Fragmented professionalism

Journalism culture in Cuban state media

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Til Ask

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List of publications

Article 1: Natvig, A. (2019b). A place under siege: Self-censorship strategies among Cuban state media journalists. [Plaza Sitiada: estrategias de auto-censura entre periodistas en los medios del Estado cubano] *Brazilian Journalism Research,*15(2), 358-380.

Article 2: Natvig, A. (2021). Perceptions of and strategies for autonomy among journalists working for Cuban state media. In T. Henken and S. García Santamaría (eds.) *Cuba's Digital Revolution: Citizen Innovation and State Policy*. Miami: University of Florida Press.
Natvig, A. (2022). Periodistas y medios estatales Cubanos: Percepciones y estrategias de autonomía. In T. Henken and S. García Santamaría (Eds) *La Revolución Digital Cubana: Innovación Ciudadana Y Política Estatal.* Madrid: Editorial Hypermedia Incorporated.

Article 3: Natvig, A. (2019a). Diverging ideals of autonomy: Non-state media in Cuba challenging a broken media monopoly. *Journal of Alternative and Community Media*, 4(2), 14-30.

Article 4: Natvig, A. (2018). Cuban journalism students: between ideals and state ideology. *Journalism Education*, 7(1), 19-28.

Acronyms

CDR	Comité de Defensa de la Revolución/ Neighbourhood Committees
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CUC	Convertible peso (1 CUC = 1,000 USD)
CUP	Cuban peso, worth 1/25 of the CUC
ETECSA	Empresa de telecomunicaciones de Cuba/ The Cuban Telecommunications Company (state owned, and the only company allowed to operate within this field in Cuba)
FCOM	Facultad de Comunicación, Universidad de la Habana/ The Faculty of Communication, University of Havana
ID	Departamento Ideológico del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba/ Ideological Department of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party
JRP	Journalistic Role Performance project
PCC	Partido Comunista de Cuba/ The Cuban Communist Party
TIC	Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación/ Information and Communication Technologies
UPEC	Unión de Periodistas de Cuba/ The Cuban Journalist Union
WJS	Worlds of Journalism Study

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PART 1: SYNOPSIS

1 INTRODUCTION

The building which houses the three main newspapers in Cuba (*Granma, Juventud Rebelde* and *Trabajadores*) is impressive with its massive grey concrete exterior. Situated close to the Revolutionary Square in Havana, adjacent to the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (which is surrounded by olive-green uniformed guards), the media building resembles a fortress more than a journalistic hub. The entrance hall, on the other hand, differs from its militaristic surroundings. With a ceiling extending to the top of the immense construction, the single table with a receptionist and a stationary telephone appears exceptionally small and fragile as I enter the room. On the wall to the right is a gigantic picture of the yacht *Granma*[1] lying amid a lush, jungle-like landscape, with the red, white and green tocororo (Cuba's national bird) situated in the foreground. There is nothing else in the room but a few chairs and the entrance to a lift in the back of the room, out of which appears the journalist I am going to interview. At that moment I realise that I have left my wallet at home and have no way to identify myself to the ageing woman behind the reception table. The journalist confirms that he knows me, and after a while I am, to my surprise, allowed into the heart of the Cuban state media.

This anecdote illuminates one of the most important aspects of this thesis: on the one hand, the rigid appearance and mythical character of the state media structure, and on the other hand, the people inside it – individuals with an array of agendas, interests and ideals. When reading, watching or listening to Cuban state media, it is difficult to perceive that there is a daily struggle to balance professional ideals and the obligations imposed by the Communist Party (PCC).

Little research exists on the Cuban state media. However, in recent years, the amount of research has increased, particularly quantitative studies. One of the largest comparative studies on journalistic ideals and practices is the Journalistic Role Performance project (JRP), which includes Cuba among 18 countries in the first wave of the study (Mellado et al., 2017; Mellado 2021). A handful of Cuban scholars living outside the island have contributed to broadening the knowledge about the media sector (see Olivera et al., 2021; Olivera & Fernández, 2022; Olivera & De Majo, 2021; Olivera & Saladrigas 2023; Oller, 2017; Oller & Olivera, 2016; Medina & Somohano, 2020; Somohano et al., 2021). A substantial amount of research on state media journalists has been produced by Cuban students or academics living in Cuba, but this research has limited circulation outside of the island (e.g. García Luis, 2013; Elizalde, 2013). Among scholars originating from countries other than Cuba, qualitative research on state media or journalism students is limited,

[1] Granma is the name of a yacht Fidel Castro bought from a US couple while in exile in Mexico in 1956. The boat was used to transport 82 insurgents over the Gulf of Mexico in their attempt to overthrow the Batista government. The yacht is said to be named after the grandmother of the original owner, and Granma is now the name of both the landing province of the expedition and Cuba's main newspaper and 'official organ' of the PCC (Daniel, 2006).

perhaps due to the difficulty of gaining access (see García Santamaría, 2017). It is much easier to find studies on non-state media, bloggers and social media, focusing on the opportunity to create an alternative public sphere in Cuba (Cearns, 2021; Henken, 2011, 2017; Henken & García Santamaría, 2021; Hoffmann, 2011, 2016; Venegas, 2007; Vicari, 2015). García Santamaría (2017, p. 116) has called for more research on Cuban state media journalists as 'critical agents of structural change' and not mere servants of the Revolution. With this thesis, I answer this call and seek to draw a nuanced and broader picture of the ideals, interests and strategies of journalism students and journalists working for Cuban state media.

When I started this project in 2015, many defining events in Cuba–US relations had taken place, and it seemed that change was rapidly approaching. The US embassy in Havana was reopened after having been closed for half a century. In the spring of 2016, Barack Obama was the first sitting US president to visit Cuba since 1928, the Rolling Stones appeared in concert, and Chanel held a catwalk in central Havana. The spread of 'offline' Internet uploaded on pen drives, known as *El Paquete* (see section 3.7) began around 2010, setting the stage for communication and entertainment outside the state media. By 2016, Wi-Fi hotspots had surfaced everywhere, and new, non-state outlets proliferated. However, over time and with the election of anti-reformist Miguel Díaz-Canel as successor to Raúl Castro in the 2018 Cuban elections, it is clear that a Cuban 'opening to the world' promises many more twists and turns. In addition, with the US elections in 2016 and 2020, there has been a retrocession in diplomatic relations between Cuba and the US. Nevertheless, the state media's historical monopoly is rapidly deteriorating, and the manner in which journalists reflect on this is a core issue of this thesis.

1.1 Purpose

This project is conceptually situated somewhere between journalism and anthropology. I chose a qualitative and inductive approach because I believe in the details of a story. There is an abundance of information in the way people choose to present themselves – how things are said or not said. I find that a personal story – the micro perspective – can shed light on the macro perspective in ways that are difficult to achieve with large quantitative studies.

The political and technological changes in Cuba were occurring during the planning stages of my PhD project. At the same time, my university college in Norway was planning an exchange programme with Cuba, and contacts were now available to help me investigate conducting research on the island. My first trip to Cuba was in 2015, and the fieldwork was completed in 2016. From the start, this was a qualitative and inductive project. Initially I wanted to interview both state media journalists and non-state journalists. However, to be granted a research visa and to be affiliated with the University of Havana, I was not permitted to interview non-state journalists. The state media

journalists were, to me, the most interesting participants for this project, as little research had been conducted on this group. I find it fascinating to investigate how state media institutions work and what negotiations happen inside those institutions. Because I had access to the Faculty of Communication in Havana (lectures, professors, Internet, and intranet), I decided to include journalism students. The focus groups with students and access to the journalism curricula proved extremely valuable, as they helped me understand the professionalisation of journalists in Cuba.

This study comprises a variety of data sources which, together, provide an extensive framework for discussing the limits and structures that influence journalism in Cuba. I conducted 12 semi-structured qualitative interviews with state media journalists, formal and informal interviews with Cuban academics, and five focus groups with journalism students. In addition, I gathered and read the curricula of the journalism programme at the University of Havana and studied Cuban research that had not been published outside of the island. Field notes and observations in Cuba offered additional sources of information.

The purpose of this PhD thesis is to explore the limits and negotiations of autonomy (Waisbord, 2013b) within the state media structure. My aim was to provide insight into the ways journalism is performed in a society where freedom of speech is limited and to shed light on how restrictions on journalistic autonomy affect individual journalists and journalism students. I hope to broaden the limited information that exists on Cuban state media journalists and provide a nuanced picture of state and non-state media in Cuba.

1.2 Research questions and articles

Many factors make the Cuban state media particularly interesting to study. First, the media monopoly of the PCC has been broken, and an ecosystem of media outlets is emerging. Second, the leeway that academics and intellectuals have enjoyed as well as the relative freedom of journalism education in Havana create interesting dynamics between academia and journalism (García Santamaría, 2017, p. 255).

The general research question reflects the tension between the ideological calls for unity and sacrifice professed by the political elite and the professional formation of journalists, which largely reflects *Western ideals*[2] of journalism:

How do journalists in the state media and journalism students negotiate professional ideals and national imageries in a changing Cuban media landscape?

[2] For a definition, see section 2.1.

My approach has been inductive/abductive; in other words, the data guided the direction of the study. Both the general and specific research questions (listed below) were developed throughout the process of writing this thesis. The general research question was gradually refined and further focused after the four articles of the thesis were published, reflecting broader theoretical concepts than those permitted in the article format. The specific research questions began as explorative inquiries, keeping various directions open while analysing how journalists experience their work in state media and what it is like to study journalism in Cuba. The specific research questions have likewise been shaped during the process of analysis and article development. In covering themes relevant to more than one article, namely autonomy, self-censorship and negotiations of ideals and practice, the four specific research questions are each linked to the article with corresponding numeration. The research questions begin with the material focusing on practicing journalists, emphasising that this constitutes the primary data of the study.

RQ1: In which ways does the defence paradigm in Cuba affect self-censorship strategies among state media journalists?

This question is pursued in article 1, Natvig, A. (2019b). A place under siege: Self-censorship strategies among Cuban state media journalists. [Plaza Sitiada: estrategias de auto-censura entre periodistas en los medios del Estado cubano] *Brazilian Journalism Research*,15(2), 358–380.

The article analyses how state media journalists negotiate, dispute and accept self-censorship to shield the country from negative portrayals in US media. Methodologically the article is based on semi-structured interviews with state media journalists.

RQ2: What strategies do journalists working for state media use to expand their autonomy?

Research question 2 is reflected in article 2, Natvig, A. (2021). Perceptions of and strategies for autonomy among journalists working for Cuban state media. In T. Henken, and S. García Santamaría (eds.) *Cuba's Digital Revolution: Citizen Innovation and State Policy*. Miami: University of Florida Press. Natvig, A. (2022). Periodistas y medios estatales Cubanos: Percepciones y estrategias de autonomía. In T. Henken and S. García Santamaría (Eds) *La Revolución Digital Cubana*: Innovación Ciudadana Y Política Estatal. Madrid: Editorial Hypermedia Incorporated.

This book chapter, which is published in both English and Spanish editions, addresses specific strategies applied by journalists to gain or maintain autonomy within the state media structure. The

chapter is based on semi-structured interviews with state media journalists but also uses data from focus group interviews with students.

RQ3: In which ways does the non-state media challenge the state media, and how do journalists and students relate to this?

This research question is discussed in article 3, Natvig, A. (2019a). Diverging ideals of autonomy: Non-state media in Cuba challenging a broken media monopoly. *Journal of Alternative and Community Media*, 4(2), 14–30.

The article detects multiple normative frameworks at play in the Cuban media landscape, where journalism students are more welcoming of non-state media. Methodologically this article contrasts data from focus groups with journalism students and semi-structured interviews with state media journalists.

RQ4: How do journalism students navigate between the perceived limits of press freedom in the state media and professional ideals learnt at the university?

The fourth research question is examined in article 4, Natvig, A. (2018). Cuban journalism students: Between ideals and state ideology. *Journalism Education*, 7(1), 19–28.

This article discusses how internship in state media is experienced by journalism students. It argues that the transition from the freedom of university to the rigidity of state media is straining for students. The article is largely based on data from focus groups with journalism students.

During my fieldwork, I found some of the themes and concepts shared by participants particularly interesting, such as the perception of *plaza sitiada* (article 1) and strategies for autonomy (article 2). The interests of the participants also impacted the study. The strong sentiments regarding non-state media became an important source of information (article 3). The article on student internships (article 4) was based on a dilemma I discovered while transcribing and analysing the data. Knowing how journalists and students navigate in the state and non-state media – and discerning their reflections on autonomy – can illuminate core elements of journalism. How do journalists react when they are hindered from informing people about important events? Which strategies can be applied to bridge the gap between ideals and practice?

Journalistic resistance (subtle, visible or even violent) against lack of autonomy has been documented in countries around the world (Erzikova & Lowrey, 2010; Hamada et al., 2019; Lee, 1998; Mellor, 2009; Ranji, 2019). The present study adds to this knowledge by confirming that, despite being part of a state media organisation in an authoritarian country, journalists do not become mere servants of the system. Furthermore, the ideals learnt in university by Cuban journalists can be both valuable and defining for the developments in the Cuban media sector in the future. If structural change with more autonomy from the PCC is achieved in the state media, and if non-state media is given a more solid legal base, Cuban journalists can produce the kind of journalism that will propel the country forward. Indeed, a Cuban journalist working for the non-state outlet *Periodismo de Barrio* won the 2019 Gabo award (in competition with 1,730 journalistic stories from Latin America, Spain and Portugal) for an investigative story on lead intoxication and its effects on a Havana neighbourhood (Gabo Awards, 2019).

1.3 Summary

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to a nuanced picture of how autonomy is negotiated in an authoritarian context. Several factors make Cuba particularly noteworthy to study. The breach in the state information monopoly, journalism education as a semi-autonomous sphere and the relationship with the US are important aspects influencing state media journalists and journalism students about to enter the profession. The general research question reflects these aspects by investigating how journalists negotiate professional ideals and national imageries. Each of the four specific research questions corresponds to an article, addressing central concepts such as autonomy, self-censorship and the gap between ideals and practice.

2 PREVIOUS RESEARCH: GLOBAL AND LOCAL INFLUENCES

Journalism in Cuba, as in the rest of the world, is being influenced and changed by digitalisation and globalisation. At the same time, negotiations of autonomy are shaped by the unique social and historical framework of a country. This chapter discusses both global and local influences on journalism and autonomy. It begins by outlining research on how autonomy is perceived and negotiated around the world, with a particular focus on authoritarian and transitional contexts. It is then refined to reflect the specific Cuban context.

2.1 Western journalism

Firstly, it is important to define key concepts that refer to notions and ideals in journalism across the globe. The notion of *Western ideals* in particular warrants a definition, as it is used throughout this thesis to assess journalistic ideals in Cuba. In describing *Western ideals* in journalism, Hanitzsch et al. (2011) observed the following:

> Western journalists are generally less supportive of any active promotion of particular values, ideas and social change, and they adhere more to universal principles in their ethical decisions. Journalists from non-western contexts, on the other hand, tend to be more interventionist in their role perceptions and more flexible in their ethical views.

Hanitzsch et al. (2011, 276), however, noted that this is not a normative perspective. Western values are not considered 'better' or 'more professional' than other values, but rather a way to display diverse social functions and professional values across societies. In the same study, Hanitzsch et al. (2011, p. 287) grouped journalistic culture into three main groups: 'Western journalism culture', 'peripheral Western' and a third group comprising transitional democracies and developing countries that tend towards non-democratic forms of government. Nygren et al. (2015, p. 45) noted that professional journalistic cultures often share professional values, standards and practices, but vary due to cultural diversities. Relating their study to Hanitzsch's analysis, Nygren et al. (2015) placed Sweden in the first group, Poland in the second and Russia in the last. Discussing the professional culture of Swedish journalists, Johanson (2015, p. 254) remarked:

> Swedish journalists represent a "Western journalism culture" cluster, which means that they traditionally follow ideals of detachment and consider themselves as watchdogs and a fourth estate. Moreover, Swedish journalism is strongly rooted in public service values. Historically the Swedish journalist has had the mandate to monitor society and to set the agenda following their professional norms and ideals.

Although the ideals noted by Johanson (2015) referred specifically to Swedish journalists, they are transferable to a general understanding of Western journalism. As noted, this is not necessarily a geographical term but rather a cluster of ideals shared by journalists worldwide (and applied to varying degrees). Hanitzsch et al. (2011, p 287) observed that journalists in the US show 'a

remarkable tendency to let personal evaluation and interpretation slip into the news coverage', thus removing US journalism from its status as the archetype of 'objective' journalism.

Based on research among journalists in 67 countries, the most recent data from the Worlds of Journalism Study characterised Western journalism as highly supportive of the monitorial role, relatively supportive of the accommodative role, less favourable of the interventionist role and antagonistic to the collaborative role (Hanusch & Hanitzsch, 2019). In popular terms, this means that Western journalism embraces the watchdog role and is hostile to collaboration with authorities. The Worlds of Journalism Study also demonstrated that this typology of journalism is characterised by high degrees of editorial freedom, minimal political influence despite high trust in political institutions, and adherence to universal codes of ethics (Hanusch & Hanitzsch, 2019). The current study applies a similar understanding of Western journalism. Since the term *Western* is often used in the literature concerning journalism culture, it makes sense to use it as a point of reference in this study of Cuban journalism as well.

2.2 Autonomy in global journalism research

While there are many differences between the state media in Cuba and the media in the countries mentioned in this section, the aim is to provide an overview of shared perceptions, strategies and structures. The Worlds of Journalism Study (Hanitzsch et al., 2019b) was the largest comparative study conducted on professional perceptions among journalists, and it included 67 countries around the globe. In the study, journalists reported on their perceived autonomy to select stories and emphasise story aspects. Overall, journalists in the study reported a high level of editorial autonomy, a finding which runs contrary to critical political–economic perspectives that tend to emphasise a deterioration of autonomy due to economisation of the media (Mastrini & Becerra, 2011; McManus, 2009). This inconsistency was explained by the WJS study's authors as the result of normalisation and socialisation into an organisational and corporate point of view. Despite structural limitations, journalists still experience a considerable degree of autonomy, as they have relative freedom to select stories and news angles. On a scale ranging from 1 to 5, the mean value of all countries was 3.81 (value 4 was defined as 'a great deal of freedom'). The lowest levels of editorial autonomy were reported in countries with a (semi-)authoritarian political system, such as Hong Kong (3.14), China (3.09) and Qatar (2.75). The greatest disparity in perceptions of autonomy was found in Qatar, a country that is home to the international Al Jazeera network, a newsroom considered to have the highest level of editorial autonomy in the Middle East (Figenschou, 2010; Hamada et al., 2019).

Reich and Hanitzsch (2013) found that among 18 democratic and non-democratic countries, journalists who reported that their professional autonomy is limited tended to perceive their work as influenced by political actors. In their sample, state ownership of the media only accounted for a

minority of the countries, but within these societies, journalists recognised the presence of the state as a limiting force (2013, p. 149). Interestingly, authoritarian regimes scored higher than hybrid regimes on perceptions of autonomy (perhaps due to greater expectations of professional autonomy in the latter), and a surprisingly wide scope to pursue professionalism was found in societies with politically aligned news media (2013, p. 152). In a study of six emerging democracies in Eastern Europe, Southern Africa and East Asia, Voltmer and Wasserman (2014) concluded that journalists interpreted press freedom both through Western discourses and specific historical and cultural views. While embracing the idea of press freedom, journalists also saw themselves as educators and adversaries. A similar perception of journalists as simultaneous watchdogs and development journalists was observed among Fijian journalists (Hanusch & Uppal, 2015).

Support for the *watchdog* role has been found in countries worldwide (Hanitzsch, 2011). However, the obstinately critical style of reporting that audiences may be accustomed to in developed democracies may be culturally inappropriate in others. According to proponents of an *Asian values approach*, criticism can be interpreted as a disrespectful attitude towards authority (Wong, 2004). The preferred function of journalism in such societies is to bring about social stability and harmony, and journalists act as helpers in promoting social development, economic growth and national unity (Hanitzsch et al., 2019, p. 42). Therefore, understanding the various loyalties journalists may have in authoritarian or transitional countries – or in countries with strong state media institutions – requires context-specific studies.

In a study of Chinese journalists (N = 1,309), 52.9% reported that the main problem facing them in their work was the discrepancy between professional ideals and reality (Zhang & Su, 2012, p. 17). This is the main area of interest in the Journalistic Role Performance Project (JRP). This project aims to address the divide between ideals and practices through interviews with journalists and analyses of the journalistic output. The first wave of the project (2013–18) included 18 countries and analysed professional roles in print media. The second wave (2019–23) includes 37 countries from all corners of the world, and it likewise analyses how different media platforms (radio, television, online) affect journalistic roles. One of the main findings from the first wave of the study was that norms do not necessarily dictate journalistic behaviour, and the interaction between norms and ideals presents a complicated and contradictory field of study. Roles are flexible and changing – they are not fixed entities – and are perpetually contingent on external factors and events (Mellado et al., 2021b).

The breach between ideals and practices, and negotiations over autonomy, are found in many studies in countries with limited press freedom. In Hong Kong, the indirect pressure from mainland China, including economic rewards to media owners and public criticism of the local media by Chinese

officials, constructs boundaries of autonomy. For instance, one line that cannot be crossed by the Hong Kong media is advocating Tibetan or Taiwan independence. Nevertheless, journalists in Hong Kong have maintained a high level of professionalism (Chan et al., 2012, p. 24). Hassid and Repnikova (2016) found that Chinese journalists can more easily publish sensitive stories if the topics have been sufficiently discussed in online forums. Some journalists even initiate the spread of a story online to write about it in print later, thereby expanding the borders of acceptable discourse. In a comparative study of Vietnam and Singapore, Lehmann-Jacobsen (2017) concluded that journalists in Singapore have a better understanding of what the state expects from them due to legal frameworks and are, therefore, more comfortable in their roles. Journalists in Vietnam, however, find that rules and boundaries on the part of the state are unclear, and this creates frustration. The more seasoned journalists feel that they enjoy greater autonomy, something which is found in journalism research globally (Lehmann-Jacobsen, 2017; Mellado & Humanes, 2012).

Mellor (2009) argued that Arab journalists have managed to expand their autonomy by emphasising their role as experts in political affairs or as eyewitnesses to important historical changes, thus demonstrating that they are not mere mouthpieces for their regimes. In Ghana and Ethiopia, the journalistic responsibility of protecting 'national interests' and upholding goals of development journalism promotes a dual loyalty to the profession and to the interests of the state, implying that autonomy is compromised yet outwardly acknowledged by journalists (Hasty, 2005; Skjerdal, 2012). In researching press coverage of elections in Tanzania and Uganda, Walulya found that despite advocating for freedom to report, structural conditions cause journalists to contradict ethical and professional standards. Walulya questioned whether this type of reporting could be considered a form of *hybrid journalism*, borrowing the concept from *hybrid democracies*, which is used to describe countries with both democratic and dictatorial tendencies (Walulya, 2018).

In a study of a Russian province, Erzikova and Lowrey (2010) found that, faced with pressure from regional governors, journalists respond by avoiding political journalism and opting instead for entertainment reporting. Others resort to upholding the Russian literary tradition by providing advice and counsel or succumbing to demands of government bureaucrats. When out of office, however, journalists are critical of the government. In Iran, journalists apply strategies of mobilising their network to obtain information. To write stories on sensitive topics, journalists utilise actors outside the journalistic field and use a strategy of posing questions to officials that encourage a particular answer (Ranji, 2019, p. 205).

2.3 Local studies on negotiated autonomy in Cuban journalism

In this section I narrow the scope of the study to research conducted in Cuba (though not published outside the island). These local research contributions have served as an important backdrop for broadening my understanding of how journalism is understood, discussed and analysed within Cuba. This research has also been a point of departure for my research questions on self-censorship (RQ1), negotiations of autonomy (RQ2, RQ3) and professional ideals (RQ3, RQ4).

The book by late journalist and academic García Luis (2013) *Revolución, Socialismo, Periodismo* (Revolution, Socialism, Journalism) was a dominant reference among participants in this study. During interviews, many journalists and students asked if I had read the book, and they used phrases from it to make important arguments. I interpreted the participants' questions the same way as García Santamaría (2017, p. 126), namely that the book was a way for journalists and academics to legitimise their own criticism. Indeed, García Luis (2004, 2013) has been so influential that I limit this review to his book (based on his PhD thesis) and one other PhD thesis. García Luis wrote various books and was president of the Cuban Journalist Union (UPEC) and dean of the Faculty of Communication in Havana before he passed away in 2012.

García Luis (2013) argued that what Cuban journalists need is neither a 'Bolshevik' press removed from the people nor a 'liberal' press obeying the market and hegemonic powers. Instead, the Cuban media needs 'a reintegration of the necessary power to accomplish its social mission, with honesty and professionality' (2013, p. 200). García Luis argued that the professional culture of journalists in Cuba has suffered under the 'external administration' (a common/correct way of referring to censorship of Cuban journalists) of the media. For instance, filters to determine quality or self-evaluation among journalists do not exist, and if they did, nobody would believe in them. This in turn creates an attitude among journalists that they do not have to make an effort; there is no point in investing energy in something that will not be published. One consequence is that the close-to-reality genre of the reportage is lost. García Luis wrote: 'We have been building a very crooked system that demobilizes, stagnates and corners creative thinking, in the name of not causing damage to the country' (2013, p. 173). Journalists in his study called for more autonomy and economic independence, less centralisation of information and a greater awareness of the profession's moral values, greater participation of journalists in creating 'information policies' (making journalists' involvement bottom-up rather than top-down), upgrades of equipment and working conditions for journalists and the employment of editors and media managers with professional backgrounds (at the time, 50% had no journalism education) (García Luis, 2013, p. 175).

Building on García Luis's work, Elizalde's (2013) PhD thesis investigated the need for a new information policy allowing Cuba to meet the massive transformations in the technological sector,

referred to as TICs (technologies of information and communication) (2013, p. 16). Elizalde emphasised the need for various forms of management of the media – finding ways for outlets to sustain themselves financially. She proposed a differentiation between outlets that are 'public', 'state' and 'governmental' and argued that editors should be given more responsibility, creativity and independence in their selection of sources and should be burdened by fewer restrictions and less bureaucratic control. She also considered inter-organisational competition and establishment of standards similar to international media outlets an important step in improving public opinion of 'institutional media'. To Elizalde, if the media is not transformed to meet the new ways of communicating, the end result will be anomy and arbitrary decisions that can be harmful to the principles of communication in a socialist society. This can, for instance, lead to greater influence of liberal media outlets controlled by the market, which can profoundly change the communication sector (Elizalde, 2013, p. 140).

2.4 Research on professional roles in Cuban journalism

In the following section, I summarise the body of international research (published in either English or Spanish) on Cuban state media journalists and journalism students. These studies have been particularly important for my understanding of journalism students and the thesis of a possible emerging generational divide. These insights have been vital to the formulation of research questions 3 and 4.

In a comparative analysis of news articles (N = 9,841) from Brazil, Cuba, Chile, Mexico and Ecuador, Mellado et al. (2017, p. 10) found that the Cuban press scored the highest on all the indicators of the 'loyal-facilitator' role, which is characterised by supporting national politics and promoting a positive image of the political elite and national triumphs. This finding was corroborated by the JRP (Mellado, 2021). Olivera and Torres (2017, p. 144) revealed that among 627 news articles from Cuban state media, the 'loyal-facilitator' role was found in 82% of those published in *Granma*, whereas in *Juventud Rebelde* it was found in 66% of the articles. This indicates that despite both organs being connected to the PCC, internal and external conditions allow for a slightly different relationship with power holders in *Juventud Rebelde*. A study involving a questionnaire of 46 Cuban journalists in a mixture of 'state' (N = 17), 'social' (N = 12) and 'private' (N = 6) media outlets (the difference reflecting the legal status of the outlet) revealed that journalists define their most important functions as being to inform, tell the truth and represent the people, while relatively few viewed criticism or 'defending the Revolution' as important (Veliz et al., 2019, p. 281). For more on journalistic roles in Cuba in relation to the JRP, see section 4.3.

A survey of journalism students (N = 383) at seven different institutions throughout Cuba revealed that students see 'civic journalism' as a professional ideal in the sense that they want to participate

in and influence public issues and be closer to public needs and interests; this perspective greatly differs from the 'loyal-facilitator' role of state media content found in other studies (Somohano et al., 2019, p. 326). In a comparative study among journalism students in Cuba, Venezuela and Ecuador (N = 1,273), Oller et al. (2017, p. 267) found that Cuban students were more interested in politics than their counterparts in Venezuela and Ecuador. The Cuban students were also more inclined towards subjects related to economy, trade and politics, and less inclined towards entertainment compared with the students in the other two countries. Further, the Cuban students represented the most 'analogue' of the three countries, as televised news and printed newspapers were more widely used than Facebook in Cuba for reading news stories. Another study based on the same set of data revealed that journalism students in all three countries view censorship, pressure from governments and self-censorship as the biggest threats to their profession, and they perceive these as obstacles to quality journalism (M = 3.6 on a 1–5 scale). Notably, this perception of threat was somewhat lower among Cuban students (M = 3). Foreign ownership of media and a growing dependency on freelance journalists were perceived as minor threats (Oller et al., 2019, p. 98).

In qualitative studies involving Cuban state media journalists, Oller and Olivera (2016, p. 154) interviewed 45 journalists in Cuban state media. They concluded that there is a large gap between what the journalism profession is and what it should be, particularly considering the 'external regulation' and lack of autonomy of journalists. State media journalists in the study were aware of their role as political actors but considered themselves 'spokespersons' rather than 'propagandists'. Furthermore, journalists viewed themselves as capable of holding opinions that may differ from that of the government but always from a constructive and non-confrontational perspective (2016, p. 193). In an article analysing various political documents, media and academic articles, in addition to interviews with journalists, Olivera et al. (2021) concluded that journalists agree on the need for a legal framework and the right to access information, but they disagree on the political direction of the media. Olivera and Fernández (2022) interviewed experts in communication and political sciences about Cuba and conducted content analysis of a variety of documents and interviews with journalists from previous studies. They concluded that Cuban professionalism under Raúl Castro seemed to be more closely connected to ideals of social justice, national sovereignty and citizen participation than to autonomy. They observed a tension between journalists leaning towards ideals of public service and those striving for greater autonomy.

Pérez (2006) interviewed 47 Cuban journalists who graduated during the 1990s to assess their ideology. Approximately one-third of the interviewees had left the country. The journalists in Pérez's study had conflictual and ambivalent views of the ideals of the 1959 Revolution. He wrote: 'The Revolution is, for these young men and women, like a mythical animal described in very

different manners by everyone who claims to have seen it' (2006, p. 260). García Santamaría (2021) analysed 'fantasies'[3] that young journalists use to cope with restrictions and oppression of their professional practice and investigated what drives them to contravene the social and political boundaries of the state media and venture into non-state projects. García Santamaría argued that by envisioning change in the state media system, young journalists have contributed to shaping the boom in independent media outlets. In her PhD, García Santamaría (2017) concluded that the elements slowing down a change led by Cuban journalists are a lack of resources and materials in newsrooms and the importance of historical moral values. At the same time, journalists reassert their autonomy through attempts at broadening the debate on what can be publicly discussed or by using creative styles of writing to make monotonous news stories livelier. Another strategy involves developing individual projects, such as blogs, through which frustrations can be channelled. The close relationship between journalists and media scholars has also promoted professional agency and made unfulfilled demands of the profession visible (2017, p. 259). After interviewing 35 young Cuban journalists working for state and non-state media, Roberts (2019, p. 41) found that strategies for navigating constraints included making the struggles visible through 'acceptable outsiders' from Latin America, covering cultural expressions such as hip hop and trova and displaying social unrest outside of Cuba, such as the turmoil in Venezuela and racism through the #BlackLivesMatter campaign.

2.5 Summary

Negotiations on how to conduct journalism and how to achieve degrees of autonomy are issues journalists struggle with in countries around the world, as documented by the Worlds of Journalism Study (Hanitzsch et al., 2019b) and the Journalistic Role Performance Project (Mellado, 2021). In authoritarian and transitional countries, negotiations over autonomy often involve multiple considerations, mixing Western ideals with historical and cultural considerations (Voltmer & Wasserman, 2014). This highlights the importance of viewing journalism and journalists both as part of a globalised dialogue and as participants in a local, context-specific discourse.

Previous research on Cuban journalism shows that state media journalists and journalism students negotiate various role conceptions, Western ideals and security discourses and non-confrontational quests for autonomy (García Santamaría, 2017; Oller & Olivera, 2016). The research unpublished outside of Cuba has been an important backdrop in enhancing my understanding of how journalism is lived and experienced in Cuba by Cubans and in which ways it is possible to discuss the transformation of state media journalism (Elizalde, 2013; García Luis, 2013). This thesis relates to

[3] This concept is, according to García Santamaría, drawn from a 'Logics Approach' to identify how identities are shaped and changed.

the previous literature by discussing the multiple loyalties of journalists. At the same time, it contributes to broadening knowledge on how journalists and students negotiate global or Western ideals in the specific Cuban context.

3 CUBA: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

To illustrate how journalism culture is formed by national characteristics, it is necessary to examine the specific context from which the Cuban state media emerged. This chapter also casts light on the underlying reasons for some of the mechanisms I analyse in my articles, such as the antagonism between Cuba and the US (article 1), why the state media developed to become such a rigid structure (article 2) and the expansion of non-state outlets (articles 3 and 4). I briefly recount the main historical events and media developments from 19th-century colonialism, the 1959 Revolution and the 'Special Period' during the 1990s. I then elaborate on recent media developments, particularly focusing on the expansion of digital journalism and non-state media outlets.

3.1 (Pre-)Colonial Cuba

Cuba was 'discovered' by the Western world when Christopher Columbus arrived in 1492. Before the Spaniards arrived, native tribes of largely Arawak and Chiboney inhabited the island. The indigenous population in Cuba was forced into slavery, and within a single generation, most of the natives had died from overwork, disease and mass suicide. A notable exception is the Taino Arawak tribe, which fought fiercely against the Spaniards. Today, their leader, Hatuey, is a national hero in Cuba (Brenner et al., 2015, p. 11) and the first in a series of national liberation symbols. Cuban history from the 16th century is one of dependence. The island was a Spanish and (briefly) English colony for approximately 400 years (1514–1895).

Sugar played a decisive role in ousting the Spanish rule in favour of a US one. By 1800, Cuba was the world's leading sugar producer, an achievement built on the exploitation of about 750,000 African slaves. The US soon became Cuba's primary trading partner despite Spanish taxation. The economic development also stimulated infrastructure, civil society and the press (Tone, 2006, p. 16). For instance, the first newspaper, *Papel Periódico de La Havana*, appeared in 1790. While the rest of Latin America was involved in violent battles for independence, Cuba was occupied with reformism through newspapers, books and the voicing of arguments in Spanish courts (García Luis, 2013, p. 72). Cuba's capitalistic economy, built on sugar and slavery, created a wealthy upper class distanced from workers and the middle class. This societal division sparked the 1895 war of independence against the Spanish colonial powers, and those same forces are also key to understanding why the 1959 Revolution eventually succeeded.

After decades of uprisings, the war of independence started in the underdeveloped eastern parts of Cuba, where the Spanish taxation had the greatest impact and people had less to lose. The 1895 war

was organised politically and ideologically from New York by journalist and poet José Martí,[4] who was killed in the early days of the war (Tone, 2006, p. 36). Martí thus became (and remains) an important national symbol of resistance and an extremely important tool in shaping national myths, particularly within journalism.

The unrest brought concerns about the property owned by US companies and the security of US residents in Cuba. Therefore, in 1898, the military ship USS *Maine* was dispatched to Cuba. When the ship exploded (for an uncertain reason) in the Havana harbour, the US intervened. Less than six months later, a bilateral peace treaty, known as the Treaty of Paris, was signed between the US and Spain, without Cuban participation. While the treaty formally gave Cuba independence from Spain, the island became a de facto colony of the US (Brenner et al., 2015, p. 14). In 1902 the Platt Amendment was incorporated into the Cuban constitution, securing Guantánamo as a US outpost and permitting US intervention (García Luis, 2008; Merrill, 2009). This war of independence, where Cuba essentially traded one master for another, marks the outset of what eventually grew into a deep resentment towards US domination on the island.

3.2 The Batista era

The Platt Amendment was in effect from 1903 to 1934. During this time US companies and investment banks secured control over basic Cuban infrastructure (Brenner et al., 2015, p. 14). By the 1950s Cuba was dominated by US businesses and became a bastion of anti-communism. While a paradise for US tourists, the country was ridden by violence, terror and corruption. In addition, there were widespread illegal activities connected to US mafia investments in casinos, in addition to sex and drug trafficking. Among the many shifts in power before the 1959 Revolution, the military leader Fulgencio Batista played the most crucial role. Batista exercised significant influence throughout the 1930s (when he overthrew the 1933 revolutionary government) and as the elected president from 1940 to 1944. The 1940s marked a period of competitive politics, ending with a 1952 military coup by Batista, who remained in power until the 1959 Revolution (Merrill, 2009; Sáenz Rovner, 2008).

The broadcast media flourished during the 1940s and 1950s. Journalism as a Western discourse with global reach in many aspects manifested itself in Cuba during this period. Some of the views on journalism that are established in Cuban academic literature may have their roots in these interactions with US media. Rivero (2009, p. 276) asserted that Havana was possibly the most important centre of commercial radio and television production in Latin America at this time. While

[4] Martí invokes admiration from all sides, his philosophy has been claimed by both Batista and Fidel Castro. He is seen as profound anti-US and also interpreted as an advocate for a strong Cuba-US friendship (Kirk, 1977). It is no coincidence that the most important Miami news outlets covering Cuba are named after him.

US investments in Cuba were an undeniable reason for this, local and national approaches also contributed. For instance, Cubans became specialists in 'indigenising' US broadcasting practices to a Cuban reality and acquired expertise in advertising due to the introduction of US broadcasting agencies in the early 20th century (Rivero, 2009, p. 280). The exact number of print media outlets is uncertain, but scholars agree that there was a broad spectrum of publications that included more than 100 newspapers and magazines. Further, during the 1950s, there were six national and 146 local radio stations as well as five television broadcast stations in Havana (García Luis, 2013, p. 75; Guerra, 2012). Only the US, Canada and England exceeded Cuba in the number of television sets in 1956 (Rivero, 2009, p. 285).

Prior to the 1952 coup, the printed press enjoyed relative freedom and political influence. However, after Batista took power, widespread censorship and bribery became the norm (Guerra, 2012, p. 40). When political censorship was mandated by law in 1957, it promoted an exodus of media professionals, which was further exacerbated by the 1959 Revolution. Those who remained became key members of the state media system; in particular, the experienced advertising professionals were central in crafting propaganda campaigns to form the new socialist state (Rivero, 2009, p. 289).

3.3 The 1959 Revolution

The well-developed media infrastructure in Cuba played a decisive role in the years of struggle leading to the 1959 Revolution. In relative isolation, Fidel Castro (who would later become president and founding father of the Revolution) and his guerrillas were leading the uprising from the Sierra Maestra mountains in the eastern part of Cuba. On a daily basis, urban activists confronted violence from Batista forces, and their survival depended on anonymity. Through clandestine publications and their own radio broadcasts on *Radio Rebelde* (Rebel Radio), Fidel and the Sierra guerrillas quickly became the face of the movement, aligning their struggle with Martí and Cuba's 19th-century independence war. To advance this image, Fidel invited dozens of journalists to the Sierra, beginning with Herbert Matthews of *The New York Times* (Guerra, 2012, p. 17).

But why did the Cuban Revolution succeed, when similar attempts to overthrow US-backed dictatorships failed in Latin American countries from Argentina to El Salvador? According to political analyst Laurence Whitehead (2007, pp. 4-6), frustration from previous social revolutions on the island along with the 1940s experience with competitive politics, US interventions and Batista produced an anti-imperialist and centre-left culture that largely supported Castro's Revolution. Moreover, after the Revolution, the socialist state was built without widescale violence, largely due to immigration to the US among those in opposition: 'In contrast to other socialist revolutions, Cuba needed no major civil war and no gulag […] since its insularity and proximity to a welcoming Florida offered an exceptionalist solution – albeit one with its own exceptionalist

political consequences' (Whitehead, 2007, p. 5). In addition, as open mass repression of dissidents could serve as a justification for a US military intervention, it prohibited the development of extreme government discrimination (such as that involving 'class hatred' towards those with a bourgeois past in the Soviet Union). The Cuban state's strategy of control instead became one of 'moralism' over 'militarism', such as through CDRs – neighbourhood committees monitoring the attitudes and behaviour of citizens. While mass participation in numerous confrontations with the US in the early days of the Revolution consolidated the legitimacy of Fidel's rule, it also normalised political rituals and blurred the lines between liberation and authoritarianism (Guerra, 2012, pp. 22-27).

3.4 Dependence on the USSR

The 1960s were marked by confrontations between the US and Cuba and increasing Cuban dependence on the Soviet Union. Main events of that era can briefly be summarised as the 1960 implementation of the US commercial, economic and financial embargo against Cuba (referred to as *el bloqueo* [the blockade] in Cuba); the unsuccessful Bay of Pigs invasion by US forces in 1961; and the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. These events had lasting effects on Cuba and offer a starting point for understanding the increasing ideological gap between the US and Cuba and for comprehending why the state media became so rigid. For instance, the invitation of the Communist Party (despite their previous support for Batista) into central positions in the fundamental structures of the Cuban government, particularly in media and culture, contributed to steering top leaders towards a pro-Soviet state. Although Fidel eventually embraced communism, most revolutionaries were not communists from the outset (Guerra, 2012, p. 18). According to García Luis (2013, p. 78), the nationalisation of the media sector also happened partly by chance; much of it was the consequence of a rapid drop in advertising in private radio and television outlets and the exodus of its leaders. Furthermore, pressure from organised workers in the printed press through *coletillas* (small notes expressing support for the Revolution) precipitated a nationalisation of the media (García Santamaría, 2017, p. 47).

After the consolidation of the Cuban Communist Party in 1965, the official news organ of the PCC, *Granma,* was established along with *Juventud Rebelde*. Two independent outlets, *El Mundo* and *Bohemia,* were maintained. The journalistic quality, however, suffered in terms of professionalism and creativity. The press model was designed to promote national unity and not allow any room for US counterrevolutionary strategies (García Luis, 2013, pp. 80-86). Ironically, despite the CIA's attempts to create a counterrevolution in Cuba, the US government policy of giving Cuban refugees material and political advantages over other immigrants had the opposite effect. The 'wet foot, dry

foot' policy,[5] which until 2017 granted Cuban emigrants permission to enter the US without a visa, gave the most fervent oppositionals a 'safety valve' in the US (Guerra, 2012, p. 23). Lastly, the fear of US aggression and the increasingly deteriorating Cuban economy during the 1960s promoted strong ideological bonds and economic dependency on the Soviet Union – a situation that lasted until its demise in 1989.

3.5 The Special Period

The socialist economic system (COMECON), to which Cuba had belonged since early 1972, ended with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Cuba was plunged into a severe economic crisis, with the GDP falling by 35% between 1989 and 1993. Cuba had an enduring shortage of raw materials, a lack of capital resources and was technologically outdated, and as a consequence, it experienced massive de-industrialisation, which by 2011 was only 45% of the 1989 level (Bye, 2020, p. 11). The term 'Special Period in a time of peace' was coined by Fidel Castro in 1989, defining a time of permanent hardship that would last until the turn of the millennium, when Venezuela emerged as a central ally. To remedy the crisis, PCC leaders changed their position on a wide range of ideological principles, such as abandoning atheism, allowing tourism and monopoly capitalism, and opening free-trade zones and joint-venture projects producing goods that Cubans could not buy (Guerra, 2012, p. 10). Further, the economic crisis led to the introduction of US dollars (USD), causing Cuba to operate with two different monetary systems.[6]

For the media, the Special Period was a time of major setbacks. The 1986 congress of the Cuban Journalist Union (UPEC) had started a process of 'rectification', aiming to demonstrate that the media would no longer 'stay on the surface of the problems' (Marrero, 2006, p. 70). The 1993 UPEC congress instead centred around the lack of job opportunities and scarce resources in newsrooms. Instead of investigative journalism, it turned to a platform of 'resistance' (Marrero, 2006, p. 81). Before the expansion of the Internet, the publications of the Catholic Church, such as *Espacio Laikal* and *Palabra Nueva*, and the relatively open academic magazine *Temas* were important exceptions to the media monopoly on the island. Despite limited circulation and occasional crackdowns, such as during the civil society debate during the late 1990s (see Hoffmann, 2011), these outlets have been vital in uniting Cuban and diasporic intellectuals (Marreiro, 2014, p. 13).

[5] This interpretation of the law came in 1995. It stated that Cubans reaching US shores ('dry feet') could apply for residency. Any Cuban caught in the waters between Cuba and the US ('wet feet') would be returned to Cuba or to a third country.

[6] *The Cuban peso* (CUP) is worth 1/25 of the *Convertible peso* (CUC), which is fixed to the US Dollar.

Since the 1959 Revolution, there have been many attempts at dialogue between Cuba and the US. From a Cuban perspective, lifting the embargo/blockade[7] has been a central demand for moving towards normalisation. For 30 years, the UN General Assembly has called for the US to end the Cuban embargo/economic blockade (where these two terms are used interchangeably). In 2022 the US and Israel were the only two countries that voted against a resolution ending the embargo/blockade (Reuters, 2022). From a US perspective, the embargo was a means to strangle a potential Communist threat close to its shores, an impression exacerbated by the active involvement of the revolutionary Che Guevara and Cuban military support for various guerrilla groups in Latin America and Africa during the 1970s and 1980s (Gold, 2019). However, Cuba researchers agree that the Cuban regime has acted in ways that impede a lifting of sanctions, including the most recent 'thaw' during the Obama administration. Without external aggression, it would be more difficult to explain shortages and mismanagement on the island (Bye, 2020; Whitehead, 2007). If Cuba were to lose its underdog role, it could 'become just another relatively needy and somewhat unsuccessful Caribbean nation' (Whitehead, 2007, p. 10).

In addition, the maintenance of the embargo laws has been a central political demand among influential Cuban exiles. This group of individuals has been steadily growing, and between 2000 and 2017, it almost doubled. In 2022 almost 250,000 Cubans emigrated to the US due to the economic crisis and inflation in the wake of COVID-19 and harder US sanctions (Guerra, 2023; U.S. CBP, 2022). Of the 2.3 million Cuban Americans (a considerably high number considering that there are 11.2 million people in Cuba), 66% live in Florida (Noe-Bustamante et al., 2019). The Cuban American community in Florida has been leaning towards the right politically, and winning over this group has been an important part of US election campaigns in Florida. From a Cuban perspective, Miami is itself a symbol of resistance to the Cuban system. This is largely due to the high percentage of Cuban Americans, and media outlets (such as radio and TV Martí) covering Cuba from the US.

3.6 Reforms and continuity

Around the year 2000, Venezuela and Hugo Chávez emerged as a new socialist ally for Cuba, offering new forms of support through oil deliveries and other goods in return for Cuban medical services. In 2006, due to illness, Fidel transferred all of his functions to his younger brother Raúl Castro, who formally became president in 2008. According to Hoffmann (2016, p. 1731), this shift of power replaced charismatic socialism with bureaucratic socialism; the personalist politics of Fidel were replaced by a re-institutionalisation emphasising the formal structures of state and party.

[7] The most important laws embodying the embargo/blockade are 1) the Cuban Democracy Act (1992), which tightened the embargo to achieve democratisation. The only area exempt from the list of sanctions is Internet access and telecommunications (Hoffmann, 2011, p. 14). 2) The Helms-Burton Act (1996) which extended the embargo to include foreign companies trading with Cuba (Bye, 2020, p. 108).

The 2011 Party Congress initiated some important structural reforms, which roughly can be described as lessening state control. Most importantly, the non-state sector in agriculture and among self-employed workers was expanded and a real estate market was opened (including fewer restrictions on buying construction materials) along with the leasing out of land and small-scale businesses to private initiatives. Another important area of reform was integration with the world economy by allowing direct foreign investment and articulating the intention of eliminating the dual monetary system, which is yet to occur (Bye, 2020; Torres, 2017). Furthermore, the 2013 migration reform abolished the need for an 'exit permit' to leave the country, granting most Cubans the liberty to travel.[8] The law also allows Cubans to stay abroad for 24 months without losing Cuban residence. This was previously conceived of as a 'definitive exit' that impeded return to the island (Hoffmann, 2016, p. 1736).

However, in recent years there has been a reform backlash. Since 2016, restrictions and raids against *cuentapropistas* (self-employed workers) have increased, limiting the possibility of expanding private initiatives legally and thus moving them further underground instead. It is estimated that about 60% of the non-state economy is informal (referring to goods bought outside Cuba or stolen from state businesses to sell on the black market). Furthermore, the deep social and economic crisis in Venezuela is affecting Cuban access to foreign currency and oil deliveries, adding to a list of economic problems such as a slow bureaucracy, a ban on direct recruitment, the dual currency and, in particular, the US embargo/blockade (Bye, 2020, pp. 37-107).

Those with few resources to offer in the informal exchange economy, those being hit by increased food prices in private markets, and those with a strong ideological commitment (e.g., large parts of the bureaucracy, low-level officials in the party and state employees) are particularly prone to being against reform. These groups have likely contributed to the reform backlash in recent years, and consequently created an 'internal blockade' that many consider a bigger problem than the US blockade (Bye, 2020, p. 79). While the economic situation in Cuba was in crisis before, the COVID-19 pandemic led to an almost complete collapse in international tourism, in addition to reduction in remittances. With the combination of increased US sanctions and COVID-related reduction in foreign revenue, the Cuban economy contracted by 11% in 2020 (BTI, 2022).

Despite its economic and bureaucratic difficulties, Cuba outranks neighbouring countries in several measures of living standards.[9] The birth mortality rate in Cuba is the lowest of all Latin American countries. The life expectancy of 78.9 years is the highest in the region; only Puerto Ricans live

[8] According to the Catholic Patmos Institute there are currently 223 persons who are prohibited from leaving Cuba (Hernández, 2020).
[9] If very small island states in the Caribbean are not taken into consideration.

longer. With a GDP expenditure of 12.8%, Cuba leads the world in the most money channelled into education (as of 2010). With the population's average of 14 years of education, this also explains why the population's literacy rate is 99.8%. The population of 11 million is clustered throughout the country, particularly around Havana (2 million) and in major cities such as Santiago de Cuba, Camagüey and Holguin (CIA, 2019).

3.7 State and non-state media in Cuba

Economic development in Cuba is operating in reverse, and so are relations with the US[10] following a short-lived softening during Obama's second term in office. The expanding media environment, however, has slowly but steadily pushed the limits of the state media system since the introduction of the Internet in 1996 (Hoffmann, 2011, p. 6). Contextualising the media expansion in Cuba is important in understanding why such developments are perceived as threatening by some of the participants in this study and to what degree the non-state media is able to challenge the established state media structure.

Essentially, the difference between state media and non-state media as defined in this thesis is that state media receives funding from the state or government (for a discussion on terminology, see section 5.10). Non-state media is a broad term used in this thesis for media outlets that do not receive direct funding from the state or government. It is, nevertheless, a multifaceted group of outlets that vary in terms of organisation, ideology and professionality.

I draw on Henken (2017) to outline possible subgroups of non-state media:

- *Digital millennials* refer to mainly apolitical cultural outlets (both online and on paper) that produce other types of stories than state media (*Vistar*, *Play-Off*, *Garbos*, *CiberCuba*, *El Toque)*.
- *Critical digital revolutionaries* are examples of outlets run by Cubans who support the Revolution but also criticise the government (*Havana Times*, *La Joven Cuba*, *Periodismo de Barrio*).
- *The digital diaspora* are news and entertainment outlets primarily based and funded outside of Cuba (*Cubaencuentro*, *Cuba Net*, *OnCuba*). Some participants in this study view these outlets as the most hostile to Cuba in terms of funding and content.

[10] The Trump administration has limited remittances (which is the most important income for Cuba, along with tourism and medical help), put restrictions on travel between US and Cuba, and activated title III of the Helms-Burton Act. This makes it possible for landowners, who had their properties confiscated after the 1959 revolution, to sue (in US courts) companies or individuals who derive financial profit from the confiscated property in Cuba (Bye, 2020, p. 122)

- *Digital dissidents* refer to outlets that are blocked from public Wi-Fi. The most (in)famous of these is probably *14ymedio*. Most collaborators in these outlets are not trained journalists, as it would not be compatible with a job in state media.

As I discuss in article 3, participants in this study mostly referred to the first three categories of these non-state media subgroups. In broad terms, among students, the 'Digital millennials' category was most referred to, whereas journalists collaborating with non-state outlets mostly referred to 'Critical digital revolutionaries' and 'The digital diaspora'. The fourth group, 'Digital dissidents', was not mentioned by anyone, as it is not a viable option for journalists or students wanting to keep multiple jobs. At the same time, if anyone were interested in this option, they probably would not have shared that in their interview. As participants may mention various categories and as these keep changing, I have chosen to use the general term *non-state media* when describing this multitude of outlets.

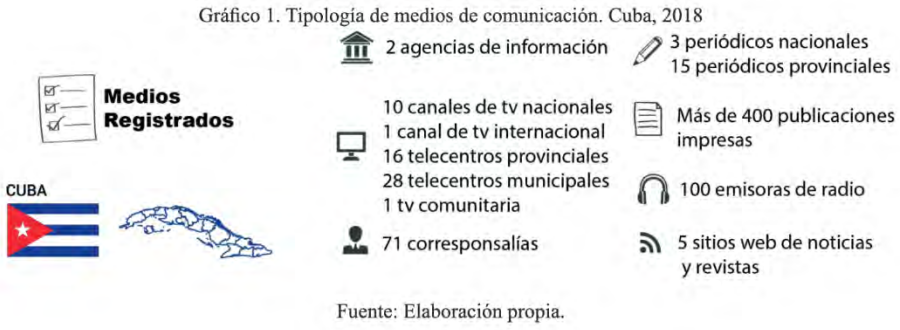
As seen above, these categories are largely based on online outlets. Although there are printed versions of some of these outlets (such as *Vistar*), most information is spread online or through *El Paquete*. Among participants in this study, some differentiated between *private media* (receiving funding from private or commercial companies) and *alternative media* (funded by embassies, NGOs or similar organisations). Other participants in this study did not seem to find such categorisations relevant. In its early years (beginning around 2007), non-state media was marked by low professionalisation, and the content resembled opinion pieces rather than articles based on objectivity (Henken, 2017, p. 435). In the last decade or so, there has been a steady growth of young journalists contributing to professionalisation in all subgroups of the non-state media (García, 2016, p. 119; Geoffray, 2021; Henken, 2021).

3.7.1 State media structure

The *state media* refers to media outlets funded and controlled by the state or government. Hence, control mechanisms of the *Departamento Ideológico del Comité Central del Partido Communista de Cuba* (Ideological Department of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party) are a part of the journalistic workday. However, as observed by Bye (2020, p. 6), there is a notorious lack of information about how the Cuban government functions and who actually makes decisions. The first PCC Congress in 1975 marked the outset of the institutionalisation of the state press and its alignment with the political project. Thus, the financial structure of the state media remains within the control of the PCC. Academics worry that the absence of decisions made by anyone other than the political elite may cause the state media to lose both credibility and persuasive power when faced with competition from the non-state media sector (Elizalde, 2013; Garcés 2016).

Information and exact numbers on the state media structure are scarce; however, the model in figure 1 may serve to clarify the structure of the state media in Cuba (Valaracel et al, 2020, p. 97).

Figure 1: Illustration of the registered media in Cuba in 2018



Translating the model above, there are two news agencies: *Prensa Latina* and *Agencia Cubana de Noticias*, both of which distribute stories to the state media and maintain reporters and correspondents domestically and abroad. There are three national newspapers and 15 provincial newspapers. The three national newspapers are connected to organs of the PCC and are financed by these respectively (*Granma*/Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party, *Trabajadores*/The National Workers Confederation, and *Juventud Rebelde*/Young Communist League).

In addition, there are more than 400 periodicals, out of which one finds the cultural magazines *Caimán Barbudo* and *Bohemia*. There are 100 radio broadcasters throughout the country and five online news platforms (figure 1 is from 2018; the number of online platforms has since increased). Further, there are 10 national television channels, one international channel, 16 provincial television centres, 28 municipal television centres and one community television channel. *Instituto Cubano de Radio y Televisión* (ICRT, the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television) is the official state broadcaster. According to its website, the ICRT's mission is to 'direct, execute and control the application of state and government policy regarding radio and television activities' (ICRT, 2019). *Cubadebate* has, on the contrary, a somewhat lower count on the total number of newspapers, digital outlets, radio and television broadcasters with some sort of economic relationship to the state: 15 national and three international outlets in addition to 41 local outlets throughout the island (Cubadebate, 2019). Common to all of the state media outlets is that they are struggling financially, they lack the resources needed to practice journalism and they pay comparatively low salaries.

Despite the reluctance towards change in state media outlets, some developments are notable. Since 2013, the multistate-owned station *Telesur*, based in Caracas, Venezuela, has been broadcasting in Cuba for 12–14 hours per day through state television, giving Cubans access to an alternative source

of information (Marreiro, 2014, p. 10). The impression from speaking with Cubans about the content in *Telesur* is that the channel is perceived to report international and Cuban stories faster than the national state television and that the channel has a left-wing approach supporting Cuba (which is perceived as a positive thing by some).

Another way of giving Cubans a voice in state media, albeit limited, is the double-page *Cartas a la Dirección* (Letters to the Newsroom) that *Granma* has published each Friday since 2008 (with similar concepts in both *Juventud Rebelde* and *Trabajadores*). A study from the Faculty of Communication in Havana (FCOM) of this section in *Granma* concluded that the 'public agenda' (what people are talking about in the streets) is reflected among the published letters, but this is not echoed in the newspaper's coverage on national issues (Rosabal & Gallego, 2010, p. 152). Despite replies from the bureaucracy, the lack of opportunity for journalistic follow-up to these letters was also confirmed by journalist participants interviewed for this thesis. For those with access to the Internet, there are also commentary fields below online articles and on the Facebook pages of state media outlets. Recently, *Granma* has introduced the option to pose questions to state employees at a given time and about certain subjects through its website.

It is difficult to obtain reliable statistics on the number of journalists working for state media outlets. According to the information centre of the Cuban Journalist Union (UPEC), 250 professionals applied to join in 2019, but the union did not reveal any information on the total number of members (Cubaperiodistas, 2019). A study of journalism students in Cuba (N = 383) can, however, provide insight into the background of newly educated professionals. This study found that the median age of students was 20.8 years, and 67.8% were female. More than 37% of the parents of Cuban journalism students had obtained a university degree (Oller et al., 2017, p. 247).

3.7.2 Internet and telecommunications

While restricting the Internet has been a central concern for Cuban authorities, they have not had the financial means to see through a labour-intensive censorship like that seen in China (Marreiro, 2014, p. 6). In its early years, the Internet was principally for the state and official institutions, and for many citizens in Cuba, this meant having access only to the domestic network and not to the World Wide Web. Furthermore, 'legitimate' users had to sign a declaration stating they would not access 'anti-Cuban' content (Hoffmann, 2011, p. 14). These measures were, however, hard to implement, and since 2004, independent bloggers have started their own ventures, followed by a growth of citizen journalism from 2008. Arguably the most well-known of these is Yoani Sanchez, who began with the blog *Generación Y* and now runs the collective project *14ymedio*. In 2012, she described herself as a 'blind tweeter' due to the difficulties of access. Her tweets would go out by SMS in bulk and receivers would upload them online, which in turn would be picked up by Hispanic

television and watched by Cubans on illegal satellite dishes (Rathbone, 2012). Despite difficulties for independent actors, there was an improvement in media policy when Raúl Castro held office. For instance, the de facto toleration of oppositional outlets such as *14ymedio* offers a striking contrast to the policies under Fidel Castro. In 2003, as many as 75 dissidents, including a number of journalists, were sentenced to prison terms of up to 30 years (Hoffmann, 2016).

Non-state initiatives (see article 3) have been fuelled by Internet cafés opening in 2013 after the Venezuelan fibre-optic cable ALBA-1 came into use (Frank, 2013). Accessing email via cellular phone through the state company ETECSA's 'Nauta' service became possible in 2014 (cellular phones were allowed in 2008). Wi-Fi hotspots across the island were established in 2015 and expanded from 35 to more than 200 in 2016. That same year, Internet speed and access were improved through a deal with Google that allowed it to install servers on the island. In addition, the breach of the state information monopoly was exacerbated by the spread of the 'offline' Internet *El Paquete*, which consists of USB sticks filled with the newest entertainment shows, movies, video games, sports, digital books, magazines, cellular phone applications (such as the extremely popular *Revolico*, which is a Cuban Craig's List) as well as news articles from both state and non-state outlets (El Paquete de Cuba, 2019). Interestingly, Cubans in the diaspora import *El Paquete* as a way to connect with their home country (Cearns, 2021).

As long as *El Paquete* follows the unwritten norms of no pornography, no religion and no politics, it survives in an 'alegal' sphere of acceptance from authorities. Subscriptions can be as inexpensive as 5 Cuban pesos (20 US cents); however, its compilers, packagers and distributors also receive income from paid advertisements embedded in the programming (Henken, 2017, p. 433). *El Paquete* is a good example of a successful private enterprise that has grown so large that it will be impossible to close down despite the recent unwillingness to embrace private initiatives. *El Paquete* is considered to be the country's largest private industry (with about 45,000 distributors), and its content reaches half of the population and generates more than $1.5 million weekly (Wall, 2017).

In 2018, 3G was launched, and in 2019, home access to the Internet was legalised (previously, access to the Internet was granted only to certain professions and institutions). Still, ETECSA is the only legal provider of Internet access, and equipment cannot be sold by local businesses (Freedom House, 2019; Semple & Cohen, 2019). However, Cuba-style connectedness has outmanoeuvred bureaucracy for quite some time; illegal antennas and Wi-Fi duplicators, as well as routers connecting entire neighbourhoods, are widespread. The resolution legalising home networks also requires that the previously illicit systems comply with the law. This has jeopardised the existence of broad networks such as SNET (an acronym for Street Network), which connects over 20,000 Cubans through gaming, and this has sparked public demonstrations (Pérez, 2019).

Despite the veritable explosion of information available to Cubans, prices for legal connection to the Internet remain extremely high ($1 per hour for Wi-Fi and $7 per 600 MB 3G). Cuban official statistics report that 40.3% of the population had access to the Internet in 2016 (ONEI, 2016). A study from a Great Britain 'creative agency' called *We are social* claimed (based on various state and NGO sources) that Cuban Internet users comprised 51% by 2019, and mobile social media users comprised 56% of the population, which is almost on par with global averages, according to the same site (We are social, 2019). However, this data does not reflect the crucial distinction between open and limited use of online systems. Some Cuba analysts claim that 22.8% of the population only periodically uses email or navigates within the Cuban *intra*net, and only 3.5% can utilise web browsing – thus not mentioning the other 73.7%, who are offline (Henken, 2017).

3.7.3 Conditions for the non-state media

It is in these waters that non-state media outlets navigate – in a constant battle for legality and legitimacy, managing to reach out to audiences while avoiding the invisible glass ceiling (see article 2). In April 2018, Miguel Díaz-Canel became president, and he began by promising continuity and seeing through a new constitution that may further complicate the situation for non-state media outlets. The new constitution, ratified in 2019, recognises the right of 'freedom of the press', but it also states that the media, in any form, are:

> The socialist property of the whole people or of the political, social and mass organisations; and cannot be the object of another type of property. The State establishes the principles of organisation and operation for all social media (PCC, 2019, article 55).

Díaz-Canel also approved a new policy on Information and Communication Technologies (TICs) as a decree law, which means it has been accepted without review by the National Assembly (Díaz-Canel, 2019). In addition, a TICs policy document has circulated among newsrooms since 2018, stating that editors have the autonomy to decide content but that the PCC controls the general policy (PCC, 2018). In 2021 the Cuban government enacted vaguely defined Internet regulations. These grant authorities expanded powers to restrict online speech, such as by criminalising the sharing of 'offensive' and 'false' information online (CRP, 2021; Ministerio de Justicia, 2021).

Thus, a central issue, as raised by Bye (2017, 2019), is the battle between immensely popular institutionalised market mechanisms, such as *El Paquete* and *Revolico*, and the substantial official resistance towards those mechanisms. How many restrictions on personal initiatives will the youth be willing to take with a deteriorating economy and state salaries too small for subsistence?[11] The answers to questions such as this are yet unclear. In October 2019, a declaration was signed by 19

[11] A minimum income to survive was in 2015 calculated to be CUP 1450 per person, while the average salary in the state was CUP 740 in 2016. This means, two average incomes in a family of four would only cover 25% of their basic needs (Bye, 2020, p. 86).

'independent and non-state' outlets claiming that since 2018 there have been 183 documented cases[12] of aggression towards journalists (APLP, 2019). The journalists requested that authorities give 'independent and non-state' outlets a legal character and contended that they should have the right to inform people (Cibercuba, 2019). Interestingly, some of the most widely read and acknowledged non-state outlets did not sign the declaration (including *OnCuba*, *Periodismo de Barrio* and *El Toque*). While these outlets' websites do not reveal why they abstained from signing, this may point to some possible frictions between non-state outlets.

Still, the safety situation for journalists is much worse in other Latin American countries than in Cuba, according to Reporters Without Borders (RWB). Between 2019 and 2022, 64 journalists have been killed in Mexico, Haiti, Honduras, Colombia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala and Paraguay. In Mexico alone, 36 journalists were killed, making it the deadliest country in the world for journalists to work in (Reporters Without Borders, 2022a). Cuba ranks 173 of 180 on the RWB press freedom scale, thus maintaining its position as the 'worst country for press freedom in Latin America' (Reporters Without Borders, 2022b). For Cuban journalists, this means that despite real threats of imprisonment and arbitrary detentions, defamations and bans on leaving the country, they can exercise criticism without fearing for their life.

3.8 Summary

Some of the most important factors leading to the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and the rigid state media structure include the experiences of Spanish colonialism and US political, economic and military interference. These influences led to popular support for the Revolution as well as acceptance of power consolidation and media control by the Communist Party. In addition, the persistence of the Revolution, despite severe economic mismanagement, has been supported by the US's role as a 'safety valve' for the most fervent oppositionals to the Cuban regime. The ideological opposition to the US[13] remains an important tool for the PCC in arousing public support and legitimate media censorship. Today, the Cuban media scene is proliferating with alternative means of communication, such as *El Paquete* and non-state outlets. Internet access is steadily increasing, but the political climate is not granting more autonomy to either state or non-state outlets.

[12] For instance, two Cuban journalists were detained and their work confiscated when doing a story on a desolated sugar community (Periodismo de Barrio, 2019). Another example is the imprisonment of journalist Roberto Quiñones after his attempting to cover a trial (Cubanet, 2019)

[13] It is, however, important to note that the term 'opposition' to the US is contentious and ambiguous. It is not necessarily a generalized opposition to the US, but rather opposition to US policies against the Cuban state (the blockade/embargo).

4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In researching Cuban journalists and journalism students, I found that both external scholarly research (e.g. Olivera & Fernandez, 2022; Somohano et al., 2021) and empirical data from the current project highlight one sentiment shared by most participants: ambiguity. This ambiguity is directed towards the limits of journalism allowed in state media, where journalists must balance professional ideals against a need to support the national project. Elaine Díaz, journalism professor and editor of the non-state outlet *Periodismo de Barrio*, has exposed the seemingly inherent tension after the state media avoided writing about rolling blackouts in Cuba. Referring to the five-year journalism education programme in Cuba, she tweeted: 'How could they read and debate In Cold Blood, the Watergate case, the reportage of Tom Wolfe, La noche de Tlatelolco, […] and still remain silent today. Remain silent every day. Or report only part of reality?' (Díaz, 2019, July 19).

4.1 Journalism culture in Cuba

This chapter is structured around two different approaches to journalism in an attempt to map out theories concerning the various loyalties negotiated by journalists working for the state media. Firstly, considering *professionalism*, I outline a theoretical foundation reflecting what many journalists in this study have expressed, namely a desire to work without interference from politics (the PCC) and the market (the fear of a capitalist takeover of the island). Albeit an ideal almost impossible to live up to, the professionalisation paradigm[14] helps shed light on normative standards shared by many Cuban journalists (as discussed in articles 2, 3 and 4). This paradigm does not, however, capture the specific Cuban context of being the ideological opposite of one of the most powerful countries in the world, the US. The 'siege' mentality this has promoted in the media, and the journalistic responsibility of protecting the nation, are also vital to understanding how journalists negotiate their role in society (discussed in article 1). Therefore, and secondly, I elaborate on the *interpretive and imagined community* to which Cuban journalists and students also belong. These frameworks of journalism are overlapping, integrated and disputed, yet in sum they comprise what I consider to be constructive entry points for the analysis of journalism culture in Cuba.

[14] While using the word professionalism to describe theories used in this chapter, I will apply the word professionalisation to the paradigm as a whole. This is to illustrate that professionalisation is a continuing process, something one must work both to achieve and maintain (Evetts, 1999).

4.2 Professionalism and professional autonomy

Relating to the main research question – How do journalists in state media and journalism students negotiate professional ideals and national imageries in a changing Cuban media landscape? – in this section, I define the first part, namely what I mean by professional ideals in journalism. It can be debated whether journalism is a profession,[15] but for the purpose of my research, I find it more critical to explore how the journalists working in Cuban state media perceive that their area of expertise is affected by the policies of the PCC.[16] To elaborate, I build on Freidson, Dzur and Waisbord by analysing professionalism and autonomy. I further include perspectives from the Journalistic Role Performance Project, which in a quantitative manner has mapped the divergence between journalistic ideals and performance in a range of countries, including Cuba.

4.2.1 What are professions?

I use Eliot Freidson's definition of professionalism, which in its most elementary sense, and as an 'ideal type'[17] is 'a set of institutions which permit the members of an occupation to make a living while controlling their own work' (2001, p. 17).

The privilege of self-control is essential, as it implies that tasks performed by members of a profession differ significantly from those of other workers. There are two general ideas behind professionalism; one is that the work accomplished in a profession is specialised to a degree that it becomes inaccessible to those lacking the proper training and knowledge. The other is that professionalism cannot be standardised,[18] such that the workday of a professional is unpredictable (unlike, for instance, work on an assembly line) (2001, p. 17). Another important aspect separating professions from other types of occupations is the 'ideology of service'. Occupations requiring specialised knowledge, such as those of merchants or politicians, for example, claim to serve either their customers or constituencies. The big difference is that while merchants may suggest and advise, they do not claim the right to decide over customers or disrupt their wishes. Professionalism, however, does permit the assertion of this kind of independence, in addition to a higher goal, a sort of moral standard reaching beyond everyday tasks (e.g., justice, salvation, truth, health). This striving to attach a profession to desirable (albeit often large, abstract and disputed) values prompted Freidson to characterise professionals as a 'secular priesthood' (2001, p. 122).

[15] For a discussion on this topic, see Olsen (2018, p. 18).
[16] There is a whole body of literature relating to how new technology, non-professional actors and user-generated content also push professional journalistic boundaries (Carlson, 2015; Lewis & Usher, 2016; Singer, 2010; Susskind & Susskind, 2015). Considering the current media situation in Cuba, such actors are not yet in a position to broadly challenge the state media institutions and these points of view will thus not be included in the analysis.
[17] For an outline of the various phases in the study of professions see Fauske (2008) and Molander and Terum (2013).
[18] Sjøvaag (2013, p. 164) however argues that routine is more important than originality in journalism, pointing towards a standardisation that Freidson argues is incompatible with professionalism.

Albert Dzur summarised the points made by Freidson into three central characteristics of professions: knowledge, self-regulation and social responsibility (2008, p. 45). These three elements are dependent on each other, as described by Olsen (2018, p. 21): 'It is hard for an occupation to gain autonomy without holding special knowledge and a social obligation. Moreover, it is hard for an occupation to develop special knowledge and fulfil its social obligations without autonomy.' The privileges granted by (a status as) a profession cannot be taken for granted. Members of a profession must continuously demonstrate that their monopoly on knowledge and autonomy promotes societal benefits, such as curing cancer or solving juridical questions; if not, a profession may lose its base of legitimacy (Dzur, 2008; Molander & Terum, 2013).

4.2.2 Professional journalism and autonomy

Journalistic autonomy can be defined as the opportunity for, or motivation of, journalists to work without external control or influence. Autonomy is considered something journalism is dependent on to serve democracy. This in turn requires that journalists are without bonds to either the state or the market (Waisbord, 2013b, p. 43). Despite being an ideal that is close to impossible to achieve completely, autonomy has in many studies been considered one of the most important premises for journalists to fulfil their social mandate (Deuze, 2005; Lauk & Harro-Loit, 2016; Merrill, 1990). Indeed, Hanitzsch et al. (2011) found that reliability, factualness and neutrality are important aspects of journalism globally and may belong to a 'universal professional identity and ideology of journalists' (2011, p. 287).

Mellado et al. (2017b) conceptualised autonomy as the degree to which journalists can practice their professional roles and ideals. Mellado et al. (2017b, p. 2) argued that it is difficult for journalists to serve their purpose in society without autonomy and in the face of increasing self-censorship. Still, despite the absence of democracy, journalists find ways to gain or maintain autonomy.

According to Waisbord, a key difference between journalism and other professions is that the latter partner with the state to maintain autonomy through legal frameworks. Professional journalism, however, is firmly placed in a liberal view of itself as independent of bonds to the state. What is shared between the journalistic profession and other professions is the notion of autonomy: 'The aspirations to autonomy and self-governance that characterise the ideal of professionalism resonate with the liberal vision of a journalism independent of the government' (Waisbord, 2013b, p. 47). Waisbord considered it 'unrealistic' to hold journalistic autonomy in such high esteem, as it will inevitably be compromised by modern society's interdependency and heteronomy (2013b, p. 47). The difficulty with the concept of autonomy is that it implies absolute terms, independence or subjugation, but such dichotomies miss the nuances of journalism, and the term itself is too abstract and complex to offer definitive answers (2013b, p. 71).

Sjøvaag has described autonomy as 'restricted at the political, economic and organisational levels of news production, negotiated at the editorial level, and exercised at the level of practice' (2013, p. 155). In other words, the institutions allowing a journalistic outlet to survive set the boundaries of autonomy, allowing more autonomy to journalists higher up in the hierarchy of the institution. It ultimately centres on the interplay between actors and structure, as the daily task of producing the news requires a certain degree of autonomy in the selection of sources, stories, and related matters, yet at the same time, the desire to be published creates conformity and reinforces the system (Sjøvaag, 2013).

This interplay begs the question: To what degree does professional autonomy truly exist, or does it imply ignoring the many ways journalism is connected to political power and business? (Waisbord, 2013b, p. 57). While claiming that 'the modernistic notion of autonomy is antiquated', Waisbord nevertheless considered it 'mistaken to conclude that journalism completely lacks autonomy for it is essentially subjected to external interests' (Waisbord, 2013b, p. 47). Put simply, autonomy is not a zero-sum game. There are margins and outskirts of autonomy where journalism can claim a foothold despite operating in unfavourable conditions; in the words of Waisbord, 'What is needed is to understand when, where, for what and why journalism maintains or pursues autonomy, or instead, abjures any pretense to exercise independent judgement and conforms to expectations and desires of external actors' (Waisbord, 2013b, p. 71).

4.3 Journalistic Role Performance

Difficulties persist in discussing the concept of professional journalism, as it is often grounded on a blending of normative and occupational definitions. Normative definitions refer to ethical and ideal standards (such as objectivity or fairness) and generate arguments about the legitimacy of journalistic professionalism. Occupational arguments describe what journalism does, such as the evolution of journalism as an occupation (Waisbord, 2013b, p. 7). Essentially, the blending of definitions reflects the gap between ideals and practices. What journalists say they do – or what ideals they purport to follow – may not be reflected in their actual practice.

From 2010 to 2020, an entire body of literature has emerged on the gap between norms and practices in journalism, including research relating to the Journalistic Role Performance Project (JRP) (Mellado et al., 2017; Mellado, 2021; Mellado & Van Dalen, 2014). This literature distinguishes itself because it compares interviews with journalists against the journalistic content they produce rather than simply relating what journalists claim to do. In relation to my project, the comparative dimension of the JRP where Cuba is included is most relevant. However, the findings of the relevant part of the JRP study were only starting to be published at the time when this thesis was initially submitted (June 2020). In addition, there are some limitations in the extent to which the JRP

framework can be applied in my project. Whereas the JRP utilises a deductive and quantitative approach to the gap between ideals and practices, my project is an inductive and qualitative attempt to explore nuances in how journalists in Cuba perceive and react to this gap. The JRP nevertheless serves as an important backdrop for my own research, both because of its specific data on Cuban journalism and its comparative analysis with other countries around the world.

Previous research in the field has focused mainly on Western nations and established democracies, with the presumption that these have similar media systems and journalistic cultures (Hallin and Mancini, 2004; 2017; Aalberg & Curran, 2012; Donsbach & Patterson, 2004). The JRP data suggests that journalistic roles are dynamic, fluid and context dependent and should be seen as 'hybrid sets of practices and narrative devices' (Mellado 2021a, p. 10). This perspective differs from the literature on a broader range of countries outside of the West, as these studies have dealt only with the roles – but not the performance – of journalists (Hanitzsch et al., 2011; Hanitzsch et al., 2019; Weaver & Willnat, 2012; Voltmer & Wasserman, 2014).

In its first wave (2013–2018), the Journalistic Role Performance project analysed professional roles through content analysis of 30,000 news stories from 64 media outlets in 18 countries. Hundreds of journalists were surveyed to study the link between practice and perceptions. The study asks the question, 'Under what circumstances is the materialization of professional roles actually possible?' (Mellado 2021a, p 3). The locus of this project is to move away from the assumption that roles are fixed entities and that 'dominant types' exist in specific geographical contexts. The JRP operates with six pre-defined roles along two dimensions – the political/power dimension and the audience dimension – as demonstrated in figure 2 (JRP, 2023). Between 2015 and 2021, the interventionist role has moved from a separate category to a sort of meta role affecting and activating other roles (Mellado, 2021b, p. 38).

Figure 2: Journalistic roles defined by the JRP.

Certain norms are often seen as pillars in journalism, and these include truth-seeking, scrutinising those in power and giving ordinary people a voice; but upon closer inspection, it is apparent that journalists may take on a multitude of roles that can contradict traditional norms. For instance, the coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that the interventionist, loyal-facilitator, watchdog, civic, service and infotainment roles were applied simultaneously and in an overlapping fashion in countries around the world (Mellado, 2021a, p. 6). Normative theories related to a Western understanding of journalistic professionalism have had a large impact on journalistic roles and locked news in rigid genres, where there is a sharp division between opinions and facts. Journalism students around the world adopt this perception in addition to the concept of objectivity, where a central role is to act as a watchdog and to never display loyalty towards elites (Mellado et al., 2013; Hovden et al., 2016). While enforcing established norms of the profession is useful as a pedagogical tool, strict normative expectations can fuel discrepancies between ideals and practice (Waisbord, 2013b; Tandoc et al., 2013).

The JRP embraces four conceptual distinctions. *Role conception* refers to the role which journalists themselves view as most important. *Role perception* is the expectation of journalists' or the media's role in society and what journalists perceive as socially required. *Role enactment* refers to the decisions journalists make in reporting, implicating the degree to which journalists have autonomy to practice the journalistic roles they believe are important. *Role performance* is the sum of newsroom decisions and styles of journalistic reporting. It can also be seen as negotiations over internal and external constraints that may impede, but also enable, journalism practice (Mellado et al., 2017, p. 7).

As there inevitably will be a gap between ideals and practice due to internal and external influences, the role enactment concept is almost impossible to fully apply. Mellado and Van Dalen (2014) found that the gap between role ideals and news outcomes was significant for the service, watchdog and civic roles. The gap was smaller in press outlets with greater perceived autonomy, while the gap increased with political or economic external influences. In fact, one of the findings of the JRP is that news coverage often supports elites despite the watchdog role being socially expected, discussed and theorised (Mellado, 2021a, p. 9). Therefore, several researchers have argued that role conflict is a common experience among journalists and that it is not necessarily a problem. Journalists may activate different roles at different times, depending on which political, economic and media systems they belong to, thus making journalistic roles contradictory and complex (Lynch, 2007; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Waisbord, 2013b; Mellado et al., 2017).

4.3.1 Role performance in Cuba

One of the main conclusions of the JRP is that roles are fragmented, socially constructed, operate simultaneously and contain both ideals and practices. The context in which journalists work affects role performance, but it is not only geographic, political or cultural elements that determine this. Historical moments and journalistic traditions are also important (Mellado et al., 2021b, p. 226). This section examines which roles are most prominent in Cuba.

The *interventionist role* alludes to the degree to which journalists use their own voice to bring about change in their reporting (Mellado, 2021b, p. 34). When applied to countries with limited press freedom, the JRP results diverge. While the interventionist role is absent in Malaysia and the Philippines, there are significant levels of intervention in news reporting in Cuba, China and Russia (Mellado et al., 2021a, p. 70). In stable democracies, opinion pieces were found to be more frequent. In contrast, in non-democratic regimes, news items with interpretation (63%), evaluative adjectives (51%) and the first-person (7%) dominated. Thus, the results suggest that journalists in stable democracies are more prone to state their own opinion, whereas journalists in non-democratic regimes tend to convey what audiences should think (Stępińska et al., 2021, p. 94). In China and Cuba, interventionism can be interpreted as a way to defend the state or as a form of self-censorship (Stępińska et al., 2021, p. 99).

The *watchdog* and *loyal-facilitator roles* refer to journalists seeing themselves as monitoring and challenging power holders or as defenders or spokespersons for official policies, respectively. The loyal-facilitator role might materialise in two different ways. One is to promote political elites and those in power, and the other is a nation-supporting role that focuses on prestige and national triumphs (Mellado, 2021b, p. 35). Although the watchdog and loyal-facilitator roles are conceptual opposites, they may exist simultaneously and work independently of each other. The watchdog role is found more frequently in countries which have experienced political turmoil (e.g., Spain, Greece), but it is almost nonexistent in China, Hong Kong, Cuba, Chile and Switzerland. Cuba leads the group in relation to the loyal-facilitator role, reflecting state control over the media and the impact of the US economic blockade (Mellado et al, 2021a, p. 73). Considering the two sub-dimensions of the loyal-facilitator role, Cuba exceeds all other countries, with almost 40% of news items supporting elites and almost 30% of items promoting nationalism. Further, left-leaning papers showed twice as much support for elites as centrist or right-wing newspapers, a finding that might explain the prevalence of this role in Cuba (Márquez-Ramírez et al., 2021, p. 116-118).

The JRP defines three roles relating to audience approach. The *civic role* aims to educate, empower and inform the public on complex topics. The *infotainment role* views the public as spectators needing to be entertained. The *service role* regards the audience as clients and provides advice and

information. These three roles are independent of each other: one, two or three can operate at the same time (Mellado 2021b, p. 36). Interestingly, the civic role is frequently observed in Cuba as well as in Russia, Mexico, Argentina and Malaysia. The infotainment and service roles are found to a lesser extent in Cuba (Mellado et al. 2021a, p. 75).

Combining these roles, the JRP has revealed a significant negative correlation between the interventionist and loyal-facilitator roles in Cuba. Specifically, the use of the interventionist role decreases the presence of the loyal-facilitator role. Thus, journalists avoid using the interventionist role when promoting their country positively (Mellado et al., 2021a, p. 77). This could also mean 'that the use of the journalistic voice is not always channelled towards propagandistic aims' (Mellado et al., 2021b, p. 230). Cuba stands out as a country in the JRP where theoretical expectations are met, implicating a high level of the loyal-facilitator role, interventionism and loyalism and a low level of the infotainment role (Mellado et al., 2021a, p. 79). In addition, the interrelation between watchdog and civic roles is found in emerging democracies rather than established ones. Thus, the lack of autonomy does not necessarily prevent interventionism, and professional autonomy does not necessarily promote interventionism (Mellado et al., 2021b, p. 231).

4.4 The interpretive and imagined community

This section addresses the second part of my main research question, namely how journalists and students negotiate *national imageries* in a changing Cuban media landscape. The collective processes related to the protection of Cuba (the 'siege' mentality) are important factors behind the self-censorship practices discussed in article 1. As outlined in chapter 3, specific historical formations have contributed to building collective imageries of the external threat from the US, and consequently, a nationalism built on resistance against imperialism and the need for collective sacrifice. The media plays an important role in this story – a role that is not easily defined within a professionalisation paradigm. Theories of the interpretive and imagined community provide a broader framework which considers the nation, community and social networks of which journalists are part, besides paying attention to the individual agency of journalists.

4.4.1 National imageries

The portrayal of nations as communities is a useful point of departure for discussing how journalistic loyalty to national narratives manifests in the Cuban state media. Anderson, who coined the concept of 'imagined communities', argued that 'print-capitalism' is the most important factor spurring the imagination of nations as horizontal and territorial bounded units. Two factors were important in this construction. First, print-languages provided a way for communication and connectedness between a limited number of people. Second, print-capitalism fixed language in a way that built an 'image

of antiquity' which is central to the idea of the nation (2016 [1983], p. 44). However, as Anderson noted, the riddle is why Spanish America ultimately split into 18 separate states after three centuries under Spanish rule. As Anderson argued (2016 [1983], pp. 58-65), it was not 'national print-languages' that promoted this division but rather the vast number of Creoles that came to imagine themselves as fellow nationals. The embryo of Latin American nationalism was created as a result of colonial hierarchical structures. The fate of being born in the Americas meant a life of subordination and exploitation by Spaniards even though Creoles and *Peninsulares* (a reference to peninsular Spain) shared religion, language and ancestry. The spread of print and newspapers in the late 17th century permitted imagined communities to emerge within what previously had been colonial economic administrative units. Arguably, from the outset, Latin American nationalism thus differed from the language-based nationalism created in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries (2016 [1983], p. 71).

Hasty (2005, p. 11), however, held that Anderson's (2016 [1983]) analysis omitted 'an examination of the actual practices through which the national imagery is achieved and maintained by the state.' This is important because there is more to news media than the production of strategic texts. Hasty argued that structures guiding everyday practices and relationships between journalists, state officials and media audiences are equally important in promoting national imageries. These relational practices promote the production, circulation and recirculation of information (Hasty, 2005, p. 11). Accordingly, the *interpretive community* concept offers valuable tools for understanding aspects of journalism culture. Zelizer (1993) described how, over time, journalists maintain a community through common understandings related to important journalistic events. She has contended that discourse, informal contacts and narratives are imperative components uniting journalists. According to Zelizer, seeing journalists as part of an interpretive community is a 'means of understanding the shared past through which journalists make their professional lives meaningful and unite themselves' (1993, p. 219). This alternative frame is needed to capture how a community emerges through journalistic meeting arenas, where reporters tacitly learn the codes of group belonging. Further, the importance of narrative and storytelling is central to understanding how and why some discourses gain momentum and how these can be used to downplay competing narratives of the same event.

Zelizer referred to two defining journalistic occurrences: McCarthyism and Watergate. The discourse surrounding these journalistic events, as demonstrated by Zelizer, has changed over time. The lapdog journalism during the McCarthy era changed from being a shameful epoch to something inciting change and learning. Watergate, however, has discursively moved from a celebration of investigative reporting to a recognition of a lack of lasting change. Discourses about important

incidents like these contribute to standards of journalistic behaviour as the 'borders of appropriate practice need renegotiation' (Zelizer, 1993, p. 224).

Complementing the interpretive/imagined community, Michael Billig's (1995, p. 6) perceptions are useful in understanding how Cuban nationalism associated with the 'siege' mentality fluctuates along with US nationalism. Billig used the term 'banal nationalism' to describe everyday ideological habits that reproduce established nations of the West. One of Billig's main points was that nationalism is often conceived of as either exotic and passionate (e.g., anti-colonial liberation groups) or dangerous (e.g., right-wing fascist movements). This focus on the extremes causes us to overlook the daily, routine and familiar forms of nationalism. Established nations with confidence in their continuity are not characteristically termed 'nationalist'. 'Banal nationalism' is meant to be a reminder that despite globalisation, nationhood is still being produced in everyday activities. Banal nationalism is not found in the fervently waved flag but in the one hanging unnoticed in a public space (Billig, 1995, p. 8).

4.4.2 Conflicting 'truths'

Lillian Guerra held that the grand narrative of the Revolution created by political leaders during the 1960s (epitomised through the epic struggle of Fidel Castro and his men in the Sierra Maestra) was a discursive strategy to substitute a public sphere and legislative bodies with mass organisations. The maintenance of the Revolution and collective empowerment demanded unconditional support. This justified the repression of dissent in addition to increasingly greater degrees of sacrifice and obedience to the state. To manage this, the Cuban people were discursively promoted as the protagonists in a battle between good and evil, freedom and imperialism. As Guerra argued, this dynamic was not only imposed from above, but also involved the public as much as the state in supporting widely held goals. However, it also legitimated an authoritarian political culture and the transformation into a 'grassroots dictatorship' and a popular nationalism defined as 'Fidelismo' (Guerra, 2012, pp. 3-13).

Defending the Cuban Revolution has been, and still is, a discursive act. One way it is accomplished is by defining the political process as an *unending* event that is 'a triumph over U.S. power that beat the odds and continued to beat them no matter how high they became' (Guerra, 2012, p. 28). Therefore, revolutionary image-making created (and still creates) an appeal to the enormity of what people were experiencing. Imageries were meant to persuade Cubans to look beyond everyday struggles and the mundane circumstances of daily life, exuding a 'process of becoming', meaning a distant, collectively imagined, idealistic future. This 'hyper-reality' of the Revolution produces an illusion while simultaneously encouraging the desire for it (Guerra, 2012, pp. 29-30).

4.4.3 Journalistic loyalty towards the nation

If the nation is perceived to be threatened, nationalistic media narratives increase in all types of media cultures (Ottosen, 1991; Ravi, 2005; Zelizer & Allan, 2011; Ørsten & Nørgaard Kristensen, 2006). In a postscript a decade after the 9/11 attacks, Waisbord (2011, p. 288) argued: 'whether official sources frame specific issues as national, collective threats or matters of individual concern largely determines whether risk narratives are used to report news in a political communication scene suffused with "security" discourses'. There is, however, scant literature on how journalists negotiate loyalties to both their profession and the nation when security threats are a continuous part of national discourse.

Analysing the Israeli media during the Al-Aksa Intifada in 2000, Zandberg and Neiger (2005) argued that journalists as part of an *interpretive community* initially conceived national belonging as more important than membership in a professional community. Israeli journalists 'repaired their professional paradigm' by returning to a more professional perspective after the initial grief and confusion expressed through a nationalist discourse. But how do journalists deal with such a major contradiction? Zandberg and Neiger (2005) suggested that 'Journalists avoid identity crisis because they are never in a situation of being loyal to the two communities at the same time.' They thus proposed a model of journalists as members of 'contradicting communities'. This point of view has been challenged by Skjerdal (2012, p. iii), who found that within an Ethiopian context, loyalties towards the profession and towards the nation are present at the same time, 'persistently and forcefully'. Skjerdal proposed instead a model of 'competing loyalties' to describe how journalists, through self-censorship and discourses of fear, produce a submissive style of reporting while contemporaneously trusting a critical public and thus rescuing a sense of professionalism. Normatively, however, a potential loyalty towards the government was perceived as broken, while the national and professional loyalty held equal importance.

4.4.4 Self-censorship

Journalists may experience loyalty towards both the profession and the state or nation. Governments, however (particularly in authoritarian contexts), might perceive the media and journalist professionals as potential threats. The legitimacy of the state may be jeopardised if journalists expose to society alternative narratives, perceptions and social realities. This causes complex relationships between the state and the media and can create a situation where professionalism may be replaced by self-censorship practices (Elbaz, Magal, Nets-Zehngut, & Abutbul Selinger, 2017, p. 123). Self-censorship can be defined as 'the withholding of journalistic material due to felt external pressure' (Skjerdal, 2010, p. 99). In their meta-analysis of publications on media coverage in conflict, Elbaz et al. (2017, p. 129) defined important contextual factors that

promote self-censorship as authoritarian political traditions (Lee, 1998; Merrett, 2001; Simons & Strovsky, 2006) and a context of conflict, where journalists unite against a common enemy (Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2001).

Journalists may silence sensitive topics, forming black holes, as if those topics do not exist. Silencing topics may be a decision by the individual journalist in not exposing critical information or it may be decided by actors higher up in the hierarchy to avoid publicity on specific issues (Elbaz et al., 2017, p. 127). Voluntarily adopting restrictive measures to protect 'national interests' or to promote ideals of 'development journalism' is a strategy used by journalists both in Ethiopia and in Ghana (Hasty, 2005; Skjerdal, 2008). For organisations, self-censorship is likely if there is a fear of being closed down, a threat to economic or business interests or ownership with external affiliations (Elbaz et al., 2017, p. 130). In liberal Chinese media organisations, politically sensitive issues are calibrated to lessen the risks of crackdowns by constructing a positive political stance (Tong, 2009). Following a wave of terrorist attacks at the turn of the millennium in Russia, editors agreed on 'responsible' editorial guidelines (Simons & Strovsky, 2006).

In addition to the individual motivations for self-censorship, such as fear of personal safety, losing one's job or a dependence on government sources, self-censorship may also be encouraged by positive incentives, such as financial compensation or professional advantages (Elbaz et al., 2017). Skjerdal (2010, p. 101) has identified this as a 'symbiotic relationship' between Ethiopian journalists and the state, in which easier access to information and services is given in return for favourable coverage. On a societal level, motivations for self-censorship may be due to individual or group support for social values such as specific ideological or political beliefs, leading to avoidance of information that compromises support for these beliefs (Elbaz et al., 2017, p. 131). For instance, in South Africa (Merrett, 2001), Argentina (Pinto, 2008) and Indonesia (Tapsell, 2012), social values have muzzled journalistic self-determination, illustrating that self-censorship has implications for democracies, transitional countries and authoritarian ones. The consequences of self-censorship, as identified by Elbaz et al.'s (2017, p. 133) meta-analysis, are a narrower debate in the public sphere due to the public lack of knowledge and a reproduction of dominant narratives. Further, self-censorship may lead to enhancement of the ruling system due to a lack of counter-narratives and may harm the function of the media by lessening its autonomy and independence and hindering the proper functioning of democracy (Elbaz et al., 2017).

4.5 Journalism as a discursive institution

The *discursive* institutionalism framework proposed by the Worlds of Journalism Study introduced a complementary analytical tool for studying journalism. While the opposing loyalties between profession and nation are emphasised in the discussion, discursive institutionalism can offer additional insight to strengthen the interpretive community framework.

As demonstrated by the Worlds of Journalism Study, there are many ways to define journalism. Although studies have confirmed that support for the watchdog role can be found around the world (Hanitzsch et al., 2019c, p. 195), there is little empirical evidence supporting a universality of journalism attached to normative ideals of democracy and holding the government to account (Hanitzsch et al., 2019, p. 26). Developing and transitional societies have specific challenges relating to political, social and economic conditions, and a framework capturing these differences is important in understanding journalism culture around the world. To address the various ways journalism is viewed, practiced and considered, researchers behind the Worlds of Journalism Study have argued that 'journalism is a *social institution* and that it is *discursively (re)created*' (Hanitzsch et al., 2019, p. 28, italics in original). In other words, journalism as an institution is a way for journalists to navigate the complex world of newsmaking by organising and structuring their work through legal frames and informal rules.

Journalists are socialised into 'the way we do things' through journalism education and, later, through the myths and tales of other journalists inside the institution. This promotes idealised expectations that are created and re-created among journalists. These discursive practices serve to demarcate boundaries against outside forces (Hanitzsch et al., 2019, p. 29). Drawing on Bourdieu (2011), Hanitzsch et al. (2019) contended that discourse puts ideas into practice; it is, therefore, never neutral, but rather a place of struggle between various fields, where some elements (journalists, institutions, or ideologies) have a stronger influence than others.

However, it is important to consider to what extent the questionnaire applied in the Worlds of Journalism Study can offer insight into journalism culture, as such, when the data comprises only the personal accounts of journalists. As shown by JRP, deals and practices may vary greatly (Mellado, 2015; Mellado, 2021). The broad focus of the Worlds of Journalism Study may direct the analysis away from a fine-grained account of how local politics and institutions affect media policies (Waisbord, 2013a, p. 137). The same critique applies to the design of my own project. In interviews, journalists have provided me with information that later proved to be false. Therefore, lacking participant observation in newsrooms and analyses of articles, it is important to recognise that only one aspect of journalism culture can be accessed through interviews. Knowledge about how journalists negotiate central aspects of journalism (such as autonomy and external influences)

in Cuba may contribute to broadening the concept of journalism culture. At the same time, this study confirms that an analysis of journalistic roles or global media trends is not necessarily the most fruitful point of departure to understand local negotiations of journalism in Cuban state media.

4.6 Summary

In this chapter, I outlined three ways of understanding the belonging and loyalty of Cuban state media journalists and journalism students. In the discussion, I will in particular emphasise the frameworks of professionalism/journalistic roles and the interpretive/imagined community. Theories of professional autonomy as outlined by Freidson (2001), Dzur (2008) and Waisbord (2013b) offer insights into the battles for autonomy within and between professions. Journalists need autonomy from the state and the market to perform their jobs and serve democracy, but this is a difficult ideal to achieve. To bridge this contradiction, the Journalistic Role Performance Project (Mellado, 2021) provides valuable insights into the flexibility and multifunctionality of journalistic roles. In the case of Cuba, the JRP has found that the loyal-facilitator role is prominent both in supporting elites and as a nationalistic expression. At the same time, the use of the interventionist role decreases the use of the loyal-facilitator role.

The second part of the theoretical framework relates to national imageries, and the 'siege' mentality affecting Cuban journalists. Accordingly, loyalty towards the nation must be outlined within a different paradigm – the interpretive/imagined community. Drawing on Zelizer (1993) and Anderson (2016 [1983]), I argue that narratives and shared discourse contribute to re-creating Cuban nationalism based on opposition to the US, and to maintaining a vision of the imagined Cuba. This imagined idealistic future (Guerra, 2012) requires the unconditional support of both the people and journalists and binds journalists to practices that sometimes run contrary to the professionalisation paradigm.

5 METHODOLOGY

Attending a conference named *Revolutionary Havana* in Bergen, Norway, in August 2019, I found myself next to a speaker who sighed and moaned every time someone presented a positive, or in my opinion, balanced view of how life is experienced in Cuba. When speaking to this American Cuban during lunch, she explained in detail how she had been rhetorically framed as an enemy by the political elite in Cuba. She, like many Cuban exiles, conceptualised the Revolution in terms of 'betrayals and counterfactuals', as Guerra (2012, p. 8) has put it. When I attempted to explain some of the positive traits of working in Cuban state media (as described to me by participants), she responded, 'They are not telling you the truth; can't you see they are forced to say these things?'

5.1 What is true or valid knowledge?

This encounter with an exile-Cuban discourse illustrates the need to discuss what can be considered 'true' or 'valid' knowledge. These considerations are central questions of philosophy and epistemology: What is truth? Which criteria are needed to define true or valid knowledge? (Glanzberg, Fall 2018 Edition). Certainly, these questions are too broad for the limits of this chapter, but they serve as a backdrop for what I wish to discuss, namely how I can interpret my interview data and theorise meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A simpler way of phrasing it can be by asking the following: 'What kind of knowledge is it possible to possess about a given subject?' (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2014, p. 45).

Since I believe that certain aspects of research can be claimed independent of my own interpretation – but at the same time believe that the data from my interview-based research is largely context dependent – I consider myself a *critical realist*. Critical realism (CR) is situated between objectivism and constructivism. While objectivism measures truth by its correspondence to facts (Glanzberg, Fall 2018 Edition), constructivism denies the existence of any social reality apart from human perception. Truth can, therefore, only be measured by the coherence between assumptions and conclusions (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2014, pp. 47-49).

The most important tenet of CR is that it combines a realist ontology (i.e., a real world exists independently of humans' perceptions and theories) with a constructivist epistemology (humans' knowledge about the world is constructed from specific perspectives and, thus, can never be objective). Although all knowledge is created and 'theory laden', this does not impede knowledge from referring to a real world. However, knowledge about a real world can never be complete, and it is always subject to revision (Maxwell, 2012, p. 5). From a CR perspective, mental phenomena are parts of reality, not separated from it. This means that intentions, beliefs, opinions and values held by participants in a study are no less real than physical phenomena (Maxwell, 2012, p. 40).

According to CR theory, all knowledge is fallible, but some knowledge may be seen as closer to a real world than other knowledge. An important objective is to identify and explain what generates human ideas or actions and to acknowledge that such 'causal mechanisms' driving social events or phenomena are relevant for scientific investigation (Danermark et al., 2002; Fletcher, 2017). Further, the concept of 'thick description' as developed by Geertz (1973) is instructive. It values the interpretation of meanings that participants give to their actions and what this shows about their society. In the words of Geertz, 'Understanding a people's culture exposes their normalness without reducing their particularity' (1973, p. 14).

CR influences my research in several ways. Because knowledge will always be filtered through my perceptions, it is important to acknowledge my role as both an observer and constructor of meaning at a certain time and place (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2014, p. 41). Thus, this study is an interpretation of the reality I observed during fieldwork. Over the years of writing this thesis, the perceptions of participants may have changed. CR helps me overcome ontological contradictions connected to my data: How can I evaluate what is 'true' in an interview? Is it important at all to decide whether the respondents' perceptions of reality correspond with the objective reality? Regarding the latter question, the empirical part of the research is primarily based on interviews with journalists and journalism students and their perception of professional culture. However, the fieldwork also consists of observations of newsrooms and the media environment as well as readings of relevant documents, including journalism curricula. This is done to achieve a thick description of the environment in which current and future journalists operate. In a critical realism approach, interpretation of the field data becomes meaningful because it acknowledges the existence of different perceptions of reality while not dismissing the notion that objective truth exists beyond human contentions. For example, a research participant may give an account of a free media situation without censorship, while critical assessment of the situation could determine that censorship is prevalent in that environment. Furthermore, when participants step out of discursive limits (defined by the PCC) or when their accounts appear contradictory, CR provides a framework to discuss both inconsistencies in participants' perceptions as well as the reasons why participants might choose alternative narratives (causal mechanisms).

Sandberg (2010, p.455) has argued that 'truth' does not define the relevance of data: 'No matter what kind of stories are told, or whether they are true or false, they tell us something important about values, identities, cultures, and communities.' In other words, all types of stories, true or not, can provide valuable knowledge and insight into dominant narratives in journalism cultures. Because there is a sharp division between the public and the private self in Cuba, there can be discrepancies in what participants say depending on which discourse they choose to draw on. This

is in itself interesting, because in the span between narratives lies a valuable source of information (Sandberg, 2010).

5.2 Qualitative research and project design

Operating within a qualitative framework has been my intention from the start. One reason for this is the experience of working on my master's thesis about a border conflict between Costa Rica and Nicaragua (Natvig, 2013). Readers said that it was easy to see that I had enjoyed writing the qualitative part, but not so much the quantitative. I am also a journalist, and I became one because I like to find and tell stories. My background has certainly influenced the present study. I have a broad knowledge of Latin America from studies, research and travels. I have studied in Mexico, written my master's thesis in Central America, and travelled through large parts of Latin America. I also speak Spanish more or less fluently. Maintaining this fluency has been an important consideration when selecting Spanish-speaking countries for travel, studies and research. In addition to my background as a journalist, my interest in social anthropology has shaped this study. While acknowledging the value of quantitative studies providing a broad overview, my interest, nevertheless, lies in the specific, concrete cases and events which can shed light on how things operate in a society. I value openness regarding research methodology, and I often find this in anthropological works. For instance, I both agree with and appreciate Geertz's (1973, p. v) description of ethnographic fieldwork:

> This backward order of things – first you write and then you figure out what you are writing about – may seem odd, or even perverse, but it is, at least most of the time, standard procedure in cultural anthropology. […] we do not start out with well-informed ideas we carry off to distant places to check out by means of carefully codified procedures systematically applied.

Relating this to my own project, both the lack of information about Cuban state media journalists and the many restrictions on doing research in the country made the research process anything but linear. The data selection thus became a pragmatic approach of using all of the methods available, which I also believe is a strength of this project. The relationships between data, research questions, articles and analysis are outlined in figure 2.

Figure 3: Methodological overview.

Research Question	Data	Article	Analysis
RQ1: In which ways does the defence paradigm in Cuba affect self-censorship strategies among state media journalists?	12 journalist interviews	1	Self-censorship strategies. Cuba–US relations.
RQ2: What strategies do journalists working for state media use to expand their autonomy?	12 journalist interviews 5 focus groups	2	Strategies of autonomy. The rules of the game in state media. Non-state media.
RQ3: In which ways does the non-state media challenge the state media, and how do journalists and students relate to this?	12 journalist interviews 5 focus groups	3	Autonomy ideals. Emerging non-state media outlets. A generational divide.
RQ4: How do journalism students navigate between the perceived limits of press freedom in the state media and professional ideals learnt at the university?	5 focus groups Journalism curricula	4	Differences between ideals and practice. Opportunities in non-state media sector.

I visited Cuba twice during the project, first in 2015 to conduct initial research and meet with academics and researchers at the Faculty of Communication at the University of Havana (FCOM). The fieldwork was conducted in the fall of 2016. In this section, I explain the reasons for the number of research participants. I also discuss the quality of the data and any ethical considerations, particularly emphasising the interviews with journalists, as these were the most difficult to obtain. As seen figure 2, journalist interviews were used as data in three of the four articles. Next follows a section for focus groups with students, which were used in three of four articles. In the section supplementary data, one finds data considered important in anthropological research, which is the area where I define this work: Cuban research, student curricula, observations and field notes. Lastly, I outline the various steps of analysis (translation, transcription, coding and terminology).

5.2.1 An impossible research visa

In addition to wanting to investigate issues in Latin America and practice Spanish, there were two reasons for selecting Cuba as the place to conduct research on journalists. First, I had contacts at the FCOM in Havana. This was because my university college in Norway had initiated an exchange programme with the University of Havana. Second, the Obama administration was softening its

relations with Cuba, and the possibility of an acceleration of change on the island was widely predicted.

During my first visit in 2015, I probed the possibilities of interviewing journalists in all types of publications – state as well as non-state, and preferably also oppositional (for an outline, see article 3). I was told by Cuban academics that a research visa was necessary in order to do research in Cuba in general, and particularly if I wanted to interview state media journalists. To obtain the research visa at the Cuban embassy in Oslo, I needed to be affiliated with a local institution. The FCOM agreed to support my work under the condition of limiting the study to journalists in state media. Although academics at the FCOM would have liked to include non-state outlets, it could cause trouble if 'alegal' media outlets were studied by the faculty. The other option I had was to enter fieldwork without a research visa and try to work it out on my own. In retrospect, I do not think it would have caused trouble being outside the framework of the FCOM, and I know of others who have conducted research on their own, such as by holding interviews in a less formalised manner. However, at the time, I did not consider it wise to base my PhD project on such a loose foundation, and I opted for the affiliation with the FCOM.

To become a visiting scholar, I was required to send my project draft to the University of Havana. Influential scholars at the FCOM recommended that I leave out all critically minded references to Cuban journalism. For example, the reference to the World Press Freedom Index (RWB, 2016), ranking Cuba 171 out of 180 countries, had to be deleted along with similar research. While this is problematic when viewed from a democratic or Western point of view, conducting research in authoritarian countries may demand a different strategy – if one wishes to complete any research at all (for similar experiences see Clark, 2006; Zayani & Sahraoui, 2017). Importantly, however, I did not at any point hide my research identity from institutions, participants or people I encountered in Cuba.

Despite obtaining proof of affiliation with the FCOM, the Cuban embassy in Oslo was unable to help me secure a research visa. Their requests kept changing, and as time was running out, I had no choice but to apply for tourist visas for myself, my husband and our newborn child. After arriving in Cuba, I was told by diplomats that even they had to travel on tourist visas. In Havana, I immediately started the research visa application process. It was, as everything else, time consuming, bureaucratic and slow (it took over a month). Through friends, I had the opportunity to conduct interviews with state media journalists during the first few weeks, but my contacts at the FCOM said that to avoid trouble I should wait for the proper visa. However, my family had a limit of two months on their tourist visas because my research visa could not be extended to them. Since

my infant was quite young, I had to leave with my family when their visas expired. That left only three weeks to conduct the interviews, which is not much time in an authoritarian country.

5.2.2 Gatekeepers in Havana

I pressed some of my contacts at the FCOM for the chance to complete interviews while waiting for the visa. To accelerate the project, one of the faculty leaders issued a statement saying, 'I CERTIFY that the postgraduate student Anne Natvig is realising her investigation about the current situation for the Cuban press, supported by the Faculty of Communication at the University of Havana' (see appendix D). I was instructed to show this if questioned by anyone. The requirement was that participants had to be contacted by the FCOM rather than by me. Together with a leading academic, I made a list of journalists I found interesting, and he offered additional suggestions. One selection criterion was that journalists preferably had multiple jobs, also outside state media. This could provide perceptions of both state and non-state media and shed light on the changing media context in Cuba.

The gatekeeping function of my contact is apparent, and the dependency on pre-approval and contact with participants before interviews can be viewed as problematic. A gatekeeper controlling access in authoritarian countries is, however, not uncommon (see for instance Figenschou, 2010). When conducting research in foreign cultures, the Norwegian Research Ethics Committee states that one should respect local traditions and authorities. This requires careful planning so that local control does not compromise research integrity (NESH, 2016). It is, however, not always possible to predict what may happen during fieldwork. I agree with Ryen (2011) that the academic field and ethics are not defined only by the place the researcher comes from. It is not always possible to fully maintain the ethical standards one may follow at home, and in foreign cultures, one sometimes must do what is possible or simply good enough (2011, p. 419). In my project, this meant obtaining a degree of knowledge about state media journalists – or getting nothing at all.

At the same time, academics at the FCOM did what they could, within the framework of a state institution, to help me start the project while I waited for the research visa. I share the experience of García Santamaría (2017, p. 127), who has also been affiliated with the FCOM and researched state media journalists, that the only thing Cuban academics asked of me was to put effort into understanding the contextual factors shaping the Cuban media system, and the nuanced debates going on within it. The affiliation with the faculty and the fact that contact with journalists was initiated by central academics had several advantages. It helped assure participants that the project was serious (see also Rivera et al., 2002, p. 685) and that their statements would not be used as tools in a polarised political discourse. I believe this helped convince participants that taking time off their busy schedules was worthwhile.

The period during which these interviews were conducted in 2016 was quite unique considering the political climate, the openness towards the US and the rest of the world as well as economic reforms (see chapter 3 for more). It was a time of softer bilateral relations and easier access to the front-line soldiers in the state media. After four years of the Trump administration in the US, the election of less reform-friendly Díaz-Canel in Cuba and the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, this study could have been much harder to accomplish.

Within the FCOM, I had relatively free rein in interviewing students, partaking in lectures and searching the intranet for academic reports, and logging on to the Internet and using the library. I took advantage of these opportunities and spent a great deal of time in the library reading Cuban research unpublished outside of the country. When I secured the research visa, I had already conducted 11 interviews. I had planned interviews with another 5–6 journalists whom I reached through friends, and I hoped these could help me find others in a classic 'snowball sample' (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I had also scheduled newsroom observations in two state media outlets. However, just one day after receiving my research visa, Fidel Castro died. While being an important moment in history, giving me valuable insight into the state–people relations in Cuba, his death meant the virtual ending of my opportunity to continue interviewing journalists.

The country went into a nine-day period of mourning during which neither music nor alcohol was allowed. It was as if the very heart of Cuba had been shut off. Fidel Castro's ashes travelled across the country, retracing the route of the 1959 freedom caravan all the way to Santiago de Cuba. Cuban state media journalists worked night and day. When the mourning period was over, I called and sent messages to the journalists whom I had planned to interview, but all except one chose to remain unavailable (which is not particularly difficult in a largely offline country like Cuba). Due to the extraordinary situation, the newsroom observations also had to be cancelled, to my increasing frustration. In retrospect, it makes sense that both journalists and newsrooms considered the timing to be extremely poor for a foreign researcher asking difficult questions about the state media. What was lost was the opportunity to see how state media institutions work from the inside, how the editorial meeting works, how journalists navigate scarce resources and slow Internet connections, and to learn about the perspectives of additional journalist participants.

5.3 Data quality and generalisability

Due to the unique Cuban context and the possibility of journalists not being able to – or choosing not to – share their personal opinions, it is important to discuss the quality of the data and consider to what degree it can be transferable or generalisable to a broader context. While this situation demands additional ethical considerations (see section 5.4), it also demands careful examination of journalists as sources (students to a lesser degree, as they are within the framework of a much freer academic community). I have been inspired by other studies on groups that are incentivised to tell polished narratives and not necessarily their own truth, such as Roma beggars on the streets of Scandinavian cities (Djuve et al., 2015). In addition, drawing on my own experiences of interviewing Norwegian politicians when working as a journalist, I had specific objectives for the interviews.

5.3.1 Establishing trust and the allied foreigner

I wanted to establish trust between the participants and myself. By trust I mean obtaining detailed stories and personal experiences on how journalism is negotiated within the state media system – not only the polished, official version. Female journalists in foreign cultures often find that they gain access more easily because they are perceived as unthreatening (see for instance Solberg, 2013). In Cuba, however, the opposite was the case. Academics at the FCOM warned me that I could be viewed as a 'CIA agent' by state media journalists (Why would a Norwegian researcher be interested in the Cuban state media?). Aase and Fossåskaret observed that conducting fieldwork in other cultures makes finding a status more difficult. A *status* is a social position with a set of rights and duties. *Roles* are different behaviours one can have in relation to a status (2014, p. 67). If the participants in a study do not know in which status or role to place the researcher, the easiest approach is to keep the conversation at a superficial level (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2014, p. 99). The lack of trust, or an understandable status or role, became apparent during the pilot interview, where the dialogue with a middle-aged reporter went poorly. In my field notes, I wrote: 'It was all in all very uncomfortable interviewing him; it seemed he was ready to attack me with words anytime I, as a foreigner, even insinuated that there is a lack of freedom of the press in Cuba. I also ended up not asking many of the questions about journalistic practice.'

In the subsequent interviews, without being consciously aware of doing so, I tried to construct a role as the allied foreigner regarding my status as a foreign researcher. This implied emphasising a distance from the US in norms and values and establishing myself as an 'open-minded foreigner with no agenda in Cuban affairs.' I also emphasised that Norway shares certain traits with Cuba, such as free health care and education. In this excerpt with a young reporter, I even compared parts of the two countries' political systems:

> A: […] I came without knowing much about Cuba.

J7: You should be happy, it's better.

A: Yes, because in Norway, Cuba is not a subject, really not. And we are also very different from the US because our [political system] is Social Democratic, which is similar [to Cuba], but there are more parties.

Although this seems strange to me now, that approach did have an impact. Guiding role expectations contributed to establishing trust in quite a few of the interviews. I also believe that sharing my own experiences and being honest about what I did not understand about Cuba and Cuban journalism contributed to building a good relationship with participants. When trust was not established, stories were more generalised or superficial. I found it easier to connect with journalists of about my own age, as I did not have to work as hard to rid myself of a possible 'CIA-agent' role. I also connected well with both senior journalists in the study. This may have been because they saw it as their task to inform me about different aspects where I lacked knowledge, or simply because we got along. For instance, before interviewing a very busy senior journalist, my contact at the faculty said I should be happy if I was even granted an hour. I stayed for four hours, talking and drinking pitch-black coffee with sugar.

Another way of establishing trust (after learning from the first interview) was to avoid words with negative connotations, such as censorship, self-censorship or freedom. By encouraging journalists and students to tell stories, asking about specific incidents at work or when covering events, I received more open and unreserved answers than I had thought possible. The fact that participants were journalists themselves (or becoming ones) of course contributed to this. They were familiar with the interview situation, and they sometimes backed their claims with specific cases even before I asked them to. I believe that stories and concrete examples (which illustrate central issues such as autonomy and self-censorship) are the principal strength of my research and are lacking in previous literature on Cuban state media journalists.

By entering a role as an 'allied foreigner', consciously or not, I might have contributed to shaping the information given to me by participants. A foreigner critical to the US may receive a certain type of response. Had I adopted a different role, the interviews would have been shaped in other ways. As I stated in the previous section, I remained vigilant for detailed stories on how Cuban journalists perceived their work. The participants in this study live in an extremely polarised environment, and it is understandable that they may be hesitant to speak with a foreigner. Some of them had experienced doing interviews with foreign journalists and afterwards being framed as in opposition to the revolutionary project due to their criticism. For me, this was a central concern – that I must not display journalists one-dimensionally as either being for or against the PCC and the Revolution.

One could also argue that a role as 'allied foreigner' is a somewhat naïve way of meeting people or that it potentially could lure journalists into sharing more than they were comfortable with in retrospect. I do, however, believe that is overestimating my influence as a researcher. The participants in the study are well-educated and intelligent, and I believe they are conscious about how they conduct themselves when stepping outside discursive limits. My responsibility is to uphold their anonymity and display the many-faceted ways of critique and belonging in Cuba.

In relation to CR theory, the possibilities and limitations of roles enacted during an interview are merely a reflection of the social world. Interviews are not, and can never be, an objective source of information. Still, the discourses one enters into during a personal meeting can be used as a source of scientific investigation regarding both subjective and objective realities.

5.3.2 The number of participants

The strength of qualitative research lies not in trying to make generalised claims but in understanding the meaning behind the stories told by participants. The processes, evaluations and decisions related to the number of participants are all important factors in making qualitative research transparent (Malterud et al., 2016). Academics have debated whether it is fruitful for qualitative researchers to determine sample size a priori. In an overview of this debate, Sim et al. (2018) argued that deciding on a number is 'inherently problematic' also from an epistemological point of view because one cannot know which themes or content will be relevant. The interpretation of relevance will also differ between researchers. Sim et al. (2018) argue that the number of participants is irrelevant; what matters is how the researcher uses the data.

Nevertheless, I wish I could have conducted more interviews with Cuban journalists. There were many external limiting factors, such as the expiry of my family's visa, restrictive Cuban rules on research and the unforeseen event of Fidel Castro's death. Such limits are something one must expect and accept when opting for research in a fragile and authoritarian context. Malterud et al. (2016) emphasised the 'quality of dialogue'. They asserted that the analytical value of empirical data is partly determined by the 'chemistry' between researcher and participant and that it also depends on the skills of the interviewer in challenging participants when interactions are tense.

Through working as a journalist, I have been trained in interviewing, in listening to what people say, and in following up on interesting and unanswered information. In Cuba, there were several factors that challenged my interviewing skills. First, I was worried about pressuring journalists to reveal information that could provoke negative consequences for them later (see section 5.4). Second, it was difficult to know if sufficient trust had been established to ask difficult questions. Saying something that could be considered offensive might ruin the conversation. At times, this

caused me to avoid pressuring journalists to respond if they were hesitant. On other occasions, I tried to make controversial issues less threatening, with varying degrees of success. For instance, in this excerpt, I tried to ask how journalists deal with censorship, but the question was lost in a heap of verbal precautions:

> It's just that I do not understand how, because you have this formation, at times you have to leave something out. Is it something you feel is difficult as a journalist with this formation that exists, or is it something you accept as "this is how it is right now"?

From a highly critical standpoint, such safeguards may have caused me to lose valuable information (blocking the entrance to the back-stage, in the words of Goffman (1974)) or to interpret life in Cuba with a 'romantic cast' of the Revolution (Guerra, 2012, p. 21). As I commented in article 3, state media journalists appear to be quite in line with party politics on how to relate to non-state media. However, as I demonstrate in the next sections, there are various ways of working with information that may be guided by considerations other than the participants' own opinions.

5.3.3 The cracks in a story

Failure to ask the difficult questions can be problematic. It may result in journalists producing only a state media narrative, or they may even be lying, without being challenged to explain discrepancies. Through the example of one of the participants, I want to advance Sandberg's (2010, p. 455) argument that 'truth' is not necessarily the best measure of interesting and relevant data.

One of my interviews was conducted in the middle of a newsroom (a location chosen by the participant). As I believed that this situation would make it impossible for the journalist to be critical, I was caught by surprise by the details the participant shared on the effects of (self-)censorship and how journalists are supposed to behave within a state media organisation. After conducting more interviews, I realised that the stories he had told me were largely within discursive limits. Later in the fieldwork, I met the journalist at a professional event. He took me aside and related concrete examples of how his work had been censored, using such strong words to describe his annoyance that I have not included it in my articles. After returning from the fieldwork, I have tried to keep track of the lives of the participants, looking for their by-line in publications and Googling their names. I then discovered that the participant was working for a non-state outlet that he previously had said was a threat to Cuba.

This story shows that it is quite easy to get the 'correct revolutionary journalist' narrative among Cuban state media journalists. In a study by Djuve et al. (2015), one central element was to avoid 'the beggar narrative' among Roma beggars in Scandinavia, meaning that they were looking for more than a pitiful story. Interviewing Roma beggars in a nice, warm location brought about a broader image in the stories than interviewing them in the streets. In the case of this journalist, lying

about unwillingness to work for non-state outlets could be a pragmatic way of not attracting negative attention. Or it could be a way to display himself as a dedicated employee, which could increase the likelihood of positive benefits. Outside of the newsroom, he could speak more freely, as one would expect. The interesting part is that the journalist positions himself both within and outside of official discourse, both in a narrative as the 'correct revolutionary' and as a 'free thinking professional'. This demonstrates that fragmentation in argumentation sometimes is more interesting than searching for rationality in the stories people tell (Sandberg, 2010, p. 462). In addition to looking for the cracks in a story, coherence can also validate data. For instance, when various journalists repeat how the censorship strategies of the Ideological Department work, there is no reason to suspect that these answers are coordinated between journalists to appear in a certain way, and they can be considered valid (Sandberg, 2010, p. 453).

5.3.4 Triangulation within methods

To verify data and attempt to define its relevance and quality, the use of a variety of sources has been vital in my research. Previous literature on both students and journalists in Cuba has been an important source of reference. I have found many of the same issues in the literature that resonate with my qualitative approach. For instance, the works of García Santamaría (2017; 2021) discussed the negotiation of professional identity among journalists. Oller and Olivera (2016; 2017) identified a dissonance among both journalists and students relating to ideals and practice.

Further, I read a multitude of Cuban media outlets and maintain contact with people I became acquainted with in Cuba as well as Cubans I have met elsewhere. I have frequently consulted these sources to learn about how changes in Cuba are perceived, what media content the individuals consume and what people's views are on various state media content. This has allowed me to keep track of what is happening in Cuba from a local perspective, and not only through the media. I have also presented three of my articles and my synopsis at conferences with Cuban academics and Cuban emigrants present, which has provided feedback on my analyses from those who live in the reality I am trying to describe. Thus, applying a mixture of methods from my fieldwork combined with insights from academic works, conferences and local observations has functioned as a safety net to ensure that analyses contain relevant information and that a 'thick description' is possible.

5.4 Informed consent and anonymity

Every participant (journalists, academics and students) was handed a sheet with information (see appendix C) about the project, publishing of information, anonymity and the voluntary nature of the participation. Beforehand, I had a scholar at the FCOM review the information sheet. He relayed that in Cuba it could invoke scepticism if participants had to sign a sheet. Orally agreeing to an interview was considered a sufficiently affirmative act of consent (a similar experience was shared

by Rivera et al. (2002, p. 685) in Russia and China). I accepted this input on Cuban norms for research behaviour and obtained oral agreements for participation after handing out the information sheet. The Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) approved the project draft, interview guides and participant information sheet before I left for fieldwork. As mentioned, the project draft approved by the NSD was different from the one sent to the University of Havana.

On the one hand, Cuban journalists can be viewed as elite sources because they are familiar with the interview situation and are able to prepare and promote certain points of view during the interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 159). On the other hand, they may be considered vulnerable, as journalists in Cuba can experience repercussions if they are too critical on subjects related to domestic or political issues. According to Brunovskis (2015), an important part of making ethical judgements in research lies in understanding the context and the probable consequences of the choices one makes (Brunovskis, 2015, p. 55). As a researcher, one has a *responsibility for avoiding harm* to participants, as outlined in paragraph 12 in the guidelines of the Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH, 2016). However, various books on qualitative research note that knowing beforehand which consequences may cause harm can be difficult (See for instance Kaiser, 2012). I therefore consider anonymity the most important way to protect both journalists and students, although the latter group is less vulnerable to identification because there are hundreds of journalism students. Anonymity minimises negative consequences that opinions outside official discourse can cause and may allow participants to speak more freely. Anonymity, however, collides with the journalistic ideal of securing transparency for readers, and participants may feel less obliged regarding the accuracy of the information they provide when names are excluded (Brurås, 2010, p. 197).

The 12 journalist participants in the Cuban state media were divided into three broad age groups for the purpose of anonymity. There were five journalists in the group *young reporter* (20–35), five in the group *middle-aged reporter* (35–50) and two in the group *senior reporter* (50+). Their workplace and professional title were omitted. Participants were also given a pseudonym in the text, as I consider a name easier to read and relate to than a number. The names were chosen from the 10 most popular names in Cuba for both sexes. The same pseudonyms were used throughout the four articles. This can be a way to make transparent for readers the amount of exposure each participant received in my project. At the same time, if a reader is meticulously interested, it is possible to discern a broader picture of each participant by comparing information from all four articles. When using quotes where journalists refer to specific media content they produce (e.g., article 2), I have not used the pseudonym because the participant's age and sex could allow identification.

As mentioned by Heggen and Guillemin (2012), a study with few participants or an unusual research context can more easily lead to identification, particularly if one reveals details of the research (Heggen & Guillemin, 2012, p. 472). Details often provide interesting analyses, and it has been difficult to know at which point details begin to compromise anonymity. For instance, one of the participants lost his job in the state media after a blog post. His story is widely known, as it was covered internationally. If one is particularly interested, one might sketch out his identity by comparing information from all four articles. As his points of view are publicly known, I do not think an identification would cause additional harm; he has already been punished by losing his job. It is possible to argue, as Kvale and Brinkmann (2015, pp. 91-95) have, that anonymity may also deny participants the voice that was the aim of the interview. Indeed, participants spending time providing valuable information to the researcher may wish to be credited through the use of their name. Perhaps it is pertinent to ask, What are the benefits of the study? For many of the participants in this project, I believe it is having their voices heard outside of Cuba.

Most of the journalists I interviewed did not seem preoccupied with anonymity. One journalist asked me whom else I had been interviewing, and she found it amusing that I would not answer. Later, at a journalistic event, the same journalist told a friend and fellow journalist that I had been interviewing her. He answered, 'Me too!' and she said laughingly, 'Oh, so we are both on your secret list.' This incident suggested that these journalists did not consider the information they shared to require the protection of anonymity.

5.5 Semi-structured interviews with journalists

The interviews with journalists provided my main source of information. These were used in articles 1, 2 and 3. In line with what Kvale and Brinkmann (2015, p. 57) termed the 'interviewer as traveller', I consider interviewing a process of 'knowledge construction' in that the conversation and accounts that are created during a meeting between two people are what is important. Accordingly, I use the word 'participant' instead of 'interviewee', 'informant' or 'respondent' because I believe we both participate in creating knowledge. The interview guide was inspired by themes from the questionnaire in the Worlds of Journalism Study (see appendix A). While the WJS is a quantitative study, the subjects treated in the questionnaire provided useful guidance when designing my qualitative interview guide. Thus, the inspiration from the WJS simply means that some relevant topics from the quantitative WJS questionnaire were remodelled into qualitative questions for my interview guide.

The interview guide consisted of four sections: 1. Personal profile, 2. Construction of news, 3. Internet and social media and 4. Professional values. The first section was used as an ice-breaker to stimulate conversation. I tried to evaluate to what degree trust had been established before deciding which section to move on to. All of the subsequent sections, however, contained issues that

journalists sometimes refrained from answering. In most interviews, I also let participants guide me towards what they perceived as important, and I skipped or contracted parts of the guide, but I always attempted to put the central questions of each section to all participants.

There were seven male and five female journalists participating. Although the number was quite balanced, this was partly by chance. The study does not have a gender focus, and as it was hard to reach participants, gender was not an important selection criterion. I do, however, consider the views of both sexes essential to gaining insight into the experiences of Cuban journalists. Most of the journalists were working in Havana, and a few were situated in towns west of the capital. In this thesis, I refer to 'Cuban journalists and students', although most of the participants lived in Havana. I am aware that perceptions and media practices in Havana may be different from other parts of Cuba, but I have chosen this general term to include all of the participants.

The journalists could determine whether I would record the interview, which was something all participants agreed to. The interviews lasted from 1 to 4 hours, and I met with some of the journalists several times. This was either casually, because I went to journalistic events or forums at the FCOM, or because I was invited by journalists to join them at various happenings. The journalists selected the location for the formalised interviews. This was a pragmatic approach, as journalists have long workdays, and many hold several jobs. I wanted to facilitate the interview so that I did not claim too much of their free time. I interviewed two journalists in their homes, two journalists came to my apartment, I met one journalist at a café and four interviews were conducted at the Faculty of Communication. The last three interviews took place at the journalist's workplace. Of these, two were done in private offices while one interview was conducted in the middle of the newsroom, as mentioned in the previous section.

Almost all of the interviewed journalists worked for different media outlets (television, radio, national newspapers, local newspapers, or online news outlets); only two of them worked for the same outlet. Journalists also work with different tasks (news reporter, specialists in certain fields, mid-level editor, chief editor), and many of the journalists can be considered quite influential regarding their ability to voice complaints. As Cuban academics have some of the island's most progressive voices on change in both political matters and in the media (See for instance Garcés, 2013, 2016; García Luis, 2013; Hernández, 2003), a participant selection based on these premises may reflect this critical academic tradition. What the selection might lack is more opinions of journalists who are lower in the hierarchy. It is in-depth understanding and richness of information that define whether one can learn about the most important issues of the research, what Patton (2015) called 'purposeful sampling'. Despite a possible bias in the sense that many journalists are theoretically and professionally talented, they meet one important criterion for purposeful sampling:

they are not a homogenous group, and the interviews bring forth nuances on a variety of topics important to the research, such as autonomy and self-censorship (Malterud, 2017, p. 59).

5.6 Focus group interviews with journalism students

I wanted to interview journalism students and also study their curricula since this provides insight into the professionalisation of journalists in Cuba. I believe this strengthens the project because I am studying both those about to become journalists and those within the profession. The journalism students are situated in a framework where ideals of journalism are maintained, whereas those working in media outlets experience breaches between ideals and practices. The contrast between practicing journalists and journalism students is demonstrated in article 3, where perceptions of non-state media are discussed by journalists and students. Students are the main source of information in article 4, where they discuss professional ideals during internships. In article 2, the contrast between students and journalists helped me understand and discuss professional autonomy. Further, the focus group interviews with students were vital in understanding how the changing media landscape in Cuba is perceived by different generations.

I conducted five focus group interviews with students, with a total of 19 participants, and the groups ranged from two to eight participants. Becoming a professional journalist in Cuba requires five years of study. I interviewed third-, fourth- and fifth-year students, considering discussions would be better with students who had a few years of study to draw on. I also wanted students to have experiences from internships in state media. The interview guide addressed the contents of journalism education, motivations for becoming a journalist, perceptions of state and non-state media and practical training (see appendix B). I primarily used the interview guide to touch on similar subjects in all the groups, emphasising dialogue and discussions between students.

Although I had initially planned to conduct one-on-one interviews, I changed my mind when I experienced the open-minded atmosphere at the FCOM. As students were encouraged to discuss and criticise, I thought of focus groups as a good way to learn about subjects that I perhaps had not thought of beforehand (Guldvik, 2002, p. 39). The eight participants in the first group were recruited by a recently graduated research assistant at the FCOM. This focus group functioned as a pilot group to adjust the other interviews and to guide my own expectations of the degree of openness to expect from students. Because I was concerned that transcribing material from a group of eight fast-talking Cubans could be difficult (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 176), I asked them to speak one at a time. This somewhat hindered a natural dialogue and discussion. In addition, the research assistant was present and often intervened in the conversation, seemingly overlooking that he was not a part of the focus group.

Learning from the pilot study, I wanted to keep groups small so that I could easily follow the dialogue and create accurate transcriptions, even though larger groups can bring about a broader range of expression (Krueger & Casey, 2009, p. 69). By notifying students about my project at lectures for 3rd- and 4th-year students and from spending time at the library, I recruited participants for the other groups. The remainder of the focus groups were conducted in social spaces in the faculty, such as at sofa groups or around small tables. This contributed to a more relaxed and conversational dialogue.

There was reason to expect that answers from journalism students in Havana may be different from those of journalism students in other parts of the country, as the Internet infrastructure is better developed in the capital. Moreover, the voluntary participation by students may have promoted the particular points of view of students engaged in the changing Cuban media landscape. However, since students display a variety of opinions on Cuban media, I believe that the focus groups represent a range of points of view.

5.7 Supplementary data

This section contains data that have been used in articles as well as data that provides more of an informational backdrop to this thesis. While only some of this information is used in the articles, the methods nevertheless shaped the way I see and understand Cuba.

One of the personal difficulties in writing about journalism in Cuba is the unavoidable obstacle of me being a Western journalism scholar conducting research in a 'non-Western' context. The same concern has been recognised by the creators of the Worlds of Journalism Study, who stated that 'most journalism research, comparative or not, about a Western country or not, still carries significant Western conceptual baggage' (Hanitzsch et al., 2019, p. 24). That the English language is the most widely used in academic discourse leads to a further advantage for scholars from the Global North, advancing their intellectual authority over research originating in other languages (Hanitzsch et al., 2019a, p. 5). The frustration over how easy it is for Cuban 'dissidents' to be heard compared with academics residing in Cuba has been described by Cuban sociologist Hernández (2002, p. 12): 'A Cuban who neither leaves Cuba nor joins the organised "dissidence" is, according to established discourse of the outside, a personification of the state – a nonperson, in fact.' Therefore, in my research on Cuba, I have deliberately tried to use Cuban research, whenever it is relevant, to 'de-westernise' journalism research and to base my claims on research and experiences described by Cubans in Cuba.

I have used content from Cuban research literature in all four articles and in this synopsis, emphasising the local PhD theses. This has been a very important source of information, both for

direct use and as background information. In Cuba, I was fortunate to be given free access to research originating at the FCOM on the intranet of the faculty. Reviewing the titles of all available publications, I selected 25 academic works published between 2004 and 2016. These comprise a selection of Bachelor, Master and PhD theses. The research I gathered during my fieldwork is largely unknown and unpublished outside of Cuba. One explanation for this is language and structures, but there may also be political reasons, as it might be used as a means of 'compartmentalising knowledge and restricting public debate' (García Santamaría, 2017, p. 128). This highlights the importance of researchers engaging in fieldwork and actively seeking to obtain information that otherwise would not have been disseminated.

I also gathered journalism curricula for the 3rd, 4th and 5th year of study (see article 4). The curricula were an important source of information for articles 3 and 4, as they offered insight into some of the pillars of journalism education and the professionalisation of journalism students. The various types of information on investigative research, for instance, gave me a broader understanding of the degree to which journalism education differed from the type of journalism practiced in the state media.

Further, the two academics interviewed for this study work in the field of social sciences. Both are important voices in the debate on how journalism and society in general should be in Cuba. However, I have only used direct citations from one of them in my articles (article 3). I have also interviewed various academics at the FCOM in a more informal manner, but these are not included as part of the listed empirical data. The most important function of these interviews has been to demonstrate how it is possible to talk about society, what kinds of demands and expressions it is possible to use from an academic standpoint, and the ways in which scholars interpret Cuban society and the media landscape – in other words, contextualising the study and contributing to the 'thick' description of the qualitative data.

Lastly, I want to mention another important aspect of the thesis's methodological backdrop: observations and field notes. I made many observations while spending time at the Faculty of Communication, when visiting media outlets for interviews and generally engaging in the media consumption of people that I met in the streets. Impressions, thoughts, worries and considerations both before and after each interview have been noted, in addition to important events where I met journalists. I have also made a note of curious happenings from wandering the streets, the opinions of a taxi driver or ice salesperson on *El Paquete* or the latest music show. In total, my field notes have been invaluable for capturing the emotions I had during fieldwork, how I evaluated my surroundings and how my interpretation of Cuban society changed over time.

5.8 Transcription, translation and publication

All of the interviews except one (in English) were conducted and transcribed in Spanish, and all interviews were recorded. A Cuban researcher transcribed seven of the journalist interviews and all of the focus groups. A local transcriber was useful to confirm accuracy when participants used local slang or expressions. Five of the journalist interviews were transcribed by me. I wanted to familiarise myself with the interviews in which the atmosphere was somewhat tense and lacked the flowing dialogue that distinguished others. I also transcribed interviews with themes that I deemed sensitive, in which I did not want an external transcriber to take part. I listened to the sound files of all of the interviews while simultaneously reading the transcripts. This helped me secure accuracy and review the contents of the interviews. In this process, I added missing details, corrected the use of punctuation and modified some mistakes, both in my own transcriptions and those of the Cuban researcher. I have undertaken all the translations from Spanish to English in this text and in the articles myself, and I have verified these with a Spanish-speaking proofreader.

I have purposively selected open access journals as publication channels for three out of four articles. Two of the articles are published in both English and Spanish. I agree with Aase and Fossåskaret (2014, p. 220) that it should be an ethical principle to give the people who shared information about themselves free access to the results, particularly when research is done in developing countries. Otherwise, the knowledge the participants helped me produce would probably be inaccessible to them.

5.9 Coding

When coding the data, I was inspired by the (reflexive) thematic analysis model of Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019). Thematic analysis involves 'searching across a data set [...] to find repeated patterns of meaning' that are relevant to the research question (2006, p. 86). I consider applying this framework an important tool in showing my role in identifying patterns and making the analytical process transparent (2006, p. 80).

I have used an inductive (or abductive) approach in applying thematic analysis. Through this method, it is the data and not the theory that determines the themes or patterns that I have developed (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84; 2019). My field notes have been useful as a starting point for potential codes, and I continued to note ideas during the transcription process. I used NVivo to code and transcribe the data. Familiarising myself with the content through transcription gave me general ideas about what was in the data. Next, I reviewed the interview transcripts one more time and selected colours to mark four broad categories in the text: *Censorship, Traditional vs. New Media, USA* and *Values*. During this process I started to construct various patterns that could be relevant

within each category, and I noted these in a book. When plotting the four initial categories into NVivo, I started expanding each one into more specific codes. For example, I kept *USA* as a 'parent node' and created 'child nodes' referring to subjects such as 'protect Cuban interests', 'stories about Cuba' and 'historical development'. As the coding progressed, these child nodes were split into even more specific codes (2006, p. 89).

The coding was done both on a semantic and latent level. Some codes were made based only on direct description, such as 'daily routines' in the newsroom. Other codes departed from possible underlying assumptions or ideas (2006, p. 84), such as when participants described practices that I label 'censorship'. However, semantic coding also evolved to a latent level; for instance, 'daily routines' eventually became part of 'autonomy'. The student focus groups were coded separately from those of journalists, as I did not know how the articles would be structured. Therefore, I kept student answers within one parent node, with child nodes such as 'internship', 'norms', 'challenges/criticism' and 'about the faculty'. I coded all data, even if it seemed to be without relevance for any aspect of my project. Some content was coded multiple times since it could be related to various subjects (2006, p. 89).

After obtaining an overview of the data, I was better able to assess themes that contributed to answering my research questions (2006, p. 81). I reviewed the texts related to each parent/child node and started a process of generating new themes. Large parts of the parent nodes *Censorship* and *Values* merged into one, *Autonomy*. The parent node *Journalism Education* to some degree spread itself out to the parent nodes *USA, New Media* and *Autonomy,* and the theme *New Media* eventually had child nodes from all of the initial categories (2006, p. 91). The reorganising and revising of parent and child nodes was a continuous process, and it has been conducted both analogically by using Post-it notes and through the NVivo programme.

5.10 Choice of terminology

5.10.1 What should the 'state media' be called?

I tested a multitude of terms to describe the Cuban media outlets that either are directly connected to organs of the Communist Party (government) or financed by the state budget. As there is only one political party in Cuba, it does not really make sense to create a division between funding from the government and funding from the state. However, the levels of scrutiny from the Ideological Department of the PCC vary among the outlets; those closest to the government are under tighter control. The editors can also interpret the changing editorial guidelines in various ways. That is to say, there is a certain level of variation between outlets.

In Cuba, all outlets with funding from the state/government go by the name *medios públicos* (public media). In English, this can be confusing, as public media often is financed through annual fees paid by receivers and sometimes also by foundations or businesses. In the information letter I handed out before each interview, I used the term *prensa estatal* (state press). One participant reacted to this, saying: 'state press is reductionist when it comes to the editorial lines of each media outlet.' I wanted to accommodate this criticism and tried the words *government-financed* and *state-financed*, but in a text, these words became too long and difficult to read. The term *official media* is also used by some, but I wanted to focus on the source of financing to create a distinction between state and non-state media (which I discuss in article 3).

For article 2, the term 'state media' was also a subject of debate. The editors disliked the term 'state media journalists' because it could imply that journalists are owned by the state, not just working for it. It is certainly not my intention to reduce the complexity of Cuban state media by using this term; it is simply for lack of a better word that can encompass its meaning. State media is also a term used by many Cuban journalists (see for instance Periodismo de Barrio, 2018) and among the participants in this study. The selection of the terms 'state media' and 'state media journalists' represents a pragmatic approach to making a complex definition readable and avoiding misunderstandings regarding funding.

5.11 Summary

Conducting research in a restrictive context, with difficulties of access to participants, and the possibility of the participants reproducing an official narrative, has been challenging. To overcome some of these obstacles, important methodological tools included working with the interview situation to establish trust and to find a status or role that participants can relate to. I emphasised sharing personal experiences and promoting myself as neutral to the polarised debate between Cuba and the US. Most of the responses from the journalists reflected an official discourse to some extent, but they also stepped outside this framework, thus juggling between narratives of being a 'correct revolutionary' and a 'correct professional'. Therefore, looking for the cracks and discrepancies in a story has been a useful approach. It enabled me to describe the meanings participants gave to their actions. Gathering information as broadly as possible and analysing data from the points of view of various sources have been tools used to validate the research material.

6 DISCUSSION

In this section, I first discuss the four specific research questions based on the findings in the articles and the theoretical framework of this synopsis. Using this as a backdrop, I consider issues related to professional journalism, journalistic role performance, and nationalism to discuss the general research question.

6.1 The US role in defining parameters of Cuban journalism

The defence paradigm in Cuba is based on the perceived threat from the US. Broadly summarised, this threat involves the potential undermining of the Cuban socialist system. The field of communications is considered particularly prone to being affected by US interests. For the PCC, there are no limits to what or whom the US could theoretically pay or persuade to become its 'mercenaries' in the journalistic field. However, as argued in chapter 3, the Cuban underdog status created by the defence paradigm is also a convenient way for the PCC to legitimate its role. This is the background for RQ1: *In which ways does the defence paradigm in Cuba affect self-censorship strategies among state media journalists?*

Cuban state media journalists are the front-line combaters of a wildly undefined mass of potential threats. This role can be viewed as a historical prolongation of the words of national hero José Martí: 'Journalists have so much of a soldier in them!' (*¡Tiene tanto el periodista de soldado!*) (Aguirre, 2003, p. 336). Thus, journalists in state media are placed in a narrowly defined role as soldiers, and journalism thus becomes a political act (García Santamaría, 2021). As I discuss in article 1 (Natvig, 2019b), the editorial guidelines defining which stories are too 'sensitive' to disseminate to the public change with the shifting relations with the US. In theory, any subject could provide weapons to the enemy in its bid to harm the Cuban system. This transfers a great deal of responsibility to the individual journalists and the editors of each outlet in interpreting and deciphering which stories it is possible to publicise. In all professions, there will be variations in the degree of preparation and the capacities of each individual. Opposing the (sometimes absurd) restrictions in editorial guidelines is time consuming and demanding. Therefore, self-censorship is an understandable strategy to attempt to strike a balance between self-determination and external control – in addition to keeping one's job. As noted by Roberts (2019, p. 44) on Cuban journalists, the term 'self-censorship' might be an over-simplification because '[t]he act of circumventing institutional constraints is in itself a form of agency within the confines of tolerated discourse by the state.'

One of the core concepts of the JRP is that roles overlap, change and are context dependent. Despite the fact that 30% of the items in the JRP sample for Cuba (Márquez-Ramírez et al., 2021) presented national triumphs (the loyal-facilitator role), state media journalists may still have a role conception

closely knit to professional journalism (Waisbord, 2013b; Freidson 2001; Dzur 2008). In examining the multiple roles journalists assume, it is never either–or. Journalists may seize the opportunity to apply one role one day, and another the next, depending on the context. Journalists in Cuba need to consider the demands of the PCC, social expectations from Cuban citizens on relations to the US, individual values, and the overarching concept of nationalism and promoting the national struggle against the US threat. Managing to navigate this terrain seems like a full-time job in itself, so it makes sense that other roles and ideals may be put on hold.

However, support for the nation and subsequent self-censorship in a situation of conflict can be found in any political context (Ottosen, 1991). Self-censorship can involve conscious considerations due to fear, but it can also involve unconscious processes, such as motivations stemming from journalists' own social values, as argued in article 1 (Natvig, 2019b). Perhaps there is a need to refine the concept of self-censorship, divided as it is between nationalistic 'war-coverage' in Western contexts and more enduring processes related to rewards and punishments in authoritarian regimes (Elbaz et al., 2017). In Cuba, both of these motivators for self-censorship exist; there is a perpetual situation of 'war' in the sense that the threat from the US is unending. In addition, the concept of rewards and punishments from the PCC is highly real. In Cuba, the external pressure arguably is stronger than in other contexts. Therefore, it may be that journalists fluctuate even more between roles and modify their self-censorship strategies to a larger extent than in countries with a more stable 'enemy' or source of self-censorship.

6.1.1 Contradicting discourses

There are understandable reasons why many journalists support the PCC's analysis of the US threat. For instance, the economic embargo/blockade is something that affects all Cubans. As I argue in article 1, the *plaza sitiada* concept creates difficult professional compromises because of journalists' support of social values and ideology (Elbaz et al., 2017). Essentially, journalists both accept and dispute the same security paradigm. Their loyalties are continuously competing between nation and profession (Skjerdal, 2012). Given the enemy image of the US that is imprinted as a part of national ideology, journalists do not have the option to shift between loyalties (Zandberg & Neiger, 2005). While RQ1 focuses on the defence paradigm as a major driving force for self-censorship strategies, there could be numerous additional reasons. As I mentioned in article 1, blaming the *plaza sitiada* mentality could also be a convenient excuse for journalists to not extend their efforts.

Still, the US is a defining force in Cuba, both structurally and discursively. Journalists and students in Cuba must be aware of these contradicting discourses, and they need to know how to interpret them. This is one of Zelizer's (1993) most important arguments for adopting the *interpretive community* paradigm in journalism studies. The places where journalists meet, and the shared

discourses journalists apply for defining events, are key to understanding how they navigate in all types of societies. For Cuban journalists and students, this paradigm is perhaps best understood if paired with the concept of *imagined communities* (Anderson, 2016 [1983]). Arguably, the imagined community is stronger in Cuba than in comparable countries, be it those with similar political systems or other countries in Latin America. While significant parts of populations in many countries have an ambivalent relationship with the US, few countries are more closely situated geographically than Cuba – and few diverge so radically in terms of ideology.

The imagined community in Cuba has been built on opposition to imperialism and colonialism. There is an abundance of national symbols in Cuba to remind its citizens of the historical legitimacy of the Revolution. The anti-colonial struggle of Taino chief Hatuey might not be on the mind of the average Cuban when drinking the beer with the same name or when seeing Hatuey's face on the label. Such symbols, nevertheless, contribute to building everyday imageries of collectivity and antiquity, which are vital to the creation of nationalism (Anderson, 2016 [1983]). The same applies to the busts of national icon and revolutionary poet José Martí (which are found everywhere from car repair shops to official buildings), not to mention the revolutionary slogans, murals, billboards and photos of revolutionary heroes.

The unconscious consumption of national symbols is an important contributor to keeping core Cuban revolutionary values alive, which is what Billig (1995) termed *banal nationalism.* Interestingly, for Cuban exiles in the US, José Martí is a symbol in much the same way that he is in Cuba, except he represents values such as the absence of repression and freedom of speech. This means that Cuban journalists and students need to know the implicit meanings connected to these everyday symbols not only from a Cuban point of view but also from that of Cubans in the US. Furthermore, they need to take a stance in how they relate to this, particularly when it comes to deciding where to work. It can be difficult to decide to work for non-state outlets because a large number of these relate to a discourse somewhere in between the 'siege' mentality in state media and that of US-based media outlets covering Cuba.

The grand narrative of the Revolution, as described by Guerra (2012), consisted of resistance and redemption, a people's uprising against injustice, a people who willingly gave up their individual rights for the sake of the collective. In this process, coercion and volunteerism became mixed in with what became a 'grassroots dictatorship'. For journalists, understanding national discourse means accepting the achievements of the Revolution, acknowledging the threat of these being undermined by US interests, and demonstrating a measure of support for these ideals. At the same time, supporting the national project does not mean having unreserved support for all of the PCC

policies. In this diffuse landscape, loyalties are divided not only between the profession and the nation but also between the nation and the party.

As Anderson reminds us, the nation, despite being a collective creation, can ask for great sacrifices by its citizens because it is perceived to be interestless. Other bodies that one can join or leave at will (e.g., the Labour Party or Red Cross) are not usually something citizens are willing to die for. Making the ultimate sacrifice for the nation, however, assumes an unrivalled moral grandeur. Anderson (2016 [1983], p. 144) noted that dying for 'the revolution' relates to a perception of something profoundly pure: '…it may be that to the extent that Marxist interpretations of history are felt (rather than intellected) as representations of ineluctable necessity, they also acquire an aura of purity and disinterestedness.' Although journalistic sacrifices for the sake of the nation are not a matter of life and death, the literature on self-censorship indicates that the nation indeed persuades journalists to leave professionalism behind in ways that no other entity can. But once again, lines are blurred when it comes to Cuba. Because the grand narrative of the Revolution has been created and maintained by the PCC, it is difficult to pinpoint what distinguishes the nation from the Communist Party (and connected organisations). Nevertheless, some journalists retain a sense of professionalism by drawing a distinction between nation and party. If a story is too 'sensitive' to be published, they can claim that it is for the 'greater good of the country' (Natvig, 2019b). Thus, lowering journalistic standards due to national concerns may be an easier professional compromise than acknowledging self-censorship in order to preserve the hegemony of the PCC (or admitting that you have given up trying). However, some journalists quoted in article 1 view the defence paradigm as a political act much more than a national concern.

Then there is the other side of the coin. 'What do *they* (the US) say about *us* (Cuba)?' If a Miami outlet publishes an article about someone who has been harassed by the PCC, that does not necessarily represent an attack on the national community itself. As I comment in article 1, some journalists will interpret such stories as a display of the incapacities of state media – maybe even as a necessary adjustment. Because the limits of what is a real threat to Cuba are unclear, journalists respond to the defence paradigm based on how they interpret the nationalistic discourse. This in turn depends on whether they see a division between nation and party or whether they see it as one unit. In articles 1, 3 and 4, many of the young journalists, journalism students and academics expressed the opinion that the parameters of the old security paradigm are outdated. These considerations partially contribute to building a professional or alternative interpretive community that works in tandem with the security paradigm.

6.2 Autonomy and its impossibility

Autonomy is a difficult ideal to achieve if it means all-or-nothing, total independence or total subjugation. The reality is usually somewhere in between, and it is on the periphery of this large and abstract ideal that it is possible to discuss it in a Cuban context. As noted by Waisbord (2013b), the interesting part is to discover why journalists continue to pursue autonomy and when (and why) they yield to external interests. Hence, in RQ2, I ask, *What strategies do journalists working for state media use to expand their autonomy?*

Many researchers consider autonomy to be the most important premise for journalists in fulfilling their social mandate, and that autonomy is contingent on democracy (Waisbord 2013b; Hanitzsch et al., 2011; Deuze 2005). While the same researchers acknowledge the impossibility of being free from external influences, the approach of the JRP is unique as it maps the various influences on a journalistic product in all types of political regimes. In the case of Cuba, this is particularly interesting because there is little comparative research on the media output of authoritarian regimes. As seen in my own project and noted by Mellado et al. (2017b), journalists find ways to gain or maintain autonomy despite the absence of democracy.

Autonomy and the negotiations over it can be studied on many different levels. Journalists, editors, outlet profiles, owners, audiences and many other factors can influence the journalistic product (Mellado, 2021). While my project is qualitative and perhaps more of an anthropological inquiry into the perceptions of journalists, the JRP remains relevant, particularly relating to the *role conception* of journalists and students. I respond to RQ2 by discussing two levels of autonomy among journalists: *individual* and *collective*.

Some of my initial questions were, 'How do journalists put up with so many restrictions? Have they given up or maybe they just do not care?' A similar question posed by friends visiting Cuban academic Julio García Luis is referred to in his book (2013, p. 127): 'Why, with your passionate Revolution, do you nevertheless have such a boring press?' Journalism education in Cuba is no exception in terms of how it provides journalists with role ideals that are difficult, if not impossible, to meet (the watchdog role in particular). As Freidson (2001) and Dzur (2008) counselled, the central characteristics of professions are knowledge, self-regulation and social responsibility. Autonomy is the key – without autonomy, it is difficult to develop special knowledge and attain social obligations. In the Cuban context, the relative academic autonomy contributes to provide journalists with knowledge about journalistic ideals, or role conceptions, that may not easily be used but may push the boundaries of autonomy.

Concerning individual autonomy, one could argue that journalists in Cuban state media exercise a peculiar kind of autonomy, one that requires more skills to navigate than a journalist in, for example, Norway, would need to have. Some important aspects of the negotiations of autonomy are (blurred) boundaries and the journalist's position within the organisation. As discussed in article 2 (Natvig, 2021), journalists higher in the hierarchy and with prominent roles in the outlet seem to be better prepared to 'balance and battle' the restrictions of the system, which is similar to the processes described by Sjøvaag (2013). Implicit or explicit guidelines, material restrictions and the will of editors are just some of the obstacles one must overcome to be able to push the boundaries of autonomy. Importantly, the journalist must be willing to accept potential consequences. In article 2, some participants claimed to receive positive feedback on their attempts, or none at all, even if they did expect the stories to be disclaimed by editors. Others had to deal with negative consequences, and to 'stay in the game' was not something all of them managed to do. Thus, it is not surprising that Cuba outranks all of the other countries in the JRP study on the loyal-facilitator role (Mellado et al., 2021a, p. 73). However, what is not seen in the statistics on journalistic role performance in the JRP is that journalists in state media use their knowledge and the ideals learnt in university to create some space for autonomous decisions, although it may not be apparent in the journalistic product.

From the perspective of the PCC, blurring the already imperceptible lines of acceptable behaviour solidly decreases the number of journalists able to push boundaries of autonomy from within. The psychological mechanisms at play are basic ones. In any confined context, having a clear set of boundaries and rules promotes a sense of safety, and it opens room for exploration. If the rules keep changing, it can cause anxiety and uncertainty (Passer & Smith, 2001). Thus, having clear boundaries regarding what journalists can and cannot do, and how to relate to external influences, makes a journalistic workday easier and causes less confusion. As I stated in article 4, journalism students find these unwritten and changing rules to be extremely difficult to understand and navigate. Lehmann- Jacobsen (2017) found the same tendency in Southeast Asia. Journalists in Singapore were more confident in their roles than their Vietnamese counterparts, largely explained by Singapore's clearer framework. Some Cuban state media journalists have pursued and achieved individual autonomy, and these achievements have been noticed by others as honourable exceptions. Nevertheless, as illustrated by the three bloggers in article 2 (and by students in article 4), the potential to overstep the lines or become demotivated by the lack of change impedes broader individual pursuits of autonomy among journalists in state media.

Regarding *collective autonomy* among state media journalists, it is instructive to recollect the early days of the Revolution in the 1960s. Seen from the political elite's point of view, the question was not the degree to which criticism could be tolerated. Criticism became meaningless if people

accepted the Revolution as a disinterested tool for political re-distribution of power. As a 'grassroots dictatorship', the collectivity that the Revolution demanded held no room for the pursuit of autonomy (Guerra, 2012). Therefore, it is difficult to talk about the 'state' and 'autonomy' in a way that makes sense outside of Cuba. The state is both the saviour and the villain; it can – and does – demand great sacrifices for the sake of keeping the nation unified. Perhaps the foundations of professionalism and professional journalism (Freidson, 2001; Dzur, 2008; Waisbord 2013b) need to be adjusted to fit the Cuban context. Autonomy Cuban-style is not, and never has been, an absolute term. While many participants in this study wanted more freedom, their desire was never at the expense of the nation or the possible undermining of the socialist project. Autonomy in Cuba can perhaps be seen as a shared puzzle, where some bits belong to the professionals and others to the state. Social responsibility may also be understood differently in Cuba if interpreted through a collectivist view. It may be interpreted as something that can contribute to the greater good of the people – and the state.

Today, the quest for *collective autonomy* among journalists is largely found within the framework of the journalist union, UPEC, and among journalism academics. Arguably, these groups also channel international norms and values into journalism in Cuba. As noted in chapter 2, the need for a framework allowing less external control is something academics call for (Elizalde, 2013; García Luis, 2013). Forwarding demands through organisations resonates well with the way protests are allowed to be channelled in Cuba. The authorities in the country have been particularly efficient in segregating cultural and social claims from political demands, thus marginalising political opponents. The intellectuals who agree to negotiate with the authorities thereby become legitimate voices in the debate, but they also contribute to maintaining and reproducing the border between social and political spheres (Geoffray, 2014, p. 234). This underscores how collective pursuits for autonomy through journalistic meeting arenas might strengthen the interpretive community among journalists, becoming the only real alternative for them to remain in 'the game'.

6.3 A generational divide

I continue the exploration of the meaning of autonomy by discussing how the changing media context influences institutional and professional autonomy for journalists in state media and among journalism students. The question posed in RQ3 is, *In which ways does the non-state media challenge the state media, and how do journalists and students relate to this?*

Reich and Hanitzsch (2013) asserted that journalists in authoritarian countries experience more perceived autonomy than those in hybrid regimes, perhaps due to a higher expectation of autonomy in hybrid regimes. In this respect, Cuba is an interesting case. While often being labelled 'authoritarian', journalists have a desire (and a hope, if not an expectation) for greater professional

autonomy (or a version of it). Again, the globalised or *Westernised* ideals of journalism confront the local conditions of professional demands made by the PCC as the vanguards of the media. Journalists aim for institutional autonomy through the channels of collective autonomy (UPEC) or through working with a state organ. But the fight must be subtle, and it must be undertaken with the right means and by the right person. The degree of institutional autonomy is perhaps the area where the non-state media can most effectively challenge the state media.

While non-state media is subject to crackdowns and (at a minimum) must relate to the discursive limits of no pornography, no religion and no politics, it largely fulfils the three central premises of professionalism: a large portion of the journalists in these outlets are educated (knowledge), they shed light on issues silenced by state media (social responsibility) and they work without direct monitoring by the state. Some of the crowdfunded outlets also work relatively independently of market demands (autonomy) (Dzur, 2008; Freidson, 2001). Notably, the non-state media is not a homogenous group in terms of organisation, ideology or professionalism (see section 3.7). It is not only the diversity that makes non-state media difficult to describe but also that such outlets have been framed and understood so differently within and outside of Cuba. When Internet access was highly restricted in Cuba, activists who denounced the social and political order were overrepresented in their visibility abroad. However, the liberalisation of the Internet has led to a professionalisation of non-state outlets and a growth in a less explicit political use of the Internet (Geoffray, 2021, p. 150). One of the most infamous outlets in Cuba, *14ymedio*, has also moved towards professionalisation. As US researcher Ted Henken wrote (2021, p. 175), 'The subjectivity of blogging and the transparency of noncredentialled bloggers who practice "citizen journalism" have served as a vital check on and crack in the dominant system where state propaganda masquerades as "professional journalism"'.

As Zelizer noted, discourses about important journalistic incidents contribute to standards of journalistic behaviour as the 'borders of appropriate practice need renegotiation' (Zelizer, 1993, p. 224). Presumably, 'borders of appropriate practice' in the state media would have been renegotiated with the impulses from non-state media. While journalist participants did acknowledge that some stories are pushed through in state media after circulating in non-state outlets, the findings in article 3 (Natvig, 2019a) show that journalists largely draw on a 'local' discourse. Professionalism should be achieved through collective attempts at autonomy such as the UPEC. Journalism students are today leaning towards Western or global ideals of being society's main providers of information. Thus, what is considered appropriate professional practice is not coherent between the actors involved, and this is a potential source of friction.

As this study has documented, specifically in article 3, there is a divide in perceptions of professional autonomy between journalists and journalism students. This can be seen as a divide in the interpretive community because journalists of different generations value distinctive skills and ideals. The multiple agendas of preservation and change may weaken the journalistic community and its ability to resist external influences. Both the sociologist cited in article 3 (and other academics) and Elizalde (2013) warned against a possible scenario in which the development in the media scene runs out of control and leads to arbitrary decisions impeding professionalisation. At the same time, the PCC has its own view of such a scenario, inscribed in Cold War logic. This view is referred to as 'the fear of Glasnost'. This is a metaphor meant to legitimise state control over the media, and it refers to the way Soviet state media crumbled in the wake of Glasnost, paving the way for a takeover of private media outlets with equally low journalistic quality (García Luis, 2013, p. 70). The concept of 'Glasnost' serves as a warning from the PCC and as a way to delegitimise non-state media, in addition to stress the importance of solving Cuban problems within the state structures. The possibility of non-state media leading to 'yellow journalism' (low-quality commercial journalism) was a concern among several journalist participants in this study.

Guerra (2012, p. 30) argued that keeping core ideals of the Revolution alive has been based on a 'process of becoming', of imagining an idealised future. To some extent, this echoes what many of the older generation of journalists, as well as academics, are doing. They are discussing, outlining and imagining a press system that would remedy all the flaws in the current state media apparatus, given the will of the political system. However, with the emergent non-state media sphere, there are new opportunities for imagining. García Santamaría (2021) asserted that young journalists' visualisations of projects beyond those of the state media provide an escape from daily reality and at the same time shape the digital media sphere. Discourse can indeed shape and re-shape society if it produces sentiments strong enough to build new social formations, as noted by Lincoln (1992). Younger generations have different ideals, imaginations of becoming and discourses on how to achieve those aims. If the political elite decides to frame these discourses as a flirtation with the enemy, as was indicated by some journalists in article 3, non-state outlets can come to challenge state media in unpredictable ways.

Generational divides are found in other transitional societies as well. In Russia, Pasti (2005, p. 99) located an older generation of Soviet-era journalists who did not question close collaboration with the authorities, and a new post-Soviet generation (or 'pampers-generation', as noted by Erzikova and Lowrey (2012)) perceived journalism as a PR role to benefit influential persons in business and politics. Unsurprisingly, the youth hold different ideals than older generations, but in the Cuban context, the outcome may affect the preservation or change of the very Revolution itself (if young

people able to elicit change choose to remain in Cuba). Following Guerra's argumentation, the reason for the appeal of Fidel Castro and why the grand narrative of the Revolution mainly *stayed* 'true' despite a less-than-prosperous outlook (particularly since 1989) is partly due to the voluntary demolition of civil society structures (Guerra, 2012, pp. 11,14). However, it cannot be taken for granted that future generations of journalists will *continue* to feel loyalty towards the nation and remain true to core revolutionary ideals, particularly when these have repeatedly proven to be mere rhetorical practices (for instance, the numerous times leaders of the PCC have expressed a desire for more autonomy for journalists).

As noted in chapter 3, there has been a reform backlash in recent years. A further restriction of rights and possibilities may provoke noticeable reactions from the non-state media sector. After all, this is a sector dominated by young people who are increasingly influenced by outside impulses through the expansion of the Internet and social media. Once again, the high level of education plays an important role. Cubans have skills, and they are inventive. It is not difficult to put up a proxy to access the online sites blocked by the PCC or to disseminate information (for instance, through *El Paquete*). The initiatives of non-state outlets collectively demanding less harassment and more rights (Cibercuba, 2019), public demonstrations to preserve the (illegal) 'Street Network' (Pérez, 2019) and various 'Twitazos' (outpouring of tweets) demanding lower Internet prices (*OnCuba*, 2019; Pentón, 2019; Zaldivar, 2019) show that public spheres exist (albeit possibly 'with adjectives' such as 'restricted' or 'precarious'). Nevertheless, this indicates that an increasing number of non-state media actors are calling for a 'de-politization of social relations' and the right to an autonomous public sphere (Hoffmann, 2011, pp. 6,9).

6.4 The role of the academic community

The academic environment in which journalism students meet is an arena where Western or global journalistic discourses and ideals are allowed to be developed and nourished. Padilla and Viera (2021) argued that academics belong to a 'semi-official' public sphere that allows some autonomy within the structures of officially recognised institutions. Members of this sphere (which also includes actors within the cinema, literature, arts and music sectors) often have channels for sharing and distributing information with both national and international scope. A good example is the *Temas* magazine, which organises a monthly discussion panel known as 'Último Jueves' (Last Thursday) and is a forum where all citizens can participate. In RQ4 I ask, *How do journalism students navigate between the perceived limits of press freedom in the state media and professional ideals learnt at the university?*

Journalism students move from a 'semi-official public sphere' to an 'official public sphere' when entering state media during internship and during their social service period (after completing the

five-year career). The ‘official public sphere’ in state media largely promotes institutionalised discussions (Padilla & Viera, 2021). At the same time, journalism students and young journalists often hold multiple jobs. A study of 142 graduates between 2010 and 2014 found that 55% collaborated with both state and non-state media in addition to maintaining a permanent position in a state outlet (García, 2016, p. 119). Journalism students working for non-state outlets then enter a third arena, deemed a ‘networked public sphere’ by Padilla and Viera (2021).

The different roles that journalists assume contain both ideals and practices, and these overlap, change and take new forms over time (Mellado et al., 2021b). For Cuban journalism students, there are a multitude of factors affecting how they can interpret their role as journalists. Not only must they consider the national imagery and political role of the state media but they also must operate in a historical moment that is unrooting the media practice of half a century. Although role conflict might be a common journalistic experience and not a problem in itself, the role conflict journalism students in Cuba experience is arguably more intense.

As stated in article 4 (Natvig, 2018), journalism students found it difficult to bridge the gap between ideals of journalism learnt at university and practice realities in state media. Journalism education as a promoter of Western ideals is indeed found in many countries with limited press freedom, pointing towards a standardisation of journalism education (Josephi, 2010). The specific media context in Cuba makes this particularly interesting. Before the expansion of the Internet and non-state initiatives, journalists who found the ‘legitimate discourse’ in state media to be too restrictive either had to leave the country or find another type of work. Now, remaining within the profession is a real alternative, as the non-state outlets provide a space to let off steam. In this context, the role of the academic community as a bridge between an ‘official’ and a ‘networked’ sphere has become even more important.

As outlined in chapter 3, media professionals who did not emigrate after the Revolution became key members in crafting propaganda for the PCC. The Cuban media scene has changed from being ahead of most other Latin American countries in the 1950s to becoming an information monopoly, and it is now seeing a flourishing of digital media. The US broadcasting tradition is arguably still a part of the media, despite disruption and change. The status of academics and the fact that their opinions are respected and acknowledged by the political elite seem to promote confidence in both students and journalists that it is possible to oppose the institutionalism in state media. This can be considered a major driving force for journalistic endeavours towards autonomy and professional ideals. For instance, the words and arguments in the oft-cited book by García Luis (2013) have given journalists a language with which to voice demands (García Santamaría, 2017, p. 259). Furthermore, the interchange between journalists and academics, with many journalists giving lectures at the FCOM,

may be seen as a bridge between practice and theory operating outside the rigid framework of the state media. Thus, the academic environment is both a maintainer and promoter of a global discourse on professional journalism. This allows journalism students to imagine and aim for a type of journalism that currently is unavailable to them in state media. Cuban journalism education also contributes to professionalisation of the non-state media ecosystem (particularly in Havana), as many students opt for this career path.

6.5 The invisible lines

Central to professional journalism is that it is dependent on the ideal of autonomy in order to fulfil societal functions (Deuze, 2005; Lauk & Harro-Loit, 2016). However, various types of roles are assumed by journalists around the world, and some of these are largely incompatible with journalistic autonomy. Nevertheless, journalistic autonomy is an ideal that exists throughout the world, despite external factors restricting it (Hanitzsch et al., 2011; Mellado, 2021). The most prominent role in Cuban state media is the 'loyal facilitator' (Mellado et al., 2017; Olivera & Torres, 2017), but as I have demonstrated in this thesis, neither journalists nor students about to enter state media perceive their professional identity through a lens of submissiveness towards authorities. The general research question asks, *How do journalists in the state media and journalism students negotiate professional ideals and national imageries in a changing Cuban media landscape?*

Through their knowledge base and awareness of social responsibility, Cuban journalists aim for the central premises of professionalism (Freidson, 2001). However, the encroachment of the PCC and the ID on the professional 'turf' of journalism and the consequent lack of autonomy make it difficult to actualise these ideals (Abbott, 1995). However, as noted by Waisbord (2013b), journalism also finds ways of gaining and maintaining professional ideals on the margins of autonomy. The articles in this thesis demonstrate that despite unfavourable working conditions and state interference in various parts of the journalistic process (from the selection of stories to the editing of them), journalists preserve a sense of professionalism. This is accomplished by maintaining strong relations with the academic community or by applying specific strategies. These strategies include self-censoring on certain issues to avoid scrutiny from the PCC's Ideological Department or invoking the interest of Miami outlets, while still publishing portions of a story (article 1). Some are able to express criticism by making the most of early hours with fewer editors, and some use blogs as a means to let off steam – within acceptable limits (article 2). Among journalists and students about to enter the profession, the most common strategy to achieve autonomy is collaboration with a range of non-state outlets (articles 3 and 4).

In light of the efforts of the leaders of the 1959 Revolution to eradicate all that came before (in terms of social strata, religious belonging, and ethnicity), the imagined community in Cuba is extremely

dependent on the version of society and the type of nationalism promoted by Fidel Castro. The state media functioned as the emergency brake in this system – the reliable transmitter of unifying sentiments, operating as a means of putting binding obligations on individuals through the use of words (Gouldner, 1996). As noted by many Cuba researchers, it is the speeches of revolutionary leaders that define the Revolution, and it is made and re-made by talking (García Santamaría, 2017; Guerra, 2012; Karlsen, 2013).

Lincoln (1992, p. 9) asserted that discourses uniting ideological persuasion and sentiment evocation can fundamentally shape and re-shape societies. Ever since the 1959 Revolution, the real or imagined threat of US aggression has had all the components necessary to arouse sentiments and build national imageries. Considering the juxtaposed, overlapping and mixed sentiments relating to public rallying in favour of the Revolution (described by participants in this study and also by Guerra (2012)), it makes sense that journalists and students (to varying degrees) see it as their responsibility to advance the security of fellow Cubans. This loyalty to the nation and the re-creation of the Revolution is fed by the discourses journalists themselves assert in state media. Therefore, despite aiming for professionalism, these ideals often contravene the unifying function of the state media. At the same time, journalists vacillate between agreeing and disagreeing on the validity of the security paradigm, being well aware that journalistic credibility and legitimacy are at stake in negotiations with the political agenda.

Journalists in any part of the world may have ideals that are incompatible with how reporting and news-work are conducted (Mellado, 2021). Internal and external influences can easily separate ideals and practices and infiltrate the autonomy of professionals. Certainly, these factors exist in extreme form in Cuba. The *loyal-facilitator* support towards elites and the nation shown in the Cuban sample exceeded all other countries in the JRP, and this aligns perfectly with the wishes of the PCC. At the same time, the civic role is quite frequently applied, which to some degree reflects the ideals of education and empowerment (within limits), which is also a part of PCC policy. Notably, the *interventionist role* lowers the presence of the *loyal facilitator* role in Cuba. In addition to the *interventionist role* possibly being an ideology speech in journalistic disguise, it may also be a means of gaining a portion of autonomy, as an opinion piece may grant more freedom than the blatant PCC propaganda reflected in support for the nation and elites.

One question remains unsolved: What is left of the journalistic profession in Cuba after such negotiations with both the local/political context and a globalised or Westernised discourse? Perhaps Guerra's (2012) conceptualisation of the Cuban Revolution as a palimpsest can be a guide to some reflections. A palimpsest is a manuscript page on which the writing has been erased and

replaced by another text. Using the 'Padilla affair'[19] as an example, Guerra argued that revolutionary leaders have put their efforts into writing over and scripting the thoughts and actions of citizens in ways beneficial to the government. Erasing text by hindering citizens' access to ideas and 'policing the autonomy of words and thoughts' has been an important strategy to secure the stability of the revolutionary state (Guerra, 2012, p. 357).

As mentioned, journalists are collectively depicted as soldiers. Journalists aiming for individual agency through claims of professionalisation can be seen as a way of bypassing the political framework. From the perspective of the PCC, this is viewed as 'counterrevolutionary' (García Santamaría, 2021). The irony, however, is that many state media journalists already work for non-state outlets. They are simultaneously working for and against the PCC and the defence paradigm. Indeed, Díaz-Canel reminded journalists of this in his closing speech at the 2018 UPEC conference (Granma, 2018). 'With irony but without euphemism' he referred to journalists working for media outlets outside the state as 'the new revolutionaries'. Their mission is, according to the Cuban president, disobedience and division. The new revolutionaries often learn such traits at US universities while claiming to be without ties to the official line of thought: 'The new revolutionaries are democratic and respectful of contrary opinions, so those who do not share their positions are: submissive, lambs, obedient, mediocre, Taliban, Red Khmers, Stalinists, government officials and repressors.'

Thus, a 'policing of the autonomy of words' still exists. What is journalistic autonomy, then, in such a context? Autonomy Cuba-style is a fine-grained mixture of partially applying professional ideals on the fringe of the possible. 'The possible' is a reference to the PhD thesis by Elizalde, named the 'Consensus of the possible', which can be understood as what it is possible to do 'within the revolution' (Castro, 1961) and within the security paradigm. Perhaps it can be considered a fragmented professionalism? For instance, as documented in article 2, the lines of acceptable behaviour 'within the Revolution' are blurred, and probably intentionally. If journalists become too dedicated to either autonomy or social obligations, this will provoke consequences (such as losing one's job or being branded a dissident). The only area of professionalism that can be pursued without large-scale negotiation is the ideal of knowledge. It can grant a much larger portion of autonomy, as universities and academic magazines belong to a 'semi-official' sphere.

Among the fragments of autonomy pursued every day by journalists, the possibilities of putting the pieces together to achieve more room to manoeuvre is steadily growing. What is at stake when non-state outlets are pushing the boundaries of both the professional and the imagined/interpretive

[19] Herberto Juan Padilla was a Cuban writer and poet who was imprisoned in 1971 for criticising the government.

community? A central issue, both for the media sector and Cuban society in general, is that of money versus ideals. In other words, reform society and accept more actors in the economy or defend a standstill with the state as the main provider. This means that economic development can be a major deciding factor in how journalism, both within state and non-state outlets, will develop.

As political legitimacy has not been re-established through the reforms initiated by Raúl Castro, the choice for president in Díaz-Canel might be between increased democratic participation and deep socioeconomic reforms and more repression and exclusion (Bye, 2020, p. 219). The latter alternative might force many non-state outlets further underground or promote an increased exodus of well-qualified media professionals. Some journalists in this study stated that new criteria of newsworthiness have been imposed by non-state coverage, but only sporadically. The rigidity of the system will be exposed and put to the test in the years to come regarding the degree to which the state media can continue with the same amount of rigid and militaristic rhetoric in the midst of an expanding online media environment with liberal journalistic ideals. The likelihood of keeping young journalists in the profession and in the country may lie in the state media's ability to undergo reform. Most of the young people in this study were largely supportive of the ideals of the Revolution but lost faith in these when they repeatedly have to give way to defence considerations. However, reaching a point where the PCC will allow state media to fulfil professional demands by granting journalists sufficient autonomy seems unlikely in the near future.

6.6 Summary

This chapter discussed the four specific research questions, each of which are related to the article with the same numeration. It also answered the general research question in relation to the theoretical framework of this synopsis. I found that the professional loyalty of Cuban journalists is split between the profession and the nation and also between the nation and the PCC. This has created many contradicting discourses and practices. Further, the chapter illustrates that state media journalists' role conception and role perception, in addition to self-censorship strategies, may be more fluctuating than in other contexts due to the unstable enemy image of the US.

It is also argued that core concepts of professionalism and journalistic autonomy (Freidson, 2001; Waisbord, 2013b) might need to be altered to fit the Cuban context; this means including the state as a component in the understanding of social responsibility and self-regulation. The data from journalists and students illustrated an emerging generational divide, inciting different types of imaginations of a collective future (García Santamaría, 2021; Guerra, 2012). This points towards multiple normative frameworks at play and possible friction in the 'interpretive community' (Zelizer, 1993).

The leeway of the academic community allows for aspirations of autonomy and professional ideals among journalism students, thus making the discrepancy between ideals and practices difficult to manage. While breaches between ideals and practices are common throughout the world (Mellado, 2021), this is at an extreme in Cuba. In this chapter, I have argued that journalists in state media practice a fragmented professionalism. Participants preserve a sense of professionalism by maintaining bonds with the academic community, by applying carefully selected self-censorship strategies, by collaborating with the PCC or by opting for (part-time) jobs in non-state outlets.

7 CONCLUSION

State media journalists in Cuba are far from being mere mouthpieces of the system or ‘correct revolutionaries’. When asked about their opinions and day-to-day work, an array of individual agendas and strategies appeared. These struggles to achieve or maintain professional journalism are subtly (or not at all) displayed in their products in state media. The same processes are evident from research detecting the gaps between role conception and role performance (Mellado, 2021). This project confirms the need for serious fieldwork to attempt to understand different journalistic cultures by experiencing them first-hand. Although limited in many ways, this project only considered what journalists and journalism students say, and did not include analyses of their journalistic output. Nevertheless, the study broadens the understanding of journalism in a changing authoritarian society and the nuances in negotiations between local and global journalistic discourses. In Cuba, this is particularly interesting given its ambiguous relationship with the US and the way the Internet and non-state outlets are challenging what was previously a state media monopoly.

The aspect that has been fundamentally difficult to understand, as a foreigner, is that journalists in Cuban state media are critical towards the inflexibility of the political agenda restricting the media, yet at the same time they support large parts of the political system which is the source of these journalistic limitations. This points to some of the many overlapping, mixed and diffuse processes operating in the negotiations of autonomy and nationalism in Cuba.

The main finding in this thesis is that the lines of acceptable journalistic behaviour ‘within the revolution’ are blurred. This leaves a large amount of responsibility to journalists and promotes both self-censorship practices and strategies to rescue a sense of professionalism. Journalists strive to fulfil professional ideals of autonomy and social responsibility (Waisbord, 2013b; Freidson, 2001) while simultaneously avoiding stepping ‘outside’ of the Revolution and becoming a ‘counterrevolutionary’. One of the vaguest areas of what one can or cannot do is the coverage of stories that might evoke the interest of the US. As argued in article 1, self-censorship is thus a way to balance external demands with journalistic integrity, accepting that not all stories can be told. At the same time, journalists largely support the social values of the Revolution and, therefore, have incentives for self-censorship. However, journalists relate to this in different ways. Some rescue a sense of professionalism by accepting the defence paradigm as a national concern, whereas others see it as profoundly political. For the latter group, restrictions are experienced as harsher and more demanding.

Journalists and journalism students in Cuba must relate to a multitude of discourses and navigate among them. The expansion of non-state outlets steadily increases this plethora of discourses. There

is the ‘siege’ mentality in the state media, the US media outlets covering Cuba, and the different ideals and agendas of the non-state outlets. Thus, aiming for some sort of coherent understanding of journalistic professionalism and bridging ideals and practices in this landscape is extremely demanding. I argue that the non-state media and the academic community contribute to building a professional or alternative interpretive community (Zelizer, 1993) that works alongside the security paradigm. This may lead to a consolidation of professionalism Cuba-style, which takes the political will into account. Alternatively, it can lead to friction because the interpretive community is understood differently among journalists of different ages.

Blurred boundaries are also an efficient tool for decreasing individual attempts at autonomy within state media institutions. In article 2, I found that journalists higher in the hierarchy are best prepared to tackle restrictions and potential consequences, and therefore they can push for autonomy within state media outlets. The uncertainty of overstepping the invisible line rather promotes attempts at collective autonomy instead of individual autonomy. From the authorities’ point of view, organised attempts through, for instance, UPEC are much more tolerated. At the same time, remaining within the framework set by the PCC, the borders between social and political spheres are largely reproduced (Geoffray, 2014).

Non-state media is broadly challenging the state media hegemony in journalism. Despite having a relatively low readership within Cuba, non-state media still allows journalists and journalism students to work for – and imagine – a different type of media system. As has been argued in this thesis, discourse can shape and re-shape society (Lincoln, 1992). This is particularly true in Cuba, where much of the Revolution’s success is attributed to the speeches of revolutionary leaders and how this has aroused public support for a ‘grassroots’ dictatorship (Guerra, 2012). The imagining of the way the media could work is divided between generations.

Many of the non-state media outlets fulfil central elements of professionalism and are less intertwined with political demands than state media. The booming online media ecosystem is thus a major draw for young journalists and journalism students. As argued in article 3, journalist participants largely draw on local discourses in working through the system to achieve change. The younger generation, on the other hand, leans towards globalised ideals of journalism. The interpretive community (Zelizer, 1993) seems to be split between actors of different generations as the borders of appropriate practice are not consolidated. This could lead to broader demands for a more autonomous social sphere and may possibly initiate friction with the political leadership.

In this context, the academic community as a ‘semi-official’ public sphere is more important than ever. Journalism students find the transition from university to state media during internship extremely difficult. The breach between the ideals taught at university and the reality in state media

is hard to bridge, as argued in article 4. Many students also have jobs in non-state media and shuttle between three social spheres: the 'official' in state media, the 'semi-official' at university and a 'networked social sphere' in non-state outlets (Padilla & Viera, 2021). The role of the academic community in preparing students and giving them the confidence to practice a type of journalism that is unavailable in state media, but which they can pursue in some of the non-state media outlets, is extremely important.

A breach between ideals and practices is a common experience throughout the world. Still, Cuba is different from many other countries in the sense that the media structure meets 'theoretical expectations', meaning that the loyal-facilitator role is prominent alongside interventionism and loyalism (Mellado et al., 2021a). I argue that the gap between ideals and practices in Cuba, at the time of this fieldwork, is experienced as harder to navigate than in other contexts. In addition, quantitative frameworks lack the nuances that appear in qualitative studies. This study illustrates the multifaceted ways journalists strive to gain or maintain autonomy and professionalism despite unfavourable working conditions.

Lastly, I argue that the negotiations with the local/political context of nationalistic sacrifice, resistance and redemption, and a globalised/Westernised discourse of professional demands have created a form of *fragmented professionalism* in Cuba. Journalists continue to pursue ideals of autonomy and social responsibility, but becoming too dedicated to either one can have negative consequences and may contradict the social values of the Revolution. This causes journalists to pursue bits and pieces of professional ideals along the borders of tolerated discourse. Some of the non-state outlets challenge this ambiguous framework by promoting more solid professional ideals and the possibility of an alternative public sphere.

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PART 2: THE ARTICLES

9 SUMMARY OF ARTICLES

The positive aspect of an article-based thesis is that one can finish segments one by one. The negative aspect is that one cannot change what was done years ago and once the articles have been published. As time has passed, I have learnt more about conducting research, about Cuba and about the available literature. This chapter lists the four published articles and addresses positive aspects of the research as well as what could have been done differently.

In retrospect, I believe I underestimated the difficulty of undertaking a research project on a hard-to-reach group situated half the world away. While I am glad that I had the opportunity and that I managed to see it through, it has been challenging. For instance, returning to conduct more interviews was outside the scope of what was possible financially and timewise. Anonymity for participants has hindered me from following their lives through, for instance, Facebook (apart from those with open profiles). Still, I am deeply thankful for the many insights this inquiry has given me over the course of these years.

9.1 Article 1

Natvig, A. (2019b) A place under siege: Self-censorship strategies among Cuban state media journalists. [Plaza Sitiada: estrategias de auto-censura entre periodistas en los medios del Estado cubano] *Brazilian Journalism Research*,15(2), 358-380.

The threat paradigm of protecting Cuba against US aggression has defined the Cuban state media since the 1960s. This article analyses the ways Cuban journalists negotiate between professional ideals and a responsibility to protect the nation. Journalists apply self-censorship strategies to meet editorial demands of positive news, but they acknowledge and worry about the lack of relevant information being provided to the people. At the same time, journalists believe certain information should be withheld from publication in order to protect the nation.

The strength of this article is that it goes into detail about how self-censorship is understood and experienced by state media journalists. In previous literature, there is little information on specific strategies among Cuban journalists. The article could, however, have discussed the breach between ideals and practices to a larger extent.

9.2 Article 2

Natvig, A. (2021) Perceptions of and strategies for autonomy among journalists working for Cuban state media. In T. Henken and S. García Santamaría (eds.) *Cuba's Digital Revolution: Citizen Innovation and State Policy*. Miami: University of Florida Press. Natvig, A. (2022) Periodistas y medios estatales Cubanos: Percepciones y estrategias de autonomía. In T. Henken and S. García Santamaría (Eds) *La Revolución Digital Cubana: Innovación Ciudadana Y Política Estatal.* Madrid: Editorial Hypermedia Incorporated.

This article, which was published in the form of a book chapter, more closely examines the various channels and strategies used by state media journalists to publish stories that otherwise would be censored. The chapter argues that it is possible for journalists to expand their own autonomy within state media. For journalists lower in the hierarchy, it can be accomplished by avoiding politics or keeping multiple jobs, also outside state media. For those with more prominent roles, criticism can be voiced through a careful selection of interviewees, or one can inform and work with the PCC on sensitive issues.

The strength of this book chapter (which is also published in a Spanish version) is the detailed stories of how autonomy is negotiated by journalists (and students). While a single story, by itself, cannot be generalised to a profession in general, it can shed light on how a system works from the inside.

9.3 Article 3

Natvig, A. (2019a) Diverging ideals of autonomy: non-state media in Cuba challenging a broken media monopoly. *Journal of Alternative and Community Media*, 4(2), 14-30.

The article detects an emerging generational divide by outlining how the ecosystem of non-state outlets affects perceptions of autonomy among journalists and students. Students are more interested in working for non-state outlets, as they provide broader journalistic opportunities. Journalists inside state media are also eager for change, but they want change through the proper channels of state ownership rather than through private businesses.

I am ambivalent towards the theoretical framework of this article. I find the theoretical assessment to be one of the article's strengths, but I am not sure if the classification of media systems is the best theory for analysing my data. The true value of my interviews lies at the other end of the spectrum. It is the nuances, the ambiguity and the sense of simultaneous belonging and opposition that make my data interesting. While Siebert et al. (1956) offered a normative framework for

authoritarian countries, which was further nuanced by Ostini and Fung (2002), these models are insufficient to capture the Cuban context. It is the way the media system reflects a country's specific political system, and the incongruities and tensions between local and global influences, that in my opinion provides the most fruitful point of departure for analysis (Voltmer, 2011, p. 240). In the methods section, I am overlooking the fact that there are additional interesting stories to be told through the information that is omitted by participants.

9.4 Article 4

Natvig, A. (2018) Cuban journalism students: between ideals and state ideology. *Journalism Education*, 7(1), 19-28.

The dissonance between ideals and reality that journalism students experience during internships is discussed in this article. It demonstrates that journalism education in Havana largely pertains to Western normative ideals. This makes the gap between theory and practice almost unbridgeable for students entering the confines of state media outlets during their internships. For many students, the non-state media represents a viable option to put journalistic ideals into practice.

This article was the first to be written of the four articles. While the theoretical section is quite good, the discussion is somewhat repetitive. Aspects of new theory introduced in the conclusion could have been moved up to the discussion section.

10 PUBLISHED ARTICLES

10.1 Article 1

English version: A place under siege: Self-censorship strategies among Cuban state media journalists

Spanish version: Plaza Sitiada: estrategias de auto-censura entre periodistas en los medios del Estado Cubano

ARTICLE

A PLACE UNDER SIEGE:

self-censorship strategies among Cuban state media journalists

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ABSTRACT – This article analyses how enemy images of the US in Cuba affect journalists in the Cuban state media. For the political elite, the image of US imperialistic interests has legitimated their continuing control over the media. Within these limits, journalists negotiate between professional ideals and a responsibility to protect the country. Journalists accept self-censorship of stories that, in theory, damage Cuban interests. At the same time, journalists see the US threat as inflated, and worry about the lack of relevant information available to the public. While journalists oppose censorship and self-censorship on everyday issues, attempts to change these practices are confined to theoretical discussions.
Key words: Authoritarian regime. Cuban journalism. Enemy images. Self-censorship. State media.

UM LUGAR SITIADO:
estratégias de autocensura entre jornalistas do Estado cubano

RESUMO – Este artigo analisa o modo como imagens hostis aos Estados Unidos em Cuba afetam os jornalistas dos meios de comunicação estatais cubanos. Para a elite política, a imagem dos interesses imperialistas dos Estados Unidos vem legitimar o seu controle permanente sobre os meios de comunicação. Com estas limitações, os jornalistas se veem obrigados a equilibrar os ideais profissionais com a sua responsabilidade de proteger a nação. Os jornalistas aceitam se autocensurar em matérias que, teoricamente, prejudicam os interesses cubanos. Ao mesmo tempo, os jornalistas consideram a ameaça norte-americana como sendo deliberadamente exagerada e preocupam-se com a falta de informação relevante que se encontra disponível ao público. Enquanto os jornalistas se confrontam com censura e autocensura em assuntos do quotidiano, as tentativas de mudar essas práticas estão confinadas às discussões teóricas.
Palavras-chave: Regime autoritário. Jornalismo cubano. Imagens hostis. Autocensura. Meios de comunicação estatais.

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PLAZA SITIADA:
estrategias de autocensura entre periodistas en medios del Estado cubano

RESUMEN – Este artículo analiza el modo en que las imágenes de EE.UU. como enemigo de Cuba afectan a los periodistas de los medios de comunicaciones cubanos. Para la élite política, la imagen de los intereses imperialistas de EE.UU. ha contribuido a legitimar su control continuo de la prensa. Actuando dentro de esos límites, los periodistas se ven obligados a equilibrar sus ideales profesionales con la responsabilidad de proteger a su país. Los periodistas aceptan la autocensura en cuanto a noticias que en teoría puedan perjudicar los intereses cubanos. A la vez, los periodistas consideran que se exagera con respecto a la amenaza norteamericana, y se preocupan por la falta de acceso por parte del pueblo a información relevante. Los periodistas se oponen a la censura y la autocensura en los asuntos cotidianos, pero los esfuerzos aplicados a cambiar estas prácticas se limitan a debates teóricos.
Palabras clave: Régimen autoritario. Periodismo cubano. Narrativas de enemigo. Autocensura. Prensa estatal.

1 Introduction

The antagonism between Cuba and the United States is well documented; media outlets worldwide publish disagreements between the countries. What is less often researched is how the difficult relationship affects the work of journalists in the Cuban state media. The threat of the US undermining or changing the Cuban social and political system causes journalists to apply various strategies of self-censorship to protect their nation.

Hitherto, there has been little research on journalistic strategies and the justifications for self-censorship in Cuba. Although this phenomenon is often referred to in reports on press freedom by organisations such as Freedom House or Reporters Without Borders, academic studies seldom make self-censorship the main focus of research. This article aims to contribute towards deepening knowledge of the specific journalistic processes (rather than political and juridical frameworks) leading to self-censorship. Through narratives from respondents, the article discusses the following research questions:

1. How do perceptions of a US threat contribute to self-censorship in the Cuban state media?

2. To what extent are signs of changing self-censorship practices among Cuban journalists evident?

2 A brief history of Cuban media

The relationship between Cuba and the US is documented in Cuban media history, both before and after the 1959 revolution. The geographical and historical proximity of Cuba and the US, as well as the increasing ideological divide between the countries, are important aspects for an understanding of how the perceived threat from the US affects journalists in Cuba today.

Before the revolution, Cuba had been a testing ground for US radio and television broadcasting, so the technology used in Cuba at the time was ahead of that of most comparable countries. In the 1950s, there were more than 150 local and national radio stations in Cuba, and six television channels (García Luis, 2013, p. 75). A majority of these were owned and run by US companies, financed by advertising. However, it was possible to find a variety of Cuban voices in newspapers and magazines (Marrero, 2003, p. 58). The development of television in Cuba followed rapid and unexpected transformations in the Cuban nation-state. Some scholars view Cuba before the Batista military coup of 1952 as a democracy in which the media had a relatively strong degree of political influence and a plurality of expression (Guerra, 2012; Rivero, 2015). During the Batista dictatorship, the broadcasting system detached itself from US capitalist principles and censorship became widespread: this situation lasted until the revolution of 1959.

Cuban media scholars see the five years after the revolution as a golden age for the media (Garcés, 2012; García Luis, 2013). Cuban journalism had severed its ties with the market-driven US model and had still not been influenced by the bureaucratic Soviet model (Siebert et al., 1984). A new, socialist press was to be developed. However, defining events in Cuba–US relations, such as the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, and the 1962 Missile Crisis, moved Cuba closer to the USSR — with lasting consequences for the media.

It is uncertain whether the revolutionary government intended to nationalise the media after the revolution. García Santamaría (2017,

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p. 47) considers that nationalisation of the media may have come about as a result of anti-Batista zeal, the exodus of journalists and editors, and pressure from unionised media workers. In 1965, the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) was founded and aligned the press with politics — which according to García Luis (2013, p. 81), led to major setbacks in journalistic content and creativity, and the media's loss of authority to make their own decisions. In addition, the older generation, which had worked under capitalism, was replaced with a new one, bringing changes in the coverage of themes, genres and style. The threat of a possible US invasion prompted the consolidation of political power and spurred a press system designed to block counterrevolutionary strategies (p. 85). The commercial, economic and financial embargo imposed by the US on Cuba (referred to in Cuba as *el bloqueo*, the blockade) has contributed to the continuing difficulties in Cuba–US relations. It has also nurtured conservative forces within Cuba that wish to perpetuate the notion of the US as an enemy, with the belief that any policy concessions to the US will weaken Cuba (Hernández, 2003, p. 110). The contradictory process of the Cuban public's contribution towards the creation of a state that proceeded to severely limit their agency, can be explained through the political construction of a master narrative of unity and resistance. The dismantling of US economic and cultural hegemony, as well as a cleansing from the indignity and injustices of past governments, required the media's unconditional support and self-sacrifice. This implied acceptance of mass organisation as a substitute for a public sphere with individual agendas — a narrative which inscribed the Cuban people as protagonists in an interminable battle between freedom and imperialism, good and evil (Guerra, 2012, p. 5).

The influential Cuban academic and journalist Julio García Luis (2013, p. 116) recalls Cuban journalism in the 1970: '...almost without noticing we had started making a press to please the system rather than serve public opinion'. In the next decade, various congresses of the PCC and the Union of Cuban Journalists (UPEC) declared that journalism should be objective, true and analytical, and that the apologetic style of the press would have to change (Marrero, 2006, p. 56). Finally, the 1986 UPEC Congress managed to start a process of press reform. Fidel Castro was present at the congress and declared: 'No enemy will critique us better than we do ourselves' (Marrero, 2006, p. 73). But just a few years later the Soviet Union collapsed. Resisting foreign threats became the priority of the PCC, and an authoritarian attitude towards

the press replaced calls for criticism. Since 2000, online media outlets and bloggers have increasingly challenged the informational role of the state press. Cuba still ranks as 172 out of 180 countries on the Press Freedom Index of Reporters Without Borders (2018).

A policy regulating the press has been in the making since 2013, and in 2018 it was finally presented. The document acknowledges several difficulties, such as external control of the press, the withholding of information, self-censorship and a deteriorating professional culture (PCC, 2018, p. 6). However, as the non-state platform *Periodismo de Barrio* points out, the document does not suggest action in respect of the main source of these issues, namely the PCC whose functionaries were part of the working group formulating this policy. Further, state media expected to be almost 'schizophrenic', as they are told to be independent of the party (Periodismo de Barrio, 2018). At the same time, the communication policy document states that the PCC is 'the director of social communication in the country, draws up the general policy for its development and controls it' (PCC, 2018, p. 10).

Following this, president Miguel Díaz-Canel held a closing speech at the Cuban Journalists Union (UPEC) where he praised state media journalists for resisting joining well paid but 'opportunist and cynical' campaigns against Cuba [referring to offers from Miami media outlets]. Díaz-Canel said the media scene never before has been as challenging, but he made sure to remind journalists of the hardships Cuba had been through previously. Citing Fidel Castro, Díaz-Canel considered that: 'the central role of journalism [is] in defending the besieged fortress' (Granma, 2018).

This notion is a reference to Cuba's being under constant attack by the US and it is referred to by participants as the concept of *plaza sitiada*. State media journalists use this concept to explain or dispute (self-)censorship on subjects that can be spun by US media, referring in particular to outlets in Miami. Hernández (2003, p. 110) maintains that 'the consequent mentality of a fortress under attack does not contribute to pluralism in Cuba'. That Díaz-Canel made the effort to mention this concept, point towards a hardening of the relation between the countries. The Cuban president's activities on *Twitter* support this. For instance, in commemorating the Bay of Pigs he claims that the US continues with 'the same lies and aggressions' and Cuba with 'equal courage and fidelity' (Díaz-Canel, 2019). Such rhetoric from the leadership of the PCC may consequently mean a hardening of media policy.

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3 Processes of self-censorship

Self-censorship is a practice found in journalistic cultures around the world, but it is a difficult phenomenon to define. There can be informal processes of self-censorship: referring to journalistic reporting practices when selecting stories, routines in the newsroom or cultural expectations. Self-censorship can also be more formal: it can be guided by institutionalised expectations of journalistic behaviour, or practices to avoid punishment or threats from public authorities (Elbaz et al., 2017; Lee, 1998; Skjerdal, 2010). The approach of this article is closer to a formal understanding of self-censorship, and will depart from Skjerdal's (2010, p. 99) definition of self-censorship as 'the withholding of journalistic material due to felt external pressure'.

Self-censorship practices are, in many ways, conditioned by the media system in the country, and depend on the degree to which media structures favour or restrict dissenting opinions (Elbaz et al., 2017). For this article it therefore makes sense to limit the review to countries with a somewhat similar state media system as Cuba's, rather than to countries that are geographically close by. Although self-censorship is found in Latin America, state media in the region are generally more challenged by private media than is the case in Cuba — although it should be noted that populism in Ecuador, Venezuela and Bolivia has brought about tighter control of or expropriation of private media (Waisbord, 2012, p. 508). Little research has, however, been done on how journalists experience these changes. There is an overall need for more research on how journalists apply and narrate self-censorship practices, which Skjerdal (2010, p. 98) also notes. This article attempts to contribute to knowledge of how journalists in authoritarian countries experience and relate to self-censorship, as well as filling some of the gaps in the research on Latin American journalism in general, and on Cuba in particular.

In societies with a long tradition of authoritarian rule, a tendency towards burying sensitive information – especially information critical of the governing party – can be the norm for journalistic behaviour. This is a consequence of the media not having a 'watchdog' role in society, combined with journalists' lack of faith in declarations of freedom of speech. This, in turn, promotes self-censorship strategies among journalists. Some contributing factors are punishment and rewards by ruling elites (Elbaz et al., 2017, p.

128). Following the Chinese takeover of Hong Kong, Lee (1998, p. 58) maintains that self-censorship among Hong Kong journalists arose as a result of a lack of better alternatives in facing China's power to reprimand or to reward journalistic coverage. This continues today in China, where fines, arrests, demotions and libel lawsuits induce journalists to self-censor (Xu, 2014). The fear of consequences similarly stimulated self-censorship in South Africa during apartheid, and in Indonesia during the New Order regime, and are practices continuing despite transition from authoritarian rule (Merrett, 2001; Tapsell, 2012). In Russia, after a wave of terrorist attacks from 1999 onwards, journalists agreed to draw up 'responsible' guidelines for the coverage of terrorism, something Simons and Strovsky (2006, p. 205) consider a trade-off for harsher media laws, and a way to preclude media outlets from fines and closedowns.

Other aspects promoting self-censorship are the individual's commitment to social, ideological or political beliefs (Elbaz et al., 2017, p. 131). Skjerdal (2010, p. 116) contends that journalists in Ethiopia justify self-censorship by disclaiming their own role in the state media system while at the same time committing to the governmental strategy of development journalism, thereby withholding information that could harm the country or its citizens. Furthermore, uniting over a common enemy is something that can promote self-censorship in times of conflict, a tendency seen in authoritarian as well as democratic countries: in the US following the invasion of Iraq in 2003; in Russia after the 1999 terrorist attacks; and in Israel after the second intifada (Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2001; Simons & Strovsky, 2006; Zandberg & Neiger, 2005).

4 Enemy images

For Cuban journalists there is an external variable that must always be taken into account: current relations with the US. The risk of a 'capitalist domination and subversion of the Cuban social order' brings constant tension to Cuban journalism (Alonso & Pérez, 2016, p. 199). Theoretical perspectives on the creation and preservation of enemy images can contribute towards understanding how Cuban journalists, as producers of these, are affected in their work situation.

Luostarinen (1989, pp. 124–127) claims that the relationship between countries, but also the internal affairs within them, affect the

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processes of developing enemy images. He defines enemy images as 'a belief held by a certain group that its security and basic values are directly and seriously threatened by some other group'. Enemy images always involve the possibility of violence and destruction; they are not merely feelings of antipathy. In countries where there is a permanent state of conflict or war, the state must always be prepared, not only militarily and economically, but also culturally. The preservation of enemy images is part of the defence – 'mental drills' in preparation for war. Adding a perspective of time serves to enhance the image: the enemy may be an arch-enemy of the past, but it is also a threat to a common future. There are several advantages to enemy images: they may integrate groups, diminish internal conflict, and strengthen national identity (Luostarinen, 1989, p. 127).

Images of an enemy can be constructed in various ways. Ottosen (2004, p. 218) draws a distinction between situational and dispositional enemy images. A situational enemy image involves a description of one specific incident of hostility. If, over time, there are many such incidents, a dispositional enemy image may develop, and aggressive behaviour will be expected from the enemy. Dispositional enemy images are difficult to change, as they are composed of stereotypes internalised in language and culture. These are reflected in the media through standardised characteristics of the enemy, even if journalists do not deliberately decide to do this.

5 Methodology

My data consists of 12 semi-structured qualitative interviews with journalists in the Cuban state media. By state media I refer to news outlets paid for either by the Cuban government or through the state budget. The interviews were conducted during a two-month fieldwork trip in the autumn of 2016. Anonymity for participants is important in the Cuban context. The journalists interviewed work in state newspapers and in broadcasting, their titles ranging from editors to recent graduates. The names of both workplaces and positions have been omitted from this article. Instead, I divide the journalists into three age groups, and give them pseudonyms. There were five in the group young reporter (20–34 years), five middle-aged reporters (35–49 years), and two senior reporters (50+ years). The participants chose where they wanted the interview to take place,

and I met most of them outside the workplace. The interviews were recorded if participants agreed to it, which everyone did.

I had a contact at the Faculty of Communications (FCOM) at the University of Havana and was allowed to use their internet and intranet to obtain research from the faculty. My contact advised me to get a research visa. A foreign researcher interviewing state journalists with a tourist visa was considered something that could cause trouble both for me and the FCOM. However, getting the visa was difficult. While waiting for the visa, I created a list in collaboration with my contact, primarily with journalists I found interesting. As a scholar of journalism, my contact has a broad overview of Cuban journalists, and I found his contributions to this list very valuable, and the opposite of restraint on my research. Gaining access to state media journalists would have been much more difficult without this contact. He helped me obtain telephone numbers and navigate the intricate system of getting in touch in a society that is largely offline, and which has extremely expensive mobile costs compared to state salaries.

I used an interview guide inspired by the questionnaire in the *Worlds of Journalism* study (WoJ, 2012). It dealt with professional roles and values, construction of news, daily routines, internet and social media. For the purposes of this article, important questions were: Who decides which stories should be prioritised?; Are there subjects one should not write about?; and How do you select your sources? I did not ask directly about 'self-censorship' as I did not want to impose any normative judgements about Cuban journalism but, rather, wanted to hear stories from the journalists' workdays.

Generally, I found participants to be quite critical both of their own role, and of the state media system of which they are part. This, however, was often limited itself to general claims, or to hypothetical examples. More experienced reporters, in particular, were hesitant to share details about personal experiences — which may be a result of a general scepticism towards foreigners having opinions on Cuban media or worries about information being misused. The younger participants shared more details and examples of how their journalistic work was restricted by the *plaza sitiada* mentality, and I therefore quote these interviews quite frequently. However, one may expect a degree of social desirability bias (Bryman, 2016) in this selection, as journalist participants did represent their state media outlet and, despite anonymity, probably did not want to express positions outside acceptable limits. For instance, admitting working for media outlets

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outside the state can be controversial. (This is discussed in other articles for my PhD project, of which this article is part; I nevertheless consider the discussions outside the scope of this article.)

All interviews were conducted in Spanish. The quotes appearing here were translated into English by me and verified by a proofreader. The responses from my sample are not applicable to all journalists throughout Cuba, but the interviews offer insights into some journalistic perceptions in a changing society.

6 Applying self-censorship to protect the nation

Journalists of all age groups have grown up in a society marked by the difficult relationship to its northern neighbour. As young reporter Jorge (personal communication, November 9th, 2016) puts it, after explaining how his family struggled to get benzathine penicillin to cure his rheumatic fever: "that sensation of being under siege, you have it in your veins because you were born under it and the country has had to live that way". In the state media there is an obligation to support the policies of the Communist Party. The three main newspapers in Cuba, *Granma*, *Trabajadores*, and *Juventud Rebelde*, are all official organs of the PCC or its connected organisations. That does not, however, mean that journalists are mere propaganda tools, or that they lack autonomy. What is published in the state media often depends on decisions made by the editor, who can be either more or less conservative.

Journalism education in Cuba is currently a five-year programme that all journalists working in state media go through. The curricula are quite extensive and follow many of the ideals of 'Western' journalism education, such as investigative journalism, criticism of societal malfunctions, and ethics. Coming from an extensive journalism education, the decision/willingness to self-censor among participants is based on adaptation processes in the newsroom as well as on the journalists' own support for the Cuban socialist project and editorial policies. A young reporter, Tania, says: "There are many things we think we cannot talk about. Not because we made it up, but because there is a tradition from which we have learnt" (Tania, personal communication, November 15th, 2016).

Part of this tradition consists of relating to the PCC's changing analysis of the outside world, and particularly the relationship to the

US. While some journalists question the usefulness of the context-decisive editorial guidelines state media operate with, there is a general acceptance of the underlying strategic and political reasons. Journalists of all age groups consider the socialist project in Cuba to be threatened by the US. They share the sense of a fight between David and Goliath in the field of communication — one that Cuba can never win. One strategy used by journalists is to avoid sharing information in the media, rather keeping it in closed circles instead. Senior reporter Carmen says:

> Generally, we are very critical at the interior. If you say four things into a microphone, they end up in Miami. They manipulate everything and people living here then believe you want to overthrow the system. [...] When we truly discuss things, they do not go through the official public channels of communication. (Carmen, personal communication, November 12th, 2016).

Discussions on what Cuban journalism should look like — or which changes are needed in the state media — can be both critical and harsh when journalists meet at the gatherings of the UPEC. However, the content of speeches made here are not to be shared with the outside world unless one is willing to take the consequences. One example is when a Cuban journalist published a speech, given at a UPEC conference by a deputy director of *Granma*, on his blog. The speech warned about Cuba heading towards a new economic recession and the difficulty of dealing with public unrest without the charismatic leadership of Fidel Castro. This criticism, coming from within the higher echelons of the PCC, was picked up by media outlets in Miami, causing the journalist both to lose his job as a radio reporter and to be expelled from the UPEC (Gámez Torres, 2016; Martínoticias, 2016).

7 Blurred lines

The limits of what can and cannot be said, and how and in which forum it should be expressed, are, however, difficult to determine. Moreover, establishing what information could be useful for the US, or may contribute to negative stories about Cuba in the Miami press, is an uncertain process. Some journalists seem more comfortable than others in filtering out appropriate information. Jorge, a young reporter, considers that if "some institution or we ourselves

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have decided we don't want to talk about this, it is always in regard to the greater good of the country". He mentions a case where a company wanted to establish itself in Cuba and create jobs, and considers that such information should not be published in the media: "If we made this public, the next thing that will happen is the US imposing a fine of millions of dollars on that company, which will bail out and do nothing in Cuba. So what do you do? You don't talk about that company" (Jorge, personal communication, November 9th, 2016).

This may be something of an established norm of (self-) censorship, as proposed by Cuban scholar García Luis (2013, p. 154), on what Cuban journalists need to consider. Senior reporter Carmen considers the practice of self-censorship as more of a 'balancing' act. She describes a hypothetical example of how a crumbling building will be reported in state media, a recurrent story as most of the colonial houses of Havana are in terrible condition. She says *Granma*, as an official organ of the PCC, will cover the event focusing on how effective and quick the rescue team was, not that the reason for the collapse was decades of neglect: "Why? Because if *Granma* is critical it goes straight to the *Miami Herald*. In [my media outlet] we might give more information on the background, but the coverage must always be balanced so that it does not end up in the wrong hands. It should not be censored, but not so critical that it ends up in Miami" (Carmen, personal communication, November 12th, 2016).

Journalists agree to keep certain issues silent in order to avoid media outlets, particularly those in Miami, from getting information they could use 'against' Cuba. At the same time, the editorial policies that journalists must follow are at times excessively restrictive, according to some journalists. Young reporter Tania says, for instance, that she wrote a story on Cuban orphans that she was unable to publish, despite the fact that the orphanages receive substantial subsidies from the state and are in good condition: "We could not talk about it, because if we did it could be used to say that in Cuba there are a lot of orphans. There are orphans everywhere in the world, right, but if it's in Cuba..." (Tania, personal communication, November 15th, 2016).

Middle-aged reporter Ernesto had a similar experience when writing a critical theatre review. The director told him that there was no need to expose problems to the outside world, as they should be resolved and analysed internally. For these journalists, despite initially disagreeing with editors and directors, the omission of

subjects deemed sensitive in relation to the US, encourages self-censorship. Ernesto says: "Later, on a different occasion I wanted to write a similar piece, but I thought, 'Why am I going to waste neurons writing a critique if I cannot publish it'" (Ernesto, personal communication, December 9th, 2016).

8. The cost of hiding information

The Cuban way of shaping society, of removing the hegemony of the world's undisputed superpower in a grassroots rebellion, and creating a society funded on ideological ideals diametrically opposed to that of the US, inspires pride and a willingness to sacrifice. For Cuban journalists, this also becomes something of a contradiction. They have to give up certain professional standards in order to fulfil the requirements of the 'revolution', and to protect the nation. When official representatives exploit their position in the name of national security and refuse to give journalists information they need on everyday issues, the perceived conflict grows, creating frustration. This practice among state functionaries is popularly called *secretismo*. Fariñas (cited in Garcés, 2012, p. 76) writes that the informational control of governmental institutions is killing the agility of the profession: "It would be naive to deny that Cuba is subject to an economic war, but it would also be naive to deny that a lot of the institutions hide behind this argument". García Luis (2013, p. 153) states that controlling the press because of external threats is contradictory: "Certainly, a mute, ineffective, acritical press favours the enemy more than ourselves".

Senior reporter María says institutions only distribute information to journalists if it is in their own interests. For instance, if the UN is to vote on the blockade, institutions may give information on their challenges. If journalists initiate contact, information is only obtained 'with a lot of difficulty'. The editorial policy of state media outlets also promotes the practice of *secretismo*, as a statement from a state functionary is needed for all stories covering issues relating to the government or official policy. Young reporter Yanet recalls a story she had wanted to write about a street in poor condition, but the person in charge refused to give an interview, so the story could not be published. She reflects: "They tell you to be critical, but you need sources that speak to you. [...] They know you are a journalist, they

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know you are from a powerful media outlet, and they will not give you information. Why? Because it will be harmful to their job, they might get fired" (Yanet, personal communication, November 11th, 2016).

The lack of access to information due to institutional secrecy also promotes self-censorship as journalists choose less difficult subjects to cover. There is always a 'big day of history' coming up, or another institution willing to share certain information, and journalists often opt for these less controversial stories instead, young reporter Jorge explains. The shortage of information created by *secretismo*, censorship and self-censorship makes it difficult for journalists who want to challenge institutionalised norms because they will simply not be published. As state media often represent the opinion of the PCC, an official spokesperson will not comment on anything unconfirmed or outside the interest of the party. Rumours are therefore something state media cannot write about. Anyone spending time in Cuban streets will notice that they abound with hearsay, and non-state media outlets take advantage of the potential in this innuendo. Young reporter Tania worries about the removal from the everyday concerns of Cuban people: "[The *Miami Herald*] is writing about a rumour that may be a lie, but it is close to you, to your reality [...] so, what is the consequence of not mentioning it? People will look for other sources" (Tania, personal communication, November 15th, 2016).

The Cold War scenario that formed the state media is increasingly becoming outdated, and bloggers and non-state media, as well as news outlets produced abroad, challenge the news hegemony of the state media. Despite that non-state media outlets have a limited range of impact, due to the expense of access to the internet, they do influence content in state media outlets. Therefore, the silencing of negative news is neither efficient nor does it contribute towards legitimising the state media. For example, the state media do not usually cover deaths, crimes or robberies. Tania describes an incident in which a guard was stabbed by a robber. A police officer chased the robber and shot him in the foot. This was filmed by a person in a wi-fi park, who uploaded it online. It went viral. The film was picked up by the South Florida media that made a 'big deal about it', and the next day a local Cuban newspaper published a story about the robbery. Tania ponders: "That was the first time they used a story about a crime involving bloodshed in Cuba. What does this indicate? That the new means of communication are compelling the media to

cover new content and imposing new criteria of newsworthiness" (Tania, personal communication, November 15th, 2016).

The confinement of certain topics to closed circles in Cuba is also something young reporters contest, believing that more openness will strengthen, not damage, the 'revolution'. Of the *plaza sitiada* mentality, young reporter Carlos says: "I am more and more convinced that it is false, that we have to discuss things publicly. Because it is worse that our readers [...] think we are satisfied with what we are doing. That is more dangerous than if they misinterpret us abroad" (Carlos, personal communication, November 17th, 2016). Changing the state media system is, however, not something any individual journalist can accomplish alone, but from time to time there are stories diverting from the normal institutionalised pattern. For instance, the editor of state newspaper *Juventud Rebelde* allowed a story on how *secretismo* hindered journalists writing about the popular state-run ice-cream parlour Coppelia (Bugallo, 2016). It is uncommon to see state officials criticised publicly. In addition, letters from readers put pressure on public institutions, and this has a ripple effect for many journalists. Jorge says: "When we ask you for information, you are a public servant, you cannot stay quiet about it, otherwise you are going to join the Coppelia list. Everybody answers, trust me, everybody" (Jorge, personal communication, November 9th, 2016).

9 Under siege by the 'enemy'

As noted in the literature review above, research on self-censorship in authoritarian countries tends to explain the phenomenon through journalistic considerations of punishments and rewards by the ruling party. These factors definitively come into play for Cuban journalists, but perhaps in different ways than, for instance, in Russia and China. Rewards in Cuban state journalism are seen particularly through the promotion of journalists and editors who show a true dedication to the 'revolution'. As demonstrated by the blog post where internal criticism at a UPEC meeting was exposed, there are consequences if one oversteps the limits of acceptable behaviour. It seems, however, that the individual's perception of ideological or social values, as well as the threat from the enemy, are elements of equal importance in Cuban state media journalists' self-censorship strategies.

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Journalists extensively support the national project of equal opportunity, distribution of wealth and anti-capitalism, and see these values threatened by the desire of the US to establish a liberal democracy on the island. Self-censorship on any issue that might help the enemy achieve this can, therefore, easily be justified and explained as necessary. If there is a possibility, real or imagined, that a story can damage the development of Cuba or lead to harmful coverage in Miami, journalists see justification in depriving the public of this information, or in 'balancing' coverage, thus only telling parts of the story. As Jorge puts it: 'It's for the greater good of the country'. Journalists are in a gatekeeping position, fulfilling the revolutionary goals of opposition to the subversion of Cuban values.

At the same time, journalists' ethical and professional values are threatened by such self-censorship practices. Journalists of all ages and positions desire change in the state media, wanting in particular to break up the close bonds to the Communist Party and to move further towards the interests of the people. Journalists consider that depriving the people of information, through censorship, self-censorship or through the effects of *secretismo*, is against the goals of the 'revolution'. García Santamaría (2017, p. 228) pinpoints the same contradiction in her PhD dissertation on Cuban journalism. The powerful image of the US as the enemy makes participation in public rallies or other commemorative ceremonies important for journalists in order to 'reassert their revolutionary belonging'. But there is a general agreement among journalists that the threat is over-exaggerated. It is difficult to distinguish real commitment from official pressures, and these can also overlap.

Cuban state media journalists can be identified with the 'loyal-facilitator model', in both the variant that protects the status quo and those in power, and those encouraging national belonging and prestige (Mellado & Van Dalen, 2013, p. 862). For more than half a century the state media have moved in this direction, and the younger journalists learn through socialisation how the country is best protected. As the enemy image of the US has been developed, not only is it dispositional (Ottosen, 2004) in the sense that aggression is expected, it is also well internalised in the Cuban culture and mentality (Luostarinen, 1989). It is not, therefore, easy to separate the desires of individual journalists from those of the collective, the nation. This may serve also to explain why journalists cooperate with a system that contradicts their professional ideals.

It thus seems that journalists have incentives for opposing or changing self-censorship strategies on a theoretical or ideal level, but putting it into practice is difficult. The journalist could be punished, but a more likely and perhaps harsher consequence could be acquiring a label as an anti-patriotic or even as a friend of the enemy. This is not an uncommon tag put on non-state actors or bloggers who question the status quo (García Santamaría, 2017, p. 234). There is also some convenience for journalists in accepting the PCC's current analysis of the 'enemy' and the outside world. Blaming the 'system' for the lack of fulfilment of professional ideals may bridge the dissonance between ideals and practice, while implying that they do not have to leave their comfort zones. Skjerdal (2010, p. 113) finds the same tendency among Ethiopian journalists; they experience an individual responsibility to promote the prosperity of the nation, but also use the rigidity of the state media system to legitimate self-censorship and slacken personal ethical standards.

One might argue that Cuban journalists take control over external framing to some degree when deciding which information is suitable to present to the 'enemy'. At the same time, journalists lose control over what is said about Cuba when censoring or self-censoring entire segments of public interest. It further leads to a delegitimisation of the state media when Cubans resort to news from the 'enemy', from Florida news outlets, in order to read stories about murders, crimes or other negative domestic news.

However, as pointed out by Tania, the growing ecosystem of media outlets in Cuba is bringing new criteria of newsworthiness into the state media. Despite the PCC's tired rhetoric about permitting media autonomy, a better-connected population forces change and younger journalists are pushing limits by partly overlooking institutional restrictions within the state media. The interviews in this study, as well as that of García Santamaría (2017, p. 233), indicate that the younger journalists are bolder and more willing to expose themselves to sanction, whereas experienced journalists are more entrenched in the Cold War rhetoric of protection against the 'enemy'. For instance, Tania mentions an interview she did with a prominent Cuban woman: "This woman spoke about a lot of things that go unsaid, uncontested, unspoken. Strong opinions, very strong, very taboo. And nothing happened. Therefore, I ask myself, is it just us? Are these philosophies of being under siege even real?" (Tania, personal communication, November 15th, 2016).

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10 Conclusions

The threat of a US invasion undermining the Cuban system is one of the main factors consolidating the state media as supporters of the Communist Party and the 'revolution'. That the 'Bay of Pigs' lives on in the field of communication is a functional construction for the political elites that keeps enemy images alive, thus drawing attention away from their own mistakes. For journalists, the external threat encourages various forms of self-censorship. Journalists agree to avoid covering subjects that could feed anti-Cuban interests in the US. This means that large segments of public life in Cuba are silenced by state media – for instance, news on murders, crimes or the establishment of new companies. Contrary to much literature on self-censorship in other authoritarian countries, the journalists' own support of state ideology, combined with enemy images, weighs heavier than considerations of rewards and punishment (Elbaz et al., 2017).

Journalists simultaneously consider this Cold War scenario over-exaggerated and see their professional ideals threatened by extensive self-censorship. Young journalists, in particular, worry about the delegitimisation of state media as Cubans look to 'enemy' news outlets to find information otherwise censored in Cuba. While journalists claim to want a structural change away from political bonds, censorship and self-censorship, these statements remain largely at a theoretical or idealistic level. Contributing factors may be the possibility of being branded a dissident or that it is more convenient to disclaim responsibility than to oppose the 'system'. However, non-state media outlets increasingly challenge established norms, and young journalists are more willing to expose themselves to sanction.

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ARTIGO

PLAZA SITIADA:
estrategias de autocensura entre periodistas en medios del Estado cubano

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RESUMEN – Este artículo analiza el modo en que las imágenes de EE.UU. como enemigo de Cuba afectan a los periodistas de los medios de comunicaciones cubanos. Para la élite política, la imagen de los intereses imperialistas de EE.UU. ha contribuido a legitimar su control continuo de la prensa. Actuando dentro de esos límites, los periodistas se ven obligados a equilibrar sus ideales profesionales con la responsabilidad de proteger a su país. Los periodistas aceptan la autocensura en cuanto a noticias que en teoría puedan perjudicar los intereses cubanos. A la vez, los periodistas consideran que se exagera con respecto a la amenaza norteamericana, y se preocupan por la falta de acceso por parte del pueblo a información relevante. Los periodistas se oponen a la censura y la autocensura en los asuntos cotidianos, pero los esfuerzos aplicados a cambiar estas prácticas se limitan a debates teóricos.
Palabras clave: Régimen autoritario. Periodismo cubano. Imágenes del enemigo. Autocensura. Medios de comunicación estatal.

A PLACE UNDER SIEGE:
self-censorship strategies among Cuban state media journalists

ABSTRACT – This article analyses how enemy images of the US in Cuba affect journalists in the Cuban state media. For the political elite, the image of US imperialistic interests has legitimated their continuing control over the media. Within these limits, journalists negotiate between professional ideals and a responsibility to protect the country. Journalists accept self-censorship of stories that, in theory, damage Cuban interests. At the same time, journalists see the US threat as inflated, and worry about the lack of relevant information available to the public. While journalists oppose censorship and

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self-censorship on everyday issues, attempts to change these practices are confined to theoretical discussions.
Key words: Authoritarian regime. Cuban journalism. Enemy images. Self-censorship. State media.

UM LUGAR SITIADO:
estratégias de autocensura entre jornalistas do Estado cubano

RESUMO – Este artigo analisa o modo como imagens hostis aos Estados Unidos em Cuba afetam os jornalistas dos meios de comunicação estatais cubanos. Para a elite política, a imagem dos interesses imperialistas dos Estados Unidos vem legitimar o seu controle permanente sobre os meios de comunicação. Com estas limitações, os jornalistas se veem obrigados a equilibrar os ideais profissionais com a sua responsabilidade de proteger a nação. Os jornalistas aceitam se autocensurar em matérias que, teoricamente, prejudicam os interesses cubanos. Ao mesmo tempo, os jornalistas consideram a ameaça norte-americana como sendo deliberadamente exagerada e preocupam-se com a falta de informação relevante que se encontra disponível ao público. Enquanto os jornalistas se confrontam com censura e autocensura em assuntos do quotidiano, as tentativas de mudar essas práticas estão confinadas às discussões teóricas.
Palavras-chave: Regime autoritário. Jornalismo cubano. Imagens hostis. Autocensura. Meios de comunicação estatais.

1 Introducción

El antagonismo entre Cuba y los Estados Unidos está bien documentado; los medios de comunicación de todo el mundo publican los desacuerdos entre ambos países. Algo que se investiga con menor frecuencia es cómo esta difícil relación afecta al trabajo de los periodistas de los medios estatales cubanos. La amenaza de que Estados Unidos socave o cambie el sistema social y político cubano induce a los periodistas a aplicar diversas estrategias de autocensura para proteger a su nación.

Es poca la investigación realizada hasta la fecha sobre las estrategias periodísticas y las justificaciones de la autocensura en Cuba. Si bien el fenómeno se menciona frecuentemente en los informes sobre la libertad de prensa elaborados por organizaciones como *Freedom House* o *Reporters Without Borders* (Reporteros sin Fronteras), es raro que una investigación académica ponga la autocensura en el punto de mira analítico principal. El objeto

de este artículo es contribuir a profundizar, específicamente, en el conocimiento de los procesos periodísticos que conducen a la autocensura, en vez de hacerlo en los marcos político y jurídico. A través de la narración que hacen los encuestados, el artículo analiza las siguientes preguntas de investigación:

1. ¿Cómo contribuyen las percepciones de una amenaza estadounidense a la autocensura en los medios estatales cubanos?

2. ¿Hasta qué punto son evidentes los signos de cambio en las prácticas de autocensura entre los periodistas cubanos?

2 Breve historia de los medios de comunicación cubanos

La relación entre Cuba y Estados Unidos está documentada en la historia de los medios de comunicación cubanos, tanto antes como después de la Revolución de 1959. La proximidad geográfica e histórica de Cuba con EE.UU., así como la creciente división ideológica entre ambos países, son aspectos importantes para comprender cómo les afecta actualmente a los periodistas de Cuba la amenaza que perciben de parte de EE.UU.

Antes de la Revolución, Cuba había sido un campo de pruebas de la radiodifusión y televisión de Estados Unidos, de modo que la tecnología utilizada en Cuba en ese momento iba por delante de la existente en casi todos los países equiparables. En la década de 1950, había en Cuba más de 150 estaciones de radio locales y nacionales, y seis canales de televisión (García Luis, 2013, p. 75). Estos medios eran en su mayoría propiedad de compañías estadounidenses financiadas con publicidad y estaban dirigidos por éstas. Sin embargo, se podía encontrar una gran variedad de voces cubanas en periódicos y revistas (Marrero, 2003, p. 58). Con la llegada del Estado-nación cubano, el desarrollo de la televisión en Cuba experimentó rápidas e inesperadas transformaciones. Algunos estudiosos ven a Cuba antes del golpe militar de Batista de 1952 como una democracia en la que los medios de comunicación ostentaban un grado relativamente alto de influencia política y pluralidad de expresión (Guerra, 2012; Rivero, 2015). Durante la dictadura de Batista, el sistema de teledifusión se desvinculó de los principios capitalistas de Estados Unidos, y se generalizó la censura. Esta situación duró hasta la Revolución de 1959.

Los investigadores de los medios de comunicación cubanos consideran los cinco años posteriores a la Revolución como la Edad

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de Oro de los medios (Garcés, 2012; García Luis, 2013). El periodismo cubano había roto sus lazos con el modelo estadounidense impulsado por el mercado y aún no estaba influido por el modelo burocrático soviético (Siebert et al., 1984). Se iba a desarrollar una nueva prensa, de corte socialista. Sin embargo, eventos definitorios de las relaciones entre Cuba y Estados Unidos tales como el de Bahía de Cochinos (Playa Girón) en 1961 y la Crisis de los Misiles de 1962 acercaron Cuba a la Unión Soviética, con consecuencias duraderas en lo referente a los medios de comunicación.

No es seguro que el gobierno revolucionario pretendiera nacionalizar los medios de comunicación después de la Revolución. García Santamaría (2017, p. 47) considera que la nacionalización de los medios de comunicación puede haberse producido como resultado del celo anti-Batista, del éxodo de periodistas y redactores jefe y de la presión de los trabajadores de los medios sindicalizados. En 1965, se fundó el Partido Comunista de Cuba (PCC) y la prensa se alineó con la política, a consecuencia de lo cual, según García Luis (2013, p. 81), los contenidos y la creatividad periodística sufrieron importantes reveses, y se produjo la pérdida de autoridad de los medios de comunicación para tomar sus propias decisiones. Además, la anterior generación de periodistas, que había trabajado bajo el capitalismo, fue reemplazada por una nueva que trajo cambios en la cobertura de temas, géneros y estilo. La amenaza de una posible invasión estadounidense provocó la consolidación del poder político y estimuló un sistema de prensa diseñado para bloquear las estrategias contrarrevolucionarias (p. 85).

El embargo comercial, económico y financiero de Estados Unidos contra Cuba (conocido en Cuba como el bloqueo) ha aportado continuas dificultades a las relaciones entre Cuba y EE.UU. Además, ha alimentado fuerzas conservadoras dentro de Cuba que desean perpetuar la idea de que Estados Unidos es un enemigo, con la creencia de que cualquier concesión en materia de políticas respecto de EE.UU. debilitará a Cuba (Hernández 2003, p. 110). El proceso contradictorio de la contribución del público cubano a la creación de un Estado que procedió a limitar severamente su capacidad de actuar [independientemente] puede explicarse a través de la construcción política de una narrativa maestra de unidad y resistencia. El desmantelamiento de la hegemonía económica y cultural de Estados Unidos, así como la limpieza de la falta de dignidad y las injusticias de los gobiernos anteriores, requirieron el apoyo incondicional y la

abnegación de los medios de comunicación. Esto implicó la aceptación de la organización de los medios como sustituto de una esfera pública con agendas individuales, una narrativa que inscribió al pueblo cubano como protagonista de una interminable batalla entre la libertad y el imperialismo, entre el bien y el mal (Guerra, 2012, p. 5).

El influyente investigador y periodista cubano Julio García Luis (2013, p. 116) recuerda el periodismo cubano en la década de 1970: "... casi sin darnos cuenta comenzamos a hacer una prensa más para complacer a los aparatos que para servir a la opinión pública". En la década siguiente, varios congresos del Partido Comunista de Cuba (PCC) y de la Unión de Periodistas Cubanos (UPEC) declararon que el periodismo debe ser objetivo, veraz y analítico, y que el estilo apologético de la prensa debería cambiar (Marrero, 2006, p. 56). Finalmente, el Congreso de la UPEC de 1986 logró iniciar un proceso de reforma de la prensa. Fidel Castro, presente en el Congreso, declaró: "Ningún enemigo nos va a criticar mejor que lo que nos criticamos nosotros" (Marrero, 2006, p. 73). Pero, pocos años después, la Unión Soviética colapsó. La resistencia a las amenazas extranjeras se convirtió en la prioridad del PCC y se sustituyeron los llamados a la crítica por una actitud autoritaria hacia la prensa. A partir del año 2000, los medios de comunicación en línea y los blogueros desafían cada vez más el papel informativo de la prensa estatal. Cuba sigue aún ocupando el puesto 172 de 180 países en la Clasificación Mundial de la Libertad de Prensa realizada por Reporteros sin Fronteras (2018).

A partir de 2013 se empezó a elaborar una política reguladora de la prensa, presentada por fin en 2018. El documento reconoce varias dificultades, como el control externo de la prensa, la retención de información, la autocensura y el deterioro de la cultura profesional (PCC, 2018, p. 6). Sin embargo, como señala la plataforma no estatal *Periodismo de Barrio*, el documento no sugiere acciones con respecto a la fuente principal de estos problemas, a saber el PCC, cuyos funcionarios formaron parte del grupo de trabajo que formuló esta política. Además, se esperaba la casi "esquizofrenia" de los medios estatales, ya que se les insta a ser independientes del partido (Periodismo de Barrio, 2018). Al mismo tiempo, el documento de política de comunicación establece que el PCC es "el rector de comunicación social del país, traza la política general para su desarrollo y ejerce su control" (PCC, 2018, p. 10).

Con posterioridad a esto, el presidente Miguel Díaz-Canel pronunció el discurso de clausura en la Unión de Periodistas de Cuba

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(UPEC), en el cual elogió a los profesionales de los medios estatales por resistirse a unirse a las campañas contra Cuba, que están bien pagadas pero son "oportunistas y cínicas" [refiriéndose a las ofertas de pagos de los medios de Miami]. Díaz-Canel afirmó que nunca fue tan retador y desafiante el panorama mediático, si bien se aseguró de recordarles a los periodistas las dificultades que había pasado Cuba previamente. Citando a Fidel Castro, Díaz-Canel indicó que: "el papel central del periodismo es la defensa de la fortaleza sitiada" (Granma, 2018).

Esta noción hace referencia a que Cuba está constantemente expuesta al ataque de EE.UU. y los participantes la denominan con el concepto de plaza sitiada. Los periodistas de los medios estatales lo emplean para explicar u oponerse a la (auto)censura en temas que puedan ser manipulados por los medios estadounidenses, con particular referencia a los de Miami. Hernández (2003, p. 110) sostiene que "la mentalidad consecuente de *fortaleza bajo ataque* no contribuye al pluralismo en Cuba". El hecho de que Díaz-Canel hiciera el esfuerzo de mencionar este concepto apunta a un endurecimiento de la relación entre los dos países. Las actividades del presidente cubano en *Twitter* apoyan esta hipótesis. Por ejemplo, al conmemorar Playa Girón, afirmó que Estados Unidos continuaba con "las mismