177; Van der Haak et al., 2012). For example, Cottle et al (2016: 177) described a very similar strategy which has been labelled “the Sarajevo poll” – “an unprecedented collaboration between competitive newsgathering organisations designed to reduce risk”. In the context of naked criminal violence, this testimony also suggests that editors and journalists from different news media coordinate with each other in order to publish similar information. Similar to the events in Tamaulipas, journalists working in other subnational states with heightened levels of criminal violence (like Chihuahua, Sinaloa and Coahuila) reported something similar. For example, in Torreón (Coahuila), where two rival criminal

bands openly fought for drug routes between 2010 and 2011 (Enciso, 2017b; Osorno, 2011), editors of the more prominent legacy newspapers came together in order to ameliorate risk of violence against them and their staff. A former editor-in-chief for *El Siglo de Torreón* commented:

There was a lot of collaboration: whenever something happened, we communicated between ourselves, especially between ourselves and the newspaper *Milenio* to talk about how we would handle this or that news story, as a way to prevent any retaliation the day after publication. In that sense, there was communication, collaboration, and when there were any acts of aggression, they would help us if we asked them to, and we helped them if they asked us about what we could or could not publish, what we would or would not publish (6).

As this testimony shows, the application of this kind of strategy was born and became particularly useful in places like Torreón or Ciudad Victoria where there was no other way to publish information of public interest (particularly information related to criminal activity). In addition to this, study participants for other subnational states also commented on this tactic. In the Estado de México, a crime beat reporter noted: “As a working mechanism, what we do is to share information so that the next day whether it is through the digital portals or the written media, it becomes more widespread, thereby avoiding any retaliation against a specific person” (E4). However, the data gathered suggests that, after criminal violence decreased in places like Torreón and Ciudad Victoria, these collaborative strategies broke down under fierce competition among media outlets.

In addition to a collective agenda strategy, journalists who possess higher levels of social capital were able to create and participate in online news start-ups, often associated in the academic literature with spaces for collaboration and experimentation between colleagues (Powers and Vera, 2017; Naldi and Picard, 2012). The empirical findings reinforced these suggestions and in fact, study

participants commented that they had created these online news start-ups soon after journalists started to come together in networks of support and in independent groups. For example, in Monterrey (Nuevo León), a local journalist said that he had published sensitive information on the websites of friends and colleagues:

I publish many things about Tamaulipas, since it is a place I have to cover as well, and given that censorship is really strict, we publish it here through the social networks, and through the public network that we have between us. I also publish stories that can't become public (N4).

In the Estado de México, the same group of journalists who fostered a support network called *Reporteros en Movimiento* [Reporters in Movement] also created an online news site for sharing and publishing information that they cannot publish in the news media that they work for: “We have a website called *Cuadrante Informativo* [Informative Quadrant], in which I publish what may have been left unsaid; I write it there and make it public”. In Veracruz between 2015 and 2016, a group of colleagues who came together to demand an end to violence against them and to seek out justice for colleagues who were killed while fulfilling their duty, created a set of websites for publishing information that they usually could not publish in local legacy newspapers (which maintained close ties and clientelistic relations with the local government). A national correspondent and activist who had organised a network of local colleagues commented on her participation in these online news start-ups:

Usually, there are media outlets that we can call free [...] for example, there is a web site called *AGN Veracruz*, another called *Plumas Libres* [Free Quills], and recently a new group called *Voz Alterna* [Alternate Voice] and I have collaborated with *AGN* at some point, sending them material that cannot be published in other media (V2).

All these testimonies suggest that cross-national organisations of journalists provide a space for journalistic professional autonomy at a local level (Hughes et al.,

2017a:959). In addition, these testimonies suggest that journalists have used digital technologies as a way to continue publishing amidst censorship and violence (Requejo-Alemán and Lug-Ocando, 2014). These testimonies also suggest that, at a time when legacy media outlets have seen a diminishment of their economic resources (Guerrero, 2017; Downie and Schudson, 2009), online news start-ups have partially supplemented losses regarding media coverage and taken over the dissemination of sensitive and public interest information (González de Bustamante and Relly, 2016a).

6.5 The Role of Symbolic Capital in Influencing Strategies for

Safety Autonomy

Symbolic capital refers to the form which economic, social and cultural capital take once they are recognised as legitimate by others in the field (Bourdieu, 1997). In the case of the journalistic field, capital can be closely connected to the notion of peer recognition. Among media and communication researchers (Marchetti, 2005:69; Benson, 2006), one of the forms in which symbolic capital could materialise in the journalistic field is in the type of newsbeat. In Chapter 5 this idea was operationalised as the type of newsbeat to which journalists were assigned, specifically crime beat reporters compared to national correspondents. Also in Chapter 5, it was argued that journalists who possess less symbolic capital (like crime beat reporters) were more prone to risk, as they lack the visibility that higher status groups have (such as national correspondents).

Building on these ideas, in this section it is argued that journalists who possess higher levels of symbolic capital – like national correspondents or investigative reporters, who are a special breed of journalists, enjoying a high reputation among

peers and often a higher status at local level – will be more likely to adopt certain strategies for safety autonomy, both for developing and publishing news. As one key-informant based in Sonora, an academic and former journalist for legacy newspaper *El Imparcial*, commented: “You can do it (investigative journalism), though we are in a particular context where special precautions must be taken, it is a process where every person must take their own precautions” (1). Empirical data suggests that this is because, in contrast to crime beat reporters, who usually cover violent crimes on a daily basis, national correspondents or investigative journalists have more time to prepare their assignments, including time for checking sources, developing more contacts to conduct high-risk coverage, and enjoy more time for confirming information before publication (Vandervoordt, 2017: 617).

First, study results suggest that national correspondents and investigative reporters have developed their own safety mechanisms to continue reporting, especially in the context of the so-called War on Drugs. Study participants commented that in a conflictive irregular situation like this one (as well as in other ‘new wars’ Cottle, et al., 2016), safety protocols from regular wars cannot be applied. “There are no manuals, no guidebook does you any good” (M1), said a veteran journalist and national correspondent based in Morelia (Michoacán) who has published extensively on local drug trafficking organisations. He added: “There are no guarantees in drug trafficking, no safety at all [...]. In drug trafficking you do not know who you will confront; it can be your brother, your son, your cousin or your neighbour, anyone” (M1). An experienced reporter based in Monterrey (Nuevo León), who has reported extensively on drug trafficking and collusion between local authorities and criminals for a political magazine based in Mexico City, commented:

In practical situations like the ones we went through here, we learned from the circumstances themselves [...] but we have a very particular situation, the security

protocols for journalists are usually born from covering situations of war in belligerent countries. What we were living in Mexico was irregular warfare with no fronts, no flanks, no rear guard, thus you do not know about the enemy and international protocols that were used to cover armed conflicts did not apply in this new situation going on in Mexico (N3).

This testimony further illustrates what other reporters have also mentioned about developing their own safety mechanisms, especially those who conduct investigative reporting in regions highly populated by organised crime cells, like Tierra Caliente in Michoacán or highland areas in Sinaloa (S3). As all these testimonies have suggested, safety training and specialised mechanisms developed for war correspondents did not apply equally among local reporters who cover sensitive stories (Cottle et al., 2016: 180; Lohner and Banjac, 2017). In addition, the fact that local journalists have developed their own safety mechanisms acquired special relevance in the Mexican context, where the vast majority of journalists interviewed (around 90 percent) have reported that they have not received any specialised training in high-risk coverage from their media companies, as discussed in the last chapter.

In this context, national correspondents and investigative reporters commented that they had developed a special capacity in order to keep working on some of the riskier stories in their communities. For example, one veteran editor for legacy newspaper *Noroeste* based in Culiacan, Sinaloa, who has covered several drug-related stories over the years, described the acquisition of this strategic behaviour as a special sensibility: “It is more about having survival instincts than a protocol” (S5). This testimony suggests that investigative reporters use a specific sensibility – ‘survival instincts’ – aimed at reducing risks and dangers while carrying on their reporting duties. This testimony echoes what other scholars have argued, that in contexts of conflict and violence, journalists rely upon their “sixth sense” or “instinct” to keep themselves safe (Cottle et al., 2016:133). Empirical findings suggest that these

instincts allow journalists to maintain certain limits and boundaries aimed at continuing reporting amidst adverse conditions. This was mentioned by other investigative reporters from other states, such as in Tamaulipas, where a veteran editor for a legacy newspaper said: “I have learned to move carefully in the limits marked between the government sphere and the crime sphere, to know how to publish” (T5), while another observed that “experience helps you set parameters for specific coverage” (M4). Drawing upon this, the next sections provide further empirical evidence about how journalists translated their special sensibility and high journalistic status into creative strategies to continue reporting and publishing while avoiding further negative consequences.

6.5.1 The role of symbolic capital in influencing strategies for safety autonomy in developing news

In regards to strategies for developing news, one of the strategies most frequently referred to was journalists maintaining a low profile when they have sensitive information, backing up sources and negotiating access to risky zones in order to conduct reporting. For example, one investigative journalist and founder of digital news start-up *Río Doce* – a digital newspaper well-known for its critical coverage on drug-related matters, civilian victims of the so-called War on Drugs and government corruption – commented that when working with high-risk issues, he has learned to keep a low profile and tried to restrain himself from revealing too much information to other colleagues:

When you have an important and interesting topic that involves some risk, what one does is to try and keep it very private, very secret and not let anyone else know that you are investigating that topic, to avoid adding more risk to what you already have (S3).

In addition, journalists noted that they carried out background checks of sources before interviews because of their potential connections with organised crime. In Morelia (Michoacán), one national correspondent for a legacy newspaper said: “In my case, for example, I take care of the details involving who will do the interview, who will be the interviewee, to have the exact profile” (M4). In Oaxaca, another national correspondent also commented that he usually did a background check of a source before conducting an interview: “First, I investigate who that person is before I meet with them, since it can be a double-edged sword and turn out that I am only being put to the test” (O2). These findings from states like Oaxaca (South-eastern region) and Michoacán (Western region) added additional evidence to what Relly and González de Bustamante (2014:116) found in their study on northern Mexico, “journalists spent more time backgrounding sources because of their potential connections to organized crime”.

National correspondents commented that they usually collaborated with other trusted investigative reporters to conduct high-risk reporting. An investigative reporter (M2), who is based in Morelia (Michoacán) and has published several pieces on local drug traffickers, commented: “We are small groups of four or five reporters maximum, who decide to confine themselves to doing high-risk reportage, but we are few and far between.” In Guerrero, a national correspondent for a legacy newspaper who also commented on this issue said that he is very cautious about the group of people with whom they work during high-risk coverage: “We are forbidden to go with reporters that are known to be untrustworthy” (G1).

Furthermore, national correspondents and investigative reporters both commented that they utilised their prestige to negotiate access to zones of silence and risky places. One journalist from Sinaloa commented: “To go with someone to places you consider to be risky areas, a colleague perhaps or, if possible, let the authorities

from the area know who you are and that you are going there” (S3). In the interview, this life-long investigative reporter and editor-in-chief for an online news start-up based in Culiacán (Sinaloa) commented that he has felt most protected when local authorities knew about his reporting activities in certain municipalities in Sinaloa. Otherwise, he said, nobody could be held responsible in the event something happened to him. In Oaxaca, a national correspondent noted something similar:

In the South there is a lot of gun trafficking. The municipalities are in constant conflict over territorial boundaries and political issues so, before going into a community in conflict, you have to touch base with the authorities so they know you are going there and that there will be no risks, because if you go in unannounced you might get shot at (O5).

In Michoacán, a national correspondent who frequently reports from hazardous places observed:

First, coverage has to be planned according to the area where it will take place. A series of contacts have to be available and agreements have to be made. In order to enter into an area, first, you need to ask for permission. You have to have details on the situation and if it is possible to go in. Then there has to be an agreement from the authorities and the delinquent gangs, because you are inevitably going to run into them and without a previous agreement, you are in real danger. You cannot just go in unannounced and start asking questions left and right without having established a work scheme and self-protection protocols (M4).

Interviews also suggest that journalists who possess higher levels of symbolic capital were able to develop safety strategies for the presentation and dissemination of news, i.e. autonomy for publishing. This issue is reviewed in the next section.

6.5.2 The role of symbolic capital in influencing strategies for safety autonomy in publishing news

Interviews suggest that the most extensive strategy for safety autonomy in publishing news used by journalists who possess higher levels of symbolic capital was to receive information from local journalists in order to pursue a sensitive story, for example when a local reporter – who did not enjoy higher prestige or support from media companies – was unable to publish sensitive material themselves. A local journalist based in Michoacán summarised this strategy as: “[being] in contact with national correspondents, so that we can leak the information, the data and let someone else handle it without mentioning us” (M5).

For one national correspondent based in Oaxaca, the practice of sharing information occurred in particular because local journalists knew that they could trust national correspondents to publish sensitive material. He said:

(Sharing information) it is very frequent. I am telling you this, because it is all based on trust and as you nurture it, people are more open to sharing, whereas if that possibility has not presented itself, each person reserves their own information (O3).

In Veracruz, another national correspondent who received these materials commented on the role that trust plays between colleagues:

Other colleagues who do not get their material published because they have an economic and political commitment tell me: 'the information is there.' And so we publish it giving credit to them or to their media outlet if they want it. There is that trust of approaching each other to avoid that information ending up in the trash can (V1).

Sharing information for publication with national correspondents was a practice often mentioned by the local journalists interviewed for this study. One such journalist based in Ciudad Juárez commented that they have shared information that

they cannot publish in their own media outlets: “If someone can't publish a news story about something that is going on in their region, they try to report it from somewhere else” (C1). Something similar was mentioned by a journalist based in Guerrero: “When there is a necessity to send high-risk information, we share it with other colleagues to publish it in several media and thus protect ourselves” (G2). In the Estado de México, a local crime beat journalist commented that sharing information for publication is very common and actually happened more than once a week: “It is very common that certain information that you cannot publish, another colleague takes it; maybe like three or four news stories a week” (E2).

Study participants from almost all states in which this study was conducted mentioned that they usually shared this sensitive material with national correspondents because they have more opportunities to publish: “There are things that you cannot publish because you are at a local level, here, they know you, and they will know it was you, but you can leak the material to a national correspondent”, said a local journalist based in Sinaloa (S2). In Jalisco, a crime beat reporter commented that he usually shared material with journalists working for national media outlets: “I think what one would want, in my own case at least, is to work on the stories and always link them to the national media, because that is how they will avoid certain risks” (J5). Local journalists said that they preferred to send sensitive material to colleagues in national media in order to avoid local censorship and actually get the material published. An editor based in Tamaulipas commented:

What you read is in large part thanks to the colleagues who put themselves at risk by sending that information to colleagues at other media outlets. In light of the impotence of not being able to publish what was going on, our last resource was to go to the national press, so there would be evidence of what was happening (T4).

Something similar was mentioned by an information chief based in Ciudad Juarez:

I have heard about colleagues sending information to either the news magazine *Proceso* ['Process'], or to the newspapers *El Financiero* ['The Financier'], and *El Universal* ['The Universal'], or even to the media from Mexico City or another important city so they can run it from there. In these cases most media act as an agency or retake it from other media outlets and publish it to avoid any risk involved for the people here. Most of the time, a big part of the work is done by someone here, but to eliminate the possible risk that comes along with publishing it under their own name, they resort to that strategy, which has been adopted for many years now (C5).

In summary, study participants offered qualitative evidence to support the argument that journalists who possess higher levels of symbolic capital will be more prone to adopting and developing strategies for safety autonomy. Overall, these findings suggested that national correspondents and investigative reporters can use their prestige and symbolic capital to negotiate access to dangerous zones, conduct high-risk coverage and receive sensitive material for publication. Additionally, findings regarding the strategy of sharing news can potentially provide an update to some quantitative investigations (Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2017b), which have found that one of the risk reduction strategies most applied by Mexican journalists is sharing information for publication – in fact, a representative survey of Mexican journalists showed that 21.7% of journalists have published information abroad and 22.7% have filtered information to the international media (Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2017b: 308).

So far, this chapter has argued that journalists have transformed certain amounts and types of capital in developing strategic tactics in order to keep reporting while reducing work-related risks. However, the data gathered suggest that the roles of capital and strategic behaviours have some limitations that are largely shaped by

different factors, including journalists' routines (like official sourcing), organisational constraints and the local environment in which journalists operate.

6.6 Some Imperatives for the Adoption of Strategies for Safety

Autonomy

This section discusses further limitations that have arisen in the high-risk context in which local journalists operate. In particular, this section explores three imperatives for the high-risk environments in which they work and which seriously limited the professional practice of local journalists (and the adoption of strategies for safety autonomy), namely: 1) the prevalence of official sourcing; 2) the prevalence of clientelistic relations; and 3) the prevalence of sensitive topics at a local level and the rise of zones of silence.

6.6.1 Official sourcing

In the last section, it has been argued that even in risky and threatening conditions, journalists were able to continue to actively report by using their cultural, economic, social and symbolic capital to implement strategic practices. However, empirical findings suggested that, when it comes to covering information related to crime and drug trafficking, active reporting is more often the exception than the rule. In fact, these findings suggest that when journalists have sought information about crime, drugs and corruption, the vast majority of Mexican reporters have followed what official sources say (a practice called official sourcing).

Despite the breakdown of national authoritarianism in the 1990s and the transition to democracy in 2000, academic studies and the empirical findings of this

investigation have suggested that, despite the emergence of the so-called strategies for safety autonomy for developing news, official sourcing and passive journalistic practices have endured as one of the more salient features in the Mexican journalistic field, at both national (Márquez-Ramírez, 2012) and local levels (De León, 2011; González-Macías, 2013; González, 2012). Since 2006, given the context of violence and public insecurity across different regions in the country, academic studies (Márquez-Ramírez, 2015:37; De León, 2015:82; Hernández-Ramírez and Rodelo, 2010) have also suggested that official sourcing has prevailed in news reporting about criminal violence and the crisis in public security. In almost every state in which this study was conducted, empirical findings offered additional evidence to these interpretations. In fact, one of the first impressions to arise during fieldwork was that a lot of local journalists (especially in subnational states, like Tamaulipas, where conditions are not met for applying some of the aforementioned strategies for safety autonomy) tended to follow what official sources said. However, this practice was also mentioned in other subnational states with lower levels of criminal violence, like Jalisco. In Guadalajara (Jalisco), for example, a crime beat reporter commented that local journalists followed a kind of passive reporting which placed official sourcing as the main feature: “I don't see any serious journalism, I see many reporters living at the expense of the government's agenda, releasing news stories and waiting for what the public official may say” (J1). As this testimony suggests and some researchers have found (Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014; Rodelo, 2009; Lara-Klahr, 2007), journalists commented that instead of applying a more active form of newsgathering, they have reported on crime, drugs and politics by using press bulletins, public statements and official statistics released by local and federal governments (however, the vast majority of investigative journalists and national correspondents interviewed for this study commented that they usually supplement

official information with more active reporting). Among the reasons given for using official sources, journalists commented that, in a fast-changing and risky environment, they tended to seek information from ‘reliable’ or ‘legitimate’ sources, like government officials and public security authorities. These findings could be understood in the light of the broader debate about press-state relations and news sources in times of conflict. In fact, there are ample academic studies suggesting that in times of crisis, violence or war, journalists mostly rely on official sources (Robinson et al., 2010; Bennet and Paletz, 1994; Hallin, 1984). Academic studies on media performance in contexts of criminal violence and public insecurity have reached similar conclusions (Rodelo, 2009). However, what this thesis has suggested (and the last section has showed) is that, under certain circumstances, journalists were able (and willing) to overcome the prevailing practice of official sourcing by using their types of capital in developing tactics to continue reporting in hazardous contexts.

However, study participants commented that the application of the aforementioned strategies for safety autonomy could be limited by the use of official sourcing in specific circumstances, especially in order to decrease potential risk when reporting on sensitive topics. Empirical findings suggest that, across subnational states that have experienced heightened levels of criminal violence, under certain circumstances, journalists have decided to follow official sources as a precautionary measure. In Morelia (Michoacán), a veteran investigative reporter and national correspondent for a national political magazine based in Mexico City noted that, before criminal violence boomed in the state, he conducted more in-depth reportage about illicit activities at the local level. As criminal violence rose in the state, he stopped doing investigative reporting: “the situation now is that organised crime has crushed the investigative spirit in journalism” (M1). Another testimony on this subject was offered by a former information chief for legacy newspaper *El Diario de Juárez*,

a best-selling newspaper known for its critical coverage of criminal bands and corruption (Hughes, 2006). He observed that as criminal violence peaked in his state between 2009 and 2011, journalists often stopped conducting investigative reporting and instead followed what official sources said:

We are still talking about narcos, but we don't do research into narcos. We publish the information we receive from agencies; we publish arrests, we publish given facts, but there's no research on those topics to avoid risks. There was research before [...] I received threats as sub-director, where they asked us to remove certain publications from our digital version. Or, if they knew we had one specific story, they would ask me not to publish it or to publish certain things they knew we covered, but that they knew we had no intention of doing so (C5).

In addition, the study has shown that the adoption of official sourcing also occurred soon after a journalist had experienced direct harassment or a violent attack against his/her person or against a media facility. In this sense, the empirical findings suggested that journalists who usually carried out active, assertive and critical coverage adopted official sourcing as a safety mechanism. For example, in 2006 in the Michoacán region of Tierra Caliente (“Hot Land”, world famous for its production of heroin (Enciso, 2017b), a local journalist and columnist, who used to report on local corruption and illicit activities in the town, received a death threat and was kidnapped by criminal gangs after publishing sensitive material about the drug trade in the region. After this episode, he decided to use official sources for reporting on criminal activities: “For many of us, it is better to say nothing [...] go to the website [and] download the state government bulletins” (M3). On 19th March 2012, in Ciudad Victoria (Tamaulipas), a car bomb exploded in front of the offices of local newspaper *El Expreso*, the best-selling newspaper in the city, which usually offered ample coverage on illicit activities in the region. One news editor at *El Expreso*, who was inside the media installation when the event occurred, recalled: “It [the bomb attack]

scares you [...] I said, fuck it, I'm only going to report for the government. Whatever the public officials say, that is what I will say. I don't get in trouble, I take it easy" (T2). As these testimonies suggest, not all journalists who have experienced direct attacks due of work were able to develop a meaningful resilience and, in turn, apply strategies for safety autonomy. In fact, these testimonies also suggest that, even in cases in which local journalists have learned from their negative experiences with violence (e.g. M3) and devoted more attention to the accuracy of facts when reporting, those who experienced direct violence tended to followed official sources when reporting on crime and drug trafficking, providing a clear link between the adoption of official sourcing and violence at local levels.

In summary, testimonies presented and discussed here suggest that official sourcing is one of the most frequently used journalistic routines among local reporters in the country which, under certain circumstances, could inhibit (or limit) the application of strategies for safety autonomy.

6.6.2 Prevalence of clientelistic relationships

Beyond the adoption of official sourcing, study participants noted a further limitation to the development of strategies for safety autonomy at the organisational level, where they were routinely censored by editors and managers following the dictates of government actors who imposed a media editorial agenda through the control of government advertising.

Interviewees from all categories across all subnational states mentioned that one of the forms of press control most often employed is the use of economic incentives, which have been used both to benefit media allies and punish media critics. As during the hegemonic party rule (Lawson 2002), economic incentives often take

the shape of clientelistic arrangements between elites, who offer public goods, services and protection to journalists and media owners in return for their political loyalty and support (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos 2002). Although study participants mentioned a range of forms that these clientelistic arrangements can take, they suggested that discretionary spending on public advertisements was increasingly common (Article 19 Mexico, 2016 and 2017; Del Palacio, 2015; De León, 2011).

Control of government advertising and other external restrictions on press autonomy often materialised in internal controls from editors-in-chief upon local journalists' individual autonomy, the study found. For example, some participants commented that journalists were usually withdrawn from their sources when a government official had applied pressure for this to occur. An information chief based in Ciudad Juarez (Chihuahua) commented on this:

Corruption is on the side of the state government here, and there have been people fired or removed from their positions, sometimes explicitly; and we know what the reason was. Companies tell their workers that the reason is different. At the end, the government puts pressure on them to remove people they don't like in relation to any information that may affect them (C5).

In Tamaulipas, a news editor noted something similar:

The journalist is constantly under pressure by the government because it is very clear that power corrupts journalists through economic pressure; those who do not play the game are pressured by the media or the government to not publish (T4).

In Jalisco, a national correspondent echoed these observations:

All media are co-opted, if we can call it that way. Media outlets who dare to question the government policies are punished, and that punishment occurs when they don't buy advertising and that obviously influences our journalistic work [...]. If the information is about the governor, this is excluded as it is not in the newspaper's

agenda to publish a direct or continuous critique against the government of the state (J4).

According to study participants, and as has been argued elsewhere (Article 19 Mexico, 2017; Salazar, 2017; Del Palacio, 2015; Hughes and Lawson, 2004), local incumbents, the local public administration and opposition political parties operate their budgets for public communications in a completely opaque manner without any restriction from local laws, local accountability mechanisms or federal intervention⁷². In this context, the vast majority of this money is used to subsidise the local press, which operates mainly with governmental money. One editor-in-chief of a local newspaper estimated that governmental advertising represents up to 80% of revenues for local newspapers (2). Thus, despite the world financial crisis and the crisis in the business model facing local newspapers globally (Zelizer, 2015; Nielsen 2012), local newspapers in Mexico have remained remarkably stable at around 300 local newspapers within 32 subnational states since 1977 (Salazar, 2017; Guerrero 2010). Thus, as during the old days of national authoritarian rule (Lawson 2002), without such revenues from advertising, the vast majority of local media could not survive. Furthermore, the discretionary spending of public money in the media has been institutionalised in annual agreements in which the local government provides vast amounts of money to the local press in return for the latter's long-term loyalty (Article 19 Mexico, 2017). In Veracruz, a local journalist observed that:

The point is that the economic interests of the media, of the things they have to do to obtain agreements with the government, they always put the reporters in the middle. If the media have no agreements, then they permit the work with freedom

⁷² Although activists and journalists did mention the possibility of 'activating' federal controls over discretionary spending through the implementation of a new regulatory framework.

and when that happens, when the heads turn to that media outlet because what they are saying is not convenient, then they buy the media outlet and the reporter is cut adrift. It may be that the reporter goes along with them or tells them: "you know what, thank you very much but I can't put up with this", consequently, either you are fired or you quit (V2).

These practices persist in all parties at all levels of government and do not seem to follow any partisan logic, as new long-term clientelistic arrangements emerge after a political transitions take place at the sub-national level. Overall, these testimonies suggest that, in a context in which local news media heavily depend upon public money to survive, the organisational learning developed by some legacy newspapers as well as the active and critical coverage applied by some news editors described in the last sections were more often the exception than the rule.

6.6.3 Sensitive topics at local level and zones of silence

Beyond the extended use of official sourcing and the prevalence of clientelistic arrangements, the empirical findings suggested that an overarching unsafe environment, the persistence of sensitive topics about which they cannot report and the rise of zones of silence may all constrain journalistic professional practice.

The study's participants agreed that one of the principal limitations that has emerged is around the increasing context of violence and the public security crisis in which they operate. One local reporter based in Veracruz summarised: "I think my colleagues are not safe. We are in a lawless state" (V3). A local journalist based in Oaxaca said something similar: "The risks derived from the lack of security in the State" (O4).

In addition, study participants commented that there were a group of local

“untouchables” (Hughes 2006:84), which are powerful actors (e.g. local incumbents, drugs lords, businessmen) who can successfully interfere in the professional life of local news media and journalists. Study participants commented that local incumbents and their political groups are among the main actors involved in determining whether they can run a critical story. As other studies have found (Hughes et al., 2017a:963; Del Palacio 2015), there is usually no open censorship; rather, the local incumbents and their political groups deploy tactics such as subsidies, spin and other kinds of incentives (from bribes to violence), aimed at suppressing any news critical of them. Beyond the local incumbent, study participants – especially in states with a strong presence of drug trafficking organisations (Chihuahua, Michoacán and Tamaulipas, among others) – have suggested that drug traffickers are the other ‘untouchable’ actors at the local level (Hughes et al., 2017a: 963; Del Palacio, 2015; Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014; Lara-Klahr, 2007).

Beyond local incumbents and drug traffickers, journalists commented that there were other kinds of ‘untouchable’ actors depending on the local power structure. For example, participants noted that local business elites go almost unquestioned by the local media in Nuevo León, where the business elite have been one of the more influential political actors, while in other subnational states like Estado de México journalists noted that they cannot investigate political organisations (like *Antorcha Campesina* [Farmers' Torch]) linked to the political party that has ruled the state since 1929. In subnational states like Oaxaca, for example, where the political regime includes a mix of indigenous and traditional elements, participants commented that they are not free to question local political bosses, who remain one of the more important local power brokers. This finding suggests that even when press freedom is restricted among subnational hybrid regimes, the actors who limit such liberties may

change from one subnational regime to the other. This finding also suggests that powerful local groups are capable of restricting the local press even in subnational regimes which can themselves be labelled electoral democracies with democratic political transitions – like Nuevo León (Martí et al., 2010).

In addition, as Waisbord (2007) has indicated, local journalists spoke about the rise of zones of silence, large subnational regions in which all forms of journalism are subject to fierce censorship imposed by drug traffickers, who often work in collusion with corrupt local authorities. This was mentioned by journalists based in all regions of Mexico (Guerrero and Oaxaca in the South; Michoacán and Jalisco in the Centre; and Chihuahua, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas in the North). For example, in Jalisco a crime beat reporter told me during the interview: “It is dangerous to go to some municipalities in the state where there's a huge influence and presence of narcos. It is dangerous because you realise you are being followed from the moment you first arrive to the place” (J1). A national correspondent based in Morelia described these so-called zones of silence:

Everyone is involved, the person who sweeps floors in the City Hall, the Courts, the Prosecutor's Office, etc. They have “eyes” [so-called *halcones* (hawks)] at the entrances and exits of the towns. Spies [hawks] or people selling chewing gum have radios, they give the word when an unknown person enters (M1).

In Oaxaca, a national correspondent also commented on this:

Let me tell you about a situation in Sierra Sur. There was a conflict in two municipalities, Tejomulco and Texmelucan, which are adjoined. On the road, you would find signs that read: "In this territory your life is at risk." Why? Well, because there are many ambushes. The people are located in the hills on the lookout for someone they don't know to start shooting. That's the risk (O5).

In summary, the overwhelming context of violence, impunity and lack of trust can prevent journalists from deploying strategies for safety autonomy. The role of the environment as a constraining force for journalists has been well documented in academic studies (Del Palacio, 2015; Waisbord, 2007) and news reports (Article 19 Mexico, 2017; RWB, 2017). This is especially true in subnational states with heightened levels of societal and criminal violence, widespread violations of human rights, low democratic development and economic inequality (Brambila, 2017b; Holland and Rios, 2017).

Having put forward the argument in this section that due to a set of imperatives – the prevalence of official sourcing, clientelistic relations as well as the prevalence of sensitive topics at local level and the rise of zones of silence – journalists were impeded from applying strategies for safety autonomy, a discussion of these ideas now follows.

6.7 Discussion

Based on the literature and the study results, this chapter began with the premise that journalists could use their volumes and forms of capital to develop strategic actions aimed at enhancing professional practice and safety. This chapter has found that in the ten-year cycle of violence since the declaration of the War on Drugs – and as a consequence of it – local journalists have become very resilient and have developed innovative strategies to continue reporting. They have learned to navigate daily risks and dangers by accumulating, interpreting and sharing personal, organisational and social experiences connected to violence and the War on Drugs. In so doing, they have also developed creative strategies aimed at fostering professional practice and safety whilst carrying out reporting – what I have called strategies for safety autonomy.

Thus, it could be said that as criminal violence has risen – and as a consequence of this – a range of independent, horizontal and collective practices and strategies for producing and sharing news has also emerged.

Guided by the theoretical framework provided by field theory as well as by the patterns and regularities that emerged from the data analysis, this chapter has offered strong qualitative evidence to suggest that journalists who possess higher levels of capital (cultural, economic, social and symbolic) are more likely to adopt the aforementioned strategies. The particular value of this analysis is that it helps to offer a clearer picture on specifically how these dimensions (cultural, economic, social and symbolic) “translate into concrete, everyday journalistic practices” (Vandervoordt, 2017:622). Another value of this analysis is that it helps to shed light on the most common strategies that journalists follow to keep reporting from dangerous and hazardous settings in the country.

In particular, this chapter has argued that the journalists who are more likely to adopt the aforementioned strategies were those who have learned from a negative experience with anti-press violence and have developed personal tactics aimed at increasing personal safety (cultural capital); those who work for legacy newspapers and enjoy greater support from their media houses, editors and managers (economic capital); those who enhanced collaboration and solidarity among peers (social capital); and those who have used their prestige in order to increase personal safety and apply strategic tactics in the field (symbolic capital) (see Figure 7).

The key to the adoption of strategies for safety autonomy lies in the actors’ capacity to convert their capital into resources needed to create the aforementioned strategies (see Figure 7). Regarding cultural capital, this chapter has found that journalists were able to learn from a negative experience, such as violence against them, and develop strategic actions aimed at enhancing personal safety and

professional practice. In this sense, this section has offered an innovative interpretation of the impact of violence against journalists, which has always been interpreted as a constraining force on journalists (e.g. Löfgren and Örnebring; Waisbord, 2002) and a catalyst of psychopathologies (e.g. Feinstein, 2013; Flores et al. 2012 and 2014). Regarding the role of economic capital, this chapter has argued that journalists who work for local legacy newspapers could benefit from the adoption of editorial policies and organisational tactics developed soon after the organisation has experienced direct violence. This chapter found that quite often participants commented on the crucial role that communication and trust between journalists and editors plays in translating economic capital into organisational strategies for enhancing safety and professional practice.

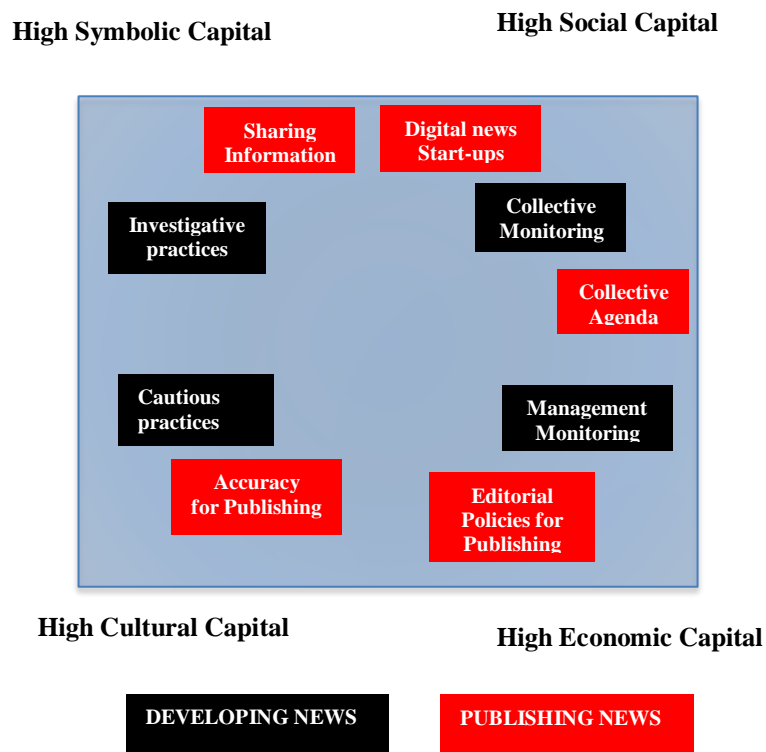


Figure 7 Strategies for safety autonomy per type of capital

Regarding the role of social capital, this chapter has found that local journalists belonging to journalists' professional groups or those who participated in journalistic

digital organisations were more likely to adopt collaborative strategies aimed at enhancing professional practice. In this sense, the chapter suggests that, under certain circumstances, journalists overcome a sense of professional competition and lack of trust among peers and in so doing have developed a kind of ‘collective professional autonomy’ (González de Bustamante and Relly, 2016a), which has allowed them to report from dangerous places. When it comes to examining the role of symbolic capital, this chapter has found that journalists use their symbolic resources in order to mitigate risks, negotiate access to dangerous zones and to receive information and scoops from professional colleagues. This study has found that the role of symbolic capital was particularly relevant for enhancing professional practice among national correspondents and investigative reporters, especially for those doing high-risk coverage and negotiating access to dangerous zones. They also used their symbolic capital for receiving information that other journalists could not publish in their own media outlets.

Additionally, this chapter has found that there is a constant jockeying among journalists in the field (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012:11) as a result of the type and volume of capital that they have gathered. Thus journalists who possess lower levels of cultural or economic capital could increase their likelihood of adopting safety strategies by employing their social or symbolic resources. In other words, this chapter suggests that journalists’ capacity to develop the aforementioned strategies is not determined by the lower levels of one or another type of capital, but by the higher amount of capital that they have gathered.

This chapter also found that the journalists who apply strategies for developing news are not always the same as those who apply strategies for publishing news. In part this is because different forms of capital have a different effect during these two phases of news production. In particular, it could be said that cultural and economic

capital were important for developing news, while social and symbolic capital were crucial for publishing news. This could be in part because publishing news is commonly a collective phenomenon which, necessarily, requires the support from other colleagues and media outlets.

In a context in which journalism is under constant attack, following Waisbord (2013:166), it is also suggested that the aforementioned strategies could function as boundary work tactics (Gieryn, 1983), which in the journalistic field can be defined as “efforts to establish and enlarge the limits of one domain’s institutional authority relative to outsiders, thus creating social boundaries that yield greater cultural and material resources for insiders [such as journalists]” (Lewis, 2012:841). Thus, amidst violence and risk, the adoption of strategies for safety autonomy have functioned as a catalyst for enhancing professional autonomy among local reporters who work on controversial stories (Waisbord, 2013:166). Although not all journalists who have followed the aforementioned strategies adhere to the same journalistic principles, it is argued that these strategies have helped to maintain and enhance journalistic professional values and norms by “strengthening professional boundaries and holding external influences at bay” (Waisbord, 2013:166).

Finally, the data gathered suggests that the role of capital and strategic behaviours have some limitations that are largely shaped by journalists’ professional role performance and journalistic routines, the organisational constraints in which they operate and, finally, by the unsafe and constraining local environment to which they must adapt. Thus, this empirical evidence suggested that strategic behaviour followed certain structural determinants.

6.8 Answering the Second Empirical Research Question

This chapter aimed to offer an answer to the second empirical question: *How do journalists' individual dispositions of forms and quantity of capital influence the adoption of strategies for safety autonomy?* Guided by the theoretical framework of field theory (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012) with the assistance of different stands in journalism studies and conflict reporting literature, the working hypothesis in this chapter was that journalists who possess more capital have more resources to maintain and increase their position in the field and, therefore, will be more likely to adopt strategies for safety autonomy. In addition, it is argued that journalists deploy strategies both for newsgathering and publishing news using the aforementioned forms of capital. Also, through this Chapter it is argued that the type of strategy for safety autonomy that journalists develop depends upon the type and volume of capital that journalists have gathered. Overall, while qualitative data has provided enough evidence to sustain the aforementioned hypothesis, some considerations must still be made. Indeed, this chapter has suggested that the roles of capital and strategic behaviours have some limitations that are largely shaped by journalists' routines, the organisational constraints in which they operate, and by the unsafe and constraining local environment to which they must adapt.

Chapter 7

Key Findings, Original Contributions and Policy Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

This thesis has been a study of risks and strategies employed by journalists to continue reporting on dangerous stories and in hazardous environments, and has offered an actor-centric perspective on the daily risks that journalists confront, the risk reduction practices they use and the strategies they apply to continue to report in the ten Mexican states in which this study was conducted. This final chapter presents the study's concluding remarks, including policy-oriented considerations.

Adopting the field approach, this study has suggested that journalists' individual dispositions regarding forms and quantity of capital both constrain agency (increasing or decreasing journalists' exposure to risk) and enable agency in violent contexts (fostering the adoption of strategies for safety autonomy). Based upon a subnational analysis and a unique set of 65 in-depth interviews with journalists, activists and public officials, this thesis has found that journalists who possess lower levels of capital are at greater risk of danger and violence than journalists who possess higher level of capital. In addition, this thesis found that high levels of capital enable journalists to acquire the resources needed for developing the aforementioned strategies.

This chapter begins with a brief summary of the thesis' key empirical findings, including how this study has answered the main research questions. The chapter then reviews some limitations in the study design, before providing an overview of the main original contributions of this research, including areas for further research. Finally, the chapter offers some policy recommendations.

7.2 Journalistic Practice from Violent Settings: Summary and

Discussion of Main Findings

The following section summarises the main findings of this research, which primarily aimed to investigate *how do journalists operate in violent contexts*. For the purposes of this study, I have developed this main idea into two empirical research questions:

- Considering Mexico's Drug War as an exogenous shock to the field, how do journalists' individual dispositions of forms and quantity of capital influence their exposure to risk in violent subnational settings?
- How do journalists' individual dispositions of forms and quantity of capital influence the adoption of strategies for safety autonomy?

As explained in Chapter 3, in order to answer these two empirical research questions, I employed qualitative open-ended interviews, divided into two categories: standardised and non-standardised. The standardised open-ended set of interview questions, a technique often employed by journalists, was the main research method used in this study. Socio-demographic results and data about journalists' direct experience with violence from the study's participants in the aforementioned standardised open-ended set of interview questions were presented in Chapter 4.

7.2.1 Key findings, discussion and future research: Chapter 4

The main objective of Chapter 4 was to contextualise the study, especially in regards to empirical Chapters 5 and 6, in which I answered the two main research questions. Chapter 4 provided socio-demographic information and data about direct experience

with violence taken from standardised open-ended interviews with 49 journalists (which is the most relevant research method for this study). Among other outcomes, Chapter 4 stated that the average participant is male, in his early forties, holds a university degree in journalism (or communication), works for a print publication, and has 19 years of professional experience. This socio-demographic profile was not intended to be statistically representative of a given population; instead, the study sample aimed to “encapsulate” (Mason, 2002:124) the population of Mexican journalists who cover risky beats and are living in some of the most violent environments in the country. This socio-demographic profile is one of the few demographic studies about this population of journalists. The data presented in Chapter 4 may contribute to a better understanding of this breed of journalists, who are too often neglected in academic studies and remain an under-studied subject, especially crime beat reporters (Lugo-Ocando, 2018).

Regarding the participants’ socio-demographic profile, the data presented suggested that crime beat reporters (so-called *policia* reporters) are one of the most male dominated groups in the field, with 77% of the study sample being male, a finding supported by other investigations (Del Palacio, 2015). In addition, contrary to other empirical investigations (especially Rodríguez, 2016), which have suggested that journalists working on crime, drugs and corruption lack journalistic experience, this study found that journalists working on these topics are fairly experienced, with an average of 19 years of professional experience. Furthermore, contrary to academic and journalistic accounts (e.g. Rodríguez, 2016), which have suggested that journalists working on these topics were mostly hands-on ‘trade’ reporters (rather than university educated journalists), the participants’ socio-demographic profile suggested that the majority of them had actually undertaken university education in journalism or communication. That said, in Chapters 5 and 6 it was argued that these

journalists may have learned risk mitigation tactics and strategies for safety autonomy in the field rather than in the university, by amassing more years of professional practice, sharing experiences with colleagues in the newsroom and sharing their own experiences with other colleagues in their communities through socialising.

Additionally, Chapter 4 offered a clearer picture of participants' occupational and organisational contexts, including type of media outlet, employment status and assigned beat. Regarding type of media outlet, the data gathered revealed that print publications remain a very relevant type of media outlet for journalists working on crime, drugs and corruption, with 71% of the study sample working for a print publication. However, it is important to mention that this finding could be related to possible bias derived from the snowball and purposive sampling used in this study. This finding suggests that further research is needed to analyse this phenomenon.

Further, the participants' socio-demographic profile suggested that, in addition to earning low salaries, local journalists are commonly assigned to work on multiple jobs or produce content for more than one platform – for example, print journalists often simultaneously produce news stories for both print and digital editions (Márquez-Ramírez and Hughes, 2017a:500; De León, 2011; González-Macías, 2013; Meneses, 2010). This finding suggests that further research is needed to analyse how labour precarity and burnout in the workplace co-exists with other forms of pressure, like anti-press violence and the prevalence of clientelistic relations.

One of the more important results presented in Chapter 4 was that in addition to their full-time position as a journalist for a given media outlet, one quarter of study participants had launched their own digital news start-ups in recent years. This finding suggests that given the new media ecosystem in which journalists operate – which includes the growing participatory culture, fragmentation of media audiences and the crisis in the journalism financial model (Zelizer, 2015; Nielsen, 2012) – full-time

journalists have moved to more autonomous digital spaces in order to keep working. Although this may suggest an important trend within journalists in Mexico and Latin America (Requejo-Alemán and Lugo-Ocando, 2014), further research should investigate what kind of journalism these digital spaces produce and how digital start-ups impact upon the news dynamic at a local level.

Chapter 4 also presented key findings regarding study participants' direct experiences with anti-press violence. The most pertinent finding in this section is that the level of violence against journalists is rather high, with 60% of study participants (29 individuals) having experienced direct intimidation or violent attack(s) as a result of their journalistic activity in the course of their lifetime (the vast majority of which had occurred within the last 10 years)⁷³. Although this data cannot be generalised across the whole population of Mexican journalists, these numbers are an indicator of the continuous threats and dangers faced by Mexican journalists working on dangerous beats and stories in the country. The Mexican case suggests that, as in other new democracies with heightened levels of criminal and societal violence (Hughes and Márquez, 2017a and 2017b; Waisbord, 2000 and 2002), journalists working on sensitive topics, or investigative reporters, are too often targeted with violence (harassment or physical attacks). Contrary to academic studies that found attacks against journalists are concentrated in particular regions in the country – like US-Mexican border states (Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014; Rodelo, 2009) – this study found that journalists suffered intimidation and harassment across all 10 selected states. In accordance with press rights organisation reports (Article 19 Mexico, 2016 and 2017), beyond violent murder, the two most severe forms of attacks

⁷³ It is worth noting that this finding could be related to possible bias derived from the snowball and purposive sampling used in this study, particular considering the fact that 40% of the sample was contacted through an NGO (CASEDE) devoted to increasing security and safety among local reporters.

– abduction and illegal detention – were geographically concentrated in subnational states (like Michoacán and Tamaulipas) in which there were more criminal organisations than state institutions during the period of analysis. Further research should attempt to conduct longitudinal studies of the prevalence of anti-press violence among journalists working on sensitive topics and, if possible, should incorporate other variables in the analysis (including the composition of the local criminal and political structures).

7.2.2 Key findings, discussion and future research: Chapter 5

Although Mexico is infamous for being one of the most dangerous places for journalists in the Western Hemisphere (RWB, 2017), Chapter 5 showed that the risk of violence is unevenly distributed among journalists in the field. In other words, this chapter provided qualitative evidence suggesting that not all kinds of journalist are equally exposed to risk in Mexico. For example, experienced journalists working for national media outlets and based in big metropolitan areas are less exposed to risk of violence than novice journalists working in small and rural cities for local media outlets. However, this chapter found that, in conditions of ongoing conflict and violence, journalists who possess greater amounts of capital are not necessarily exempt from facing risk and violence against them; in fact, the chapter concluded that it is almost impossible to eradicate risks when reporting on sensitive stories from violent settings.

Regarding the conceptual apparatus used in Chapter 5, field analysis proved to be a very useful theoretical framework with strong explanatory power for analysing the uneven distribution of risk among journalists covering sensitive topics in the country. In particular, the concept of fields as spaces of struggle characterised by the

ongoing production of difference and contestation allowed for the possibility of highlighting differences among types of journalists, while the concept of capital, as material and symbolic resources, allowed for an exploration of how journalists' uneven exposure to risk can be understood by analysing the volume and nature of their cultural, economic, social and symbolic forms of capital.

Using the qualitative interviews conducted for this study, Chapter 5 provided some qualitative evidence to suggest that journalists who possess lower levels of capital will be at greater risk of danger and violence than journalists who possess higher levels of capital. For the purposes of the empirical analysis, each of the four types of capital under consideration in this thesis were operationalised in specific variables and the results were discussed. Chapter 5 suggested that the local journalists most prone to risk of violence were those who had fewer years of professional experience (cultural capital), lower levels of individual income and a lack of management support (economic capital), lower levels of peer solidarity (social capital) and those who worked on news beats with lower prestige (symbolic capital). In this sense, as Vandevordt (2017:622) has observed, field analysis has helped to offer a more detailed and precise perspective of how the aforementioned forms of capital may influence (by increasing or decreasing) risk exposure among local journalists. Further research should operationalise and gauge other empirical manifestations of these four forms of capital. Additionally, regarding economic and symbolic forms of capital, further research might analyse how these forms of capital influence risk exposure (and risk mitigation) among different types of journalists (beyond those analysed in this study, for example, international correspondents or bloggers).

Overall, the empirical results offered some qualitative evidence to support the main hypothesis positioned in this chapter, suggesting that journalists who possess

lower volumes of capital are more prone to risk of violence. For example, the empirical results suggested that, contrary to experienced journalists who have acquired skills and developed safety mechanisms aimed at mitigating risks and dangers, new journalists are more prone to risk of violence because they lack the skills and abilities to successfully mitigate dangers when reporting on sensitive topics and from violent settings. Another example regarding economic capital was presented in Chapter 5, where it was suggested that journalists who have precarious work conditions and lack safety provisions for carrying out high-risk coverage and management support are often more prone to the risk of violence than journalists who enjoy a fixed contract, as well as better material and organisational conditions. Further research should investigate other constraints and limitations arising from job precarity in the context of digital media, which remains one of the less studied topics in journalism and media communication research.

Chapter 5 also suggested that, when it comes to journalists' risk mitigation, the volume and type of capital that they have gathered presents some limitations. For example, findings indicated that amassing more years of professional practice did not always materialise in lower levels of risk. In fact the empirical data suggested that, given the long periods of time and continuous exposure to violence and danger experienced by veteran crime reporters, experienced journalists were not exempt from being targeted with violence. The empirical findings also suggested that, after spending a lot of years working in hazardous environments, journalists have 'normalised' risks and dangers (Simon, 2014) – a condition developed by conflict reporters "after years of living in an environment in which threats and violence are routine" (Simon, 2014:28). Academic investigations suggest that this situation may, potentially, undermine journalists' psychological wellbeing (Feinstein, 2013). Further

research should gauge to what extent 'normalisation of risk' prevailed among journalists who work in hazardous environments on a daily basis.

This chapter found similar conditions and limitations regarding the other forms of capital under investigation in this study. For example, in terms of symbolic capital (journalistic prestige), the chapter found that journalists who enjoy greater levels of prestige (like national correspondents or investigative reporters) were not always at less risk than journalists who enjoyed lower levels of prestige (like crime beat reporters). Specifically, the data gathered suggested that 70% of national correspondents interviewed for this study had been targeted with violence (10 out of 14 national correspondents). This latter finding shows that in the context of the so-called War on Drugs (in which the state has lost the monopoly on violence in some territories and in which violence is often used by extra-state actors as a form of coercion), all kinds of journalists may be subject to intimidation and attacks. This is an important finding because, in the Latin American context (Waisbord, 2000:62), it has been argued that journalists working for national media outlets are less frequently targeted with violence, as they have more visibility and prominence than local journalists working in small towns and villages. In other words, journalists who possess higher levels of symbolic power are not exempt from threats and attacks.

Although a journalist who possesses less cultural or economic capital does not necessarily possess less symbolic or social capital (Bourdieu, 1997), Chapter 5 found that risk exposure is 'reproduced' among journalists with lower amounts of capital. In other words, the study found that journalists who had less of one form of capital (such as prestige) were more likely to possess less of another kind of capital (such as organisational support). This situation, in which lower volumes of capital overlap with each other increases exposure to risk and violence. In light of this, further research

should concentrate on investigating risk exposure among those journalists who usually have very low levels of all forms of capital, such as freelancers and fixers.

Finally, Chapter 5 also found that, despite all adversities, journalists were able to increase their mitigation of risk. This was possible, for example, by turning their professional solidarity with peers into collective protection mechanisms. This in turn suggested that despite all adversities, collective groups and risk mitigation strategies are a way of enhancing safety among local reporters. Further research should therefore investigate under which conditions collective professional groups have emerged in other parts of the country and, more importantly, how they endure over time.

7.2.3 Key findings, discussion and future research: Chapter 6

Throughout Chapter 6 it was argued that journalists who possess more capital have more resources to maintain and increase their position in the field and, therefore, will be more likely to adopt strategies for safety autonomy (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012:97; Vandevordt, 2017:613). This chapter also argued that the degree to which journalists develop such strategies not only varies between types of journalists and media outlet, but also varies by cities across the country. Guided by the theoretical framework provided by field theory, this chapter has offered strong qualitative evidence to support this claim. Furthermore, field analysis proved to be a very useful analytical tool for examining how a set of variables (like cultural, economic, social and symbolic forms of capital) can be translated into specific daily journalistic practices applied in risky and threatening conditions. Contrary to previous interpretations that emphasise the constraining factors influencing news production in violent settings (e.g. Rodelo, 2009), this study is one of the first empirical investigations to place the emphasis on journalists' agency and their resources and

strategic actions to enhance safety and professional autonomy amidst violence and risk.

By operationalising the four forms of capital under investigation in this study into specific variables, this chapter found that the journalists most likely to adopt the aforementioned strategies were those who have exhibited meaningful resilience soon after experiences of anti-press violence and translated this into personal strategies for developing and publishing news (cultural capital). Also included in this list were: journalists working for a legacy news organisations which, as a result of organisational learning, had developed strategic actions for developing and publishing news (economic capital); journalists who have worked for legacy newspapers and enjoyed greater support from their media houses, editors and managers (economic capital); journalists who have enhanced collaboration and solidarity among peers (social capital); and those who have used their prestige in order to increase personal safety and apply strategic tactics in the field (symbolic capital). Further research might operationalise these forms of capital into other empirical manifestations.

This chapter found that the key to the adoption of strategies for safety autonomy lies in the actors' capacity to convert their capital into resources needed to create these. Regarding cultural capital, this chapter found that journalists were able to learn from negative experiences, such as violence against them, and to develop strategic actions aimed at enhancing personal safety and professional practice. In this sense, this chapter has offered an innovative interpretation of the impact of violence against journalists, which has always been interpreted as a constraining force on journalists (Rodelo, 2009) and a catalyst for psychopathologies (e.g. Feinstein, 2013). Further research should investigate which elements (like journalists' role performance) helped to determine the likelihood of journalists adopting meaningful

resilience and to what extent this learning outcome can be socialised among other reporters.

Regarding the role of economic capital, this chapter has argued that journalists who work for local legacy newspapers could benefit from the adoption of editorial policies and organisational tactics developed soon after the organisation has experienced direct violence. This chapter found that quite often participants commented on the crucial role that communication and trust between journalists and editors has on translating economic capital into organisational strategies for enhancing safety and professional practice. Newsroom observation and ethnographic research may provide more robust evidence regarding these findings and as such further research should analyse which internal dynamics inside legacy media outlets helped to explain their *sui generis* response to violence. According to the results of this study, an autonomous financial capacity is a *sine qua non* condition for the development and employment of organisational learning strategies for safety autonomy.

Regarding the role of social capital, this chapter has found that local journalists who belonged to journalists' professional groups or those who participated in journalistic digital organisations were more likely to adopt collaborative strategies aimed at enhancing professional practice. In this sense, this chapter suggested that the underlying reason for the adoption of these strategies was a previous collective socialisation that emerged from the networks of solidarity between journalists. Further research should investigate to what extent this kind of network journalism represents an emerging model of journalism, or whether it is just a set of collective strategic dynamics applied by local reporters. In addition, regarding the collective creation of digital news start-ups, further research should investigate to what extent these digital publications represent viable spaces for critical and autonomous journalism at a local

level, or whether there were sporadic efforts for disseminating sensitive information which could not be published in traditional media outlets.

Regarding the role of symbolic capital, this chapter has found that journalists use their symbolic resources in order to mitigate risks, negotiate access to dangerous zones and receive information and scoops from professional colleagues. Although academic studies have already mentioned that journalists with higher amounts of symbolic capital deploy different strategies to continue reporting (Cottle et al., 2016), this chapter offered a novel interpretation about how journalists of this kind used their higher status to continue reporting in hazardous environments.

Overall, this chapter has suggested that journalists who possess higher levels of capital were able to develop the aforementioned strategies, but that further research should gauge to what extent these practices are employed by Mexican journalists. Additionally, this chapter has attempted to provide an exhaustive list of strategies for safety autonomy. Indeed, the empirical findings of this study, as well as academic accounts, indicate that, beyond those practices analysed here, there are a large amount of tactics that journalists use to continue reporting while reducing work-related risks (see Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2017b).

Finally, the data gathered suggests that the role of capital and strategic behaviours have some limitations that are largely shaped by journalists' professional role performance and journalistic routines, the organisational constraints in which they operate and, finally, by the unsafe and constraining local environment to which they must adapt. Thus, this empirical evidence suggested that strategic behaviour followed certain structural determinants.

7.3 Comparing Risk Mitigation Strategies and Strategies for Safety

Autonomy: Some Social Determinants

Throughout this study a subnational comparative approach was followed for examining risk mitigation tactics as well as professional strategic behaviour among local journalists working on the most dangerous stories in their communities. Given that this study has concentrated on the general patterns and regularities about the research phenomenon across journalists working at the most violent states in the country, less attention has been devoted to the comparative analysis of the contextual elements influencing the research objects in the ten selected states. Considering all this, this section aims to explore some similarities and differences about how certain social variables could influence journalists' adoption of risk mitigation tactics and strategies for safety autonomy (like the area's recent criminal history, geographical location, criminal composition, local elite configuration, as well as social capital at local level).

Guided by the empirical data gathered for this study, it could be argued that the recent history of local drug-trafficking organisations as well as the type of criminal organisations operating at local level could influence journalists' adoption of risk mitigation tactics as well as professional strategic behaviour. Empirical findings from this study have suggested that in subnational states and cities that have coexisted for a long time with drug-trafficking (Ciudad Juárez in Chihuahua, or Culiacán in Sinaloa [Osorno, 2009]), news media outlets (especially legacy publications) as well as experienced journalists have acquired knowledge and expertise (at collective, organisational and individual levels) on how to protect themselves while continuing to report under such hazardous and challenging circumstances. As one crime beat journalist working on this topic and based in Ciudad Juárez (Chihuahua) observed,

“The people [and news organisations] who are in that line of work know how to take care of themselves”. However, this situation is different elsewhere. This is especially true in those states and cities (like Acapulco in Guerrero, or Estado de México, among others), where drug traffickers have acquired power and visibility more recently (Enciso, 2017b), and where local news media outlets and journalists have just started to work out how to deal with this new criminal scenario. This situation may explain, in part, why news media outlets and journalists in these cities and states have only just started to adopt some of the risk mitigation tactics and strategies for safety autonomy that were developed in other states some years ago. Further research is recommended, especially analysing how historical trends in the composition of criminal organisations at local level could influence (and shape) the adoption of strategic behaviour in contemporary Mexico. Additionally, the data gathered suggested that another criminal factor that could explain the adoption of the aforementioned strategies is the type of criminal organisation that operates at local level. In fact, as other studies have documented (Holland and Rios, 2017; Valdez, 2016; Estévez, 2010), some criminal organisations (like the *Zetas* in the Northeast region) tend to use more violent and sadistic tactics for imposing fierce control in their territory (or *plaza*, as they called it), including in the local operation of the journalistic field. For example, according to press rights reports (Article 19 Mexico, 2016 and 2017) and some journalistic accounts (Valdez, 2016; Osorno, 2011), from 2008 to 2012, the *Zetas* were responsible for more of the horrific and shocking violence against the press in Tamaulipas and Coahuila than any other criminal organisation (such as attacks on media outlet facilities as well as extortion, forced disappearances and violent murders). In this context, it is argued that the intensity of attacks against the press perpetuated by some criminal organisations could explain, at least in part, why journalists and media outlets in such states adopted, as early as 2007 and 2008, an

extensive practice of self-censorship as an extreme measure for reducing work-related risks, as well as other strategies for risk mitigation and for enhancing professional autonomy (like the so-called collective agenda).

Regarding the emergence of journalists' professional independent organisations, the Mexican case has suggested that the density of social capital at local level (Putnam, 1993) is a *sine qua non* condition ensuring their success. This can be seen in subnational states like Tamaulipas, where criminal violence has eroded any civic organisation in the state (including journalists' independent professional organisations) (for an explanation on this see González de Bustamante and Relly, 2016a and Brambila and Lugo-Ocando, 2018). In contrast, in places like Ciudad Juárez (in Chihuahua), where there are several civic organisations demanding protection of migrants as well as an end to impunity for the thousands of women murdered in Ciudad Juárez, the social capital density at a local level has played a role in fostering the emergence of other civic associations, including the emergence of independent journalistic networks and organisations. Further research (both qualitative and quantitative) is recommended, especially for exploring how the density of local civic associations and networks could influence the emergence of journalists' independent professional groups. Additionally, this thesis has suggested that the emergence of journalists' professional independent organisations, as well as collective strategic behaviour, was more difficult to achieve in states that presented an internal heterogeneous composition, like Guerrero, Michoacán and Oaxaca, where geographical challenges and coexistence of different identities posed additional challenges for the emergence of local professional organisations as well as collective efforts aimed at enhancing professional practice. Additional research is needed in these subnational states, which are usually not the research object of national and international scholars working on this topic.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that there are additional elements influencing strategic professional behaviour at local level. Among other things, this research has showed that geographical location (like border states versus non-border states; proximity and distance to the capital city), as well as moments of political turmoil (like elections or social appraisals) could also influence the extent to which (and the type of) strategic behaviour that journalists may follow. Overall, the comparative approach developed in this study has shown that despite the amount and type of capital that journalists have gathered, they are all constrained by the institutional and social arrangements in which they operate. In the end, neither the constraining factors, nor the set of resources for resistance can be understood on their own; both must be understood.

7.4 Limitations of this Study

Limitations of this study include the fact that it has concentrated on the most violent states in Mexico. This type of research design was chosen because it produces important insights into the research object and, particularly, allows for the collection of valuable data on the practice of journalism in violent settings, as well as journalists' strategies for mitigating risk and for continuing to work amidst violence and conflict. However, this kind of approach could be criticised for focusing only on a specific type of subnational state, and for avoiding further comparisons with others that present different structural conditions (for example, subnational states with lower levels of contextual violence). Wherever possible, future research should incorporate other criteria for case selection and could, for example, attempt to include not only the most violent states in the country but also states with lower levels of societal and criminal violence (such as Yucatán or Querétaro) (Enciso, 2017a).

Although the subnational scale for analysis has provided fertile ground for analysing the practice of journalism in violent settings, this research strategy has tended to obscure further differences within each subnational region. In other words, this type of research strategy could not offer a robust analysis of the differences at city or municipal levels. This is an important point as academic research has found that political, criminal and media dynamics vary across municipalities and cities embedded in a single subnational state or province (Holland and Rios, 2017; Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014). Again, wherever possible, future research should incorporate case studies and comparisons taking into account further levels of analysis.

Additionally, the questionnaire method implemented in this study has strengths but also some drawbacks. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques allowed me to explore in detail the causal mechanisms behind some patterns and to develop new hypotheses and explanations for the object of inquiry. However, these types of sampling did not offer strong bases for the generalisation of hypotheses beyond the selected states. In that sense, this research is exploratory in nature and further investigations should help to gauge (once again) the validity of the set of hypotheses posited in this study. In addition, it is worth noting that this study proved that qualitative open-ended interview questions were an ideal type of research strategy for hypothesis creation. However, this type of methodological strategy operates in the realm of perceptions and opinions and relies almost entirely on the accuracy of the information expressed by those interviewed. Wherever possible, future research should incorporate a mixed methods strategy, in order to incorporate into the qualitative data an additional set of aggregate data (or surveys) about the research object, either at a national or subnational level.

Finally, following the specialised literature on field theory and the application of field theory made by media and communication scholars, this study has operationalised the forms of capital at individual level in specific variables. However, as other academic studies have suggested, these forms of capital may have other empirical manifestations. For example, academic studies have operationalised cultural capital as particular journalistic skills or journalists' role performance (Vandevordt, 2017), while other studies (Tandor Jr., 2017) have understood symbolic capital as journalists' awards and prizes. Future research should explore how different empirical manifestations of the forms of capital under study may have a role in explaining journalistic practice in violent settings. In addition, as this thesis has taken an actor-centric perspective, this study did not consider the forms of capital at organisational or institutional level. In this respect, future research should operationalise the forms of capital into empirical manifestations at an organisational level (Vandevordt, 2017; Benson, 2013; Bourdieu, 2005).

7.5 Contributions and Suggestions for Future Research

There are three aspects to the original contributions made by this research: 1) the role of capital among journalists working in violent contexts; 2) a more nuanced understanding of risk exposure and journalistic practice among Mexican journalists working on risky beats in violent settings, and 3) the methodological approach. In this section, I will position these contributions within the fields of journalism studies and conflict reporting.

7.5.1 Sociology of journalism in conflict reporting

Traditionally, academic research on conflict reporting has been descriptive in nature. This study has made a contribution to the systematic and theory-driven analysis of conflict reporting. By using the sociology of journalism accompanied with key concepts and hypotheses of field theory, this study has shown the utility of offering a theoretical approach to the study of journalism in conflict and violent settings. In fact, this study has shown how a set of mezzo factors – like cultural, economic, social and symbolic forms of capital – could either constrain or enable journalistic practice in conflict and threatening conditions. In particular, the field analysis presented in this study has suggested that some types of capital that are often under-estimated in the academic literature – like the role of social and symbolic capital – are crucial resources for understanding the increasing risk of violence to which journalists are exposed, as well as the tools deployed as a means of resistance and to continue working. Overall, this study has contributed to the literature by offering a more systematic, detailed and comprehensive explanation of journalistic practice in violent settings than that offered by the vast majority of current scholarship on news production in violent settings.

Furthermore, in drawing on field theory, the thesis has intended to integrate the study of journalistic practice into a broader debate about the sociology of journalism. This is an important contribution for developing more valid causal inferences and explanations about the dimensions influencing journalistic practice in violent settings. Future research can refine, test and adapt the analysis by exploring what types of capital are most important for understanding risk exposure and for adoption of strategies for safety autonomy in cities, states and countries beyond the regional sample explored here. In addition, further research could take into consideration other types of journalist that have been understudied in this dissertation

and in the majority of work on the subject. Due to their exposure to danger and proximity to risk, some cases in point are photo-journalists, local fixers and bloggers.

Additionally, as was shown in Chapter 2, field theory and the application of field theory developed by media and communication scholars (especially Waisbord, 2013 and Benson, 2013) offers a very rich set of concepts, hypotheses and assumptions that together are extremely useful for analysing the historical trajectory and contemporary position of national journalistic fields. In particular, Benson's concepts of field position and field logic were particularly useful for exploring the Mexican case. In addition, this thesis concludes that the concept of exogenous shock could be applied to explaining extreme situations.

In addition, this study concludes that drawing upon the three versions of field theory used in this study – Bourdieu's theory of field; DiMaggio and Powell's neo-institutional approach to organisational fields; and the model of strategic action fields developed by Fligstein and McAdam – could offer an alternative, creative and coherent approach for analysing the practice of journalism both in peaceful and conflict settings.

7.5.2 Understanding the Mexican case

Although the worrisome situation for the Mexican press is often the topic of journalistic works, press rights organisation reports and academic research on this area have just started to generate empirical findings and explanations about the daily dangers and risks that local Mexican journalists face and, more importantly, about the tools for resistance and strategies to continue working in very adverse conditions. In this sense, this study has contributed to expanding our understanding of this important phenomenon.

This thesis has suggested that levels of aggression and violence against the press cannot be understood without recognising the increasing autonomy of the Mexican press and its prominent role not only among elites but also in public life at both national and local levels (Guerrero, 2010 and 2017; Hugues, 2006; Lawson, 2002). Thus, as some authors have found (Asal et al., 2016; Waisbord, 2000:58-64), the Mexican case shows that democratic polities (compared with autocratic regimes) may introduce some institutional motivations for developing critical journalism. However, this thesis has also shown that, in some cases, new democratic countries (like Mexico) are incapable of safeguarding the exercise of independent and critical journalism in their territory. This idea, just very recently explored in the literature (for an international analysis on this see Asal et al., 2016; for the Mexican case see Brambila, 2017b), acquires relevance when we try to explore the high rates of homicides and violent attacks against journalists in the country.

It could also be argued that criminal violence and a broken judicial system – accompanied with economic inequalities and technological changes – has challenged democratic deliberation and the viability of critical journalism in the country, especially in subnational regions populated by criminal actors (Relly and González de Bustamante, 2014). While important, this interpretation misses other aspects of this phenomenon. For this reason, the present study has taken a different approach. Throughout all this study, I have argued that in this ten-year cycle of violence – and as a consequence of it – local journalists have been very resilient and have developed innovative strategies to keep reporting. They have learned to navigate daily risks and dangers by accumulating, interpreting and sharing personal, organisational and social experiences connected to violence. In doing so, they have also developed creative strategies aimed at fostering professional practice and safety while reporting. In short, this study has captured some of the more salient features of a momentous

transformation in the Mexican journalistic field, in which as violence has risen, a more horizontal, collaborative and assertive repertoire of journalistic strategies has also emerged. Above all, what this thesis has found is that the cycle of criminal violence in the country has forced some journalists to see each other and recognise each other and, ultimately, to organise in a more independent and horizontal way than before. This may be the beginning of a new type of journalistic model in the country. However, it is not yet time to judge whether and to what extent all of these courageous and resilient journalists will definitely transform the Mexican press into a more independent and autonomous institution in the years to come.

7.5.3 Methodology and innovation of approach

Instead of concentrating on the national level of analysis, this thesis has deliberately adopted a subnational comparative strategy for analysing journalistic performance in violent contexts. One of the main reasons for this is that worldwide (and in Mexico), the vast majority of journalists targeted with anti-press violence have been local journalists based in subnational regions in their home country (CPJ, 2017; RWB, 2017). By focusing on a subnational level of analysis, this thesis has challenged the tendency to look mainly to the nation-state as the most popular and natural default category for analysis in media and communication research and conflict reporting.

Considering the richness of empirical data collected for this study, this thesis has also contributed to a paradigm shift in media and communication research, one in which the national state is “merely one among many levels” of analysis (Esser, 2013:121). Indeed, by exploring the practice of journalism in Mexico’s states, this study has suggested a shift in the scale of analysis from the national to the subnational as a very useful tool, both analytically and empirically, to develop research and

comparisons of anti-press violence and safety of journalists across world subnational regions suffering from violence, inequality and poor government.

Furthermore, the type of methodological design followed in this study (the subnational sampling strategy) potentially contributes to opening up new avenues for theorising and explaining the uneven materialisation of democratic liberties (such as press freedom) in new electoral democracies, which contain “subnational authoritarianism” (Gibson, 2013) or “brown zones” (O’Donnell, 1993). Future research should develop more sophisticated subnational comparative strategies, including quantitative studies, mixed methods research and comparative cross-regional investigations.

Finally, further research must consider a broader definition of violence against the press. In this study – and in the vast majority of studies in the field of media and communication – this term is commonly understood as physical attacks, verbal intimidation and threats against news journalists and media outlets as a result of their work. However, this definition neglects further indirect or structural forms of violence, including cultural and symbolic ones. Thus further research should consider a definition of indirect forms of violence, including those suffered by sexual and ethnic minorities. It is worth noting that other approaches and developments in different areas of social research may add valuable insights about this phenomenon. In particular, it is recommended to include some developments made by peace studies researchers on structural violence (like Galtung, 1969). It is also recommended to use approaches made by feminist studies researchers and gender studies specialists, including those analysing patriarchy, gender violence, and discrimination.

Based on the Mexican context, the next section offers some policy recommendations grounded in the study’s empirical findings.

7.6 Policy Recommendations

This section focuses on the social responsibility to protect media practitioners and suggests that there is always a relationship between risks and responsibility. Both risks and responsibility presume “decisions need to be taken” (Giddens, 1999:8), especially when it comes to local journalists in hazardous or violent settings. This section examines the responsibilities of institutions and actors concerned with the safety of media practitioners, namely colleagues and peer associations, media companies, local governments, the international community, the public at large, and academia.

As some authors have rightly pointed out (Waisbord, 2007:120; Voltmer, 2013:138; Sambrook, 2016:188) – and as I discussed in Chapter 2 – journalists and news media organisations rely upon state institutions to carry out their professional activity and fulfil their role in democratic societies. Considering this, it is argued that the Mexican government has more responsibility in the worrisome situation for the press (and the country) than any other actor or institution and, therefore, the bulk of policy recommendations address state institutions and legal authorities.

To start with, the findings offer empirical support for demands for the correct functioning of the special legislation and agencies created to safeguard journalists and end impunity in crimes against the press. Over the last 10 years, the Mexican authorities – many times in response to civil society groups, pressure from journalists and demands from international bodies (Brambila and Lugo Ocando, 2018; Campa, 2014; Joloy, 2013; Edmonds-Poli, 2013) – have created institutional mechanisms for increasing the protection of journalists, especially the Special Prosecutor’s Office for Dealing with Crimes Committed Against Journalists, and the Sanctuary Mechanism for Protection of Journalists and Human Rights Defenders. However, this institutional framework has not yet resulted in a significant decrease in crimes against journalists. Important limitations and barriers have impeded the success of these state institutions.

Among other things, a lack of confidence in Federal and local authorities from journalists is particularly high. For example, empirical findings suggest that just a few journalists have turned to state institutions for support. In addition, as Mexico is a federal democracy – in which subnational states are autonomous political institutions – there is more than one jurisdiction in charge of prosecuting crimes at a time. Thus, when it comes to prosecuting crimes against journalists, there are challenges for cooperation among different branches and levels of government. In this context, it is argued that greater efforts and collaborations between authorities at different levels could increase the effectiveness when it comes to ending the impunity cycle in which the vast majority of attacks against the press are trapped (international evidence about this can be found in places like Brazil, see Cottle, et al., 2016). Additionally, this thesis has shown that the risks and dangers of being a journalists are unevenly distributed throughout the country. As such, it is argued that special contingency plans, as well as mechanisms to protect journalists, emergency response procedures, as well as denunciations of aggressions against the press should be implemented among those subnational states in which the highest number of aggressions against the press are concentrated (like Guerrero, Oaxaca, Tamaulipas and Guerrero).

Furthermore, this study empirically demonstrates that the Mexican press depends largely upon government subsidies to exist. However, this study also found that this economic dependency has negative consequences for demanding a strong and firm response from the government when an attack against journalists and news media organisation occurs. In other words, a prevalence of press-state clientelistic relations seriously undermines media responses to denounce and seek justice in cases of violence against journalists. In this context, a more robust and transparent regulatory framework and legislation for regulating allocation of governmental advertising in the media should be approved and implemented at both federal and local levels.

In addition, the empirical findings suggest that the journalism industry's response to crimes and aggression against journalists has been in many respects slow and fragmented. In fact, this study has shown that news media outlets have abdicated their most basic responsibilities with their media staff (such as providing health insurance and journalistic tools for reporting). These important deficiencies acquire greater relevance when considering the fact that this situation is particularly rife among local journalists covering the most hazardous stories in their own communities. Additionally, this thesis has shown that as much as 90% of journalists interviewed observed that they had not yet received any safety protocols or special preparation for conducting high risk assignments. In this context, this thesis suggests that local legacy news organisations, as well as small news start-ups, should all begin taking safety of their media staff seriously by providing not only the tools and management support for confronting challenging environments, but also the most essential facilities. This is especially important for ensuring safety among those journalists who are usually more prone to risk, like crime beat reporters and photo-journalists, among others.

Additionally, the empirical findings of this study have suggested that professionalization and preparation for conducting high risk coverage could improve by following collective efforts and mechanisms rooted in the local and community experiences rather than traveling from the international experience to the community. Thus, contrary to risk mitigation manuals, which have been developed in the context of international regular conflicts, this study has found that journalists have developed their own strategies and tactics from their own experiences and practices in the field. In many cases, as this study has shown, they have collectively shared their experiences with local colleagues and groups in their own subnational states. Thus, it is argued that future (national and international) efforts aimed at increased professionalization

of newsgathering and publishing in dangerous contexts should concentrate on empowering local independent professional groups and networks.

Finally, the empirical findings of this study have suggested that media scholars working on violence against journalists and journalists' safety also have a responsibility to develop problem solving research and analysis that could, potentially, generate better policy initiatives, as well as more accurate and more reliable data in order to ameliorate the dangers, risks and violence that local journalists and media practitioners confront on a daily basis. As the international and national academic communities have benefited from the life and experiences of local conflict reporters (by presenting findings at international congresses, and publishing theses, articles and books), we media scholars working on this issues have a responsibility to devote part of our academic work towards improving the material and professional conditions as well as the life experiences of local reporters and media practitioners who jeopardise their lives when attempting to fulfil their professional duties.

By taking an actor-centric approach, this thesis has attempted to place in a broader social and institutional context the risks and dangers that Mexican journalists working on hazardous topics in their communities confront on a daily basis. Above all, this study has intended to capture a paradox in the contemporary journalistic field in Mexico: in times of broken judicial institutions, naked criminal and anti-press violence and human rights crises, local journalists have developed independent, creative and resilient strategies to keep reporting on the most challenging, horrific but transcendental and necessary stories in their own communities. Ultimately, journalists' life experiences and professional practice have reminded us that wherever violence and dominance exists, there are always ways, tools and resources that can help us to resist and continue pushing forward.

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Appendix A Ethical Approval



Downloaded: 18/05/2015
Approved: 18/05/2015

Jose Brambila Ramirez
Registration number: 130118110
Journalism Studies
PhD dissertation

Dear Jose

PROJECT TITLE: Subnational Media Systems in New Democracies
APPLICATION: Reference Number 002917

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 18/05/2015 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 002917 (dated 07/05/2015).
- Participant information sheet 008045 (07/05/2015)

If during the course of the project you need to deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation please inform me since written approval will be required.

Yours sincerely

Emma Shelton
Ethics Administrator
Journalism Studies

Appendix B
Consent Form

University of Leeds
School of Media and Communication
Letter of Consent

My participation in this study is completely voluntary and no coercive measure or payment was used to accept.

I agree that researcher, **Julieta Alejandra Brambila Ramírez**, uses the information I offered in his Ph.D. dissertation and further publications, such as academic articles and/or books.

I understand that my identity will remain anonymous at all times and that the researcher will guarantee the confidentiality of the information given.

I allowed the researcher to record the information in audio and take some notes during the session.

I am aware that the researcher is the only person that will have access to my personal data (Name, email, contact phone number).

I understand that I may retreat from the project in the following six months after the interview was made without any implication.

I VOLUNTARILY ACCEPT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROJECT

Signature:

Name:

Date:

Appendix C

Information Sheet

Information sheet about research project

Project: Subnational media systems in new democracies.

Brief description of the project:

This project seeks to investigate on security when doing journalism and the violence against the press in Mexico among the journalists' perceptions, opinions and practices. The project consists on semi-structured interviews with Mexican journalists in ten different states in the country. The states chosen for this study are: Chihuahua, Mexico State, Guerrero, Jalisco, Michoacán, Nuevo León, Oaxaca, Sinaloa, Tamaulipas, and Veracruz. The interviews seek to investigate, among the national reporters and state journalists' perceptions, opinions and practices, on the violent situation against the press in their state, as well as the security and risks of journalism in the country. The questionnaire will be carried out by telephone; it will be recorded and has an average duration of twenty minutes. The personal information will be confidential and the participation in the project will be completely anonymous and voluntary.

The interviews will provide information to my PhD dissertation, in the *School of Communication and Means of Communication* from the *University of Leeds*, in the United Kingdom. Likewise, the information will be used in further academic and analytical products (such as academic articles and/or books).

This project is sponsored by the Center of Global Communication Studies (CGCS), the Annenberg School of Communication in the University of Pennsylvania, United States.

Julieta Alejandra Brambila Ramírez
PhD Researcher
School of Media and Communication
University of Leeds

Appendix D Questionnaire Form

General information
Name and age:
How many years of experience do you have?
Which means of communication do you work in?
How many years of experience do you have in your means of communication?
What is your work position in that means of communication?
What information source do you cover?
What is your highest level of education?

1. What is the freedom of the press and the security for journalists in the STATE?
2. Do you think journalism is a risky profession? Why?
3. Which types of stories are the most dangerous to release in the STATE?
 - a. *Mention some examples and give reasons*
4. How often do you cover those stories?
5. Do you follow any strategy and/or specific protocol when covering such stories? Which one(s)?
 - a. *Give examples to your answer*
6. Were you given any training to cover such stories by the means of communication where you work?
7. Have you ever used journalist networks in the STATE or in another state to publish sensitive information that could not be published in any other way?
8. Given your experience, how important is it to have a journalist's organization to raise their security in the STATE? Why? Which are the main obstacles to organize the journalists union?
9. From your own experience, what do you understand by violence against the press?
10. Do you identify any type of common aggression against the press in the STATE? How normal are those practices? Could you identify the factors that foster such violence?
11. Which ones do you consider to be the *severe aggressions* against the press in the STATE? Could you identify the factors that foster such violence?
12. Could you mention who the main aggressors to the press in the STATE are?
 - a. *Which strategies do they use?*

13. If you have received any aggression in your journalist labour, how has that event affected your work?
14. Have you ever met a co-worker where you work or in another means of communication who has been threatened or abused because of his journalist work?
 - a. *Give examples to your answer*
15. When there is a threat or aggression to one your co-workers
 - a. *How would you describe the society's reaction towards it?*
 - b. *How would you describe the guild of journalists' response towards it?*
 - c. *How would you describe the means of communication's response?*
How much coverage did the case have in the local media?
 - d. *How would you describe the local authorities' reaction towards it?*
16. According to different information, crimes against the press go unpunished. Why do you think this happens?
17. Finally, from your own point of view, why is the attack to the press that relevant?
18. Would you like to add anything else?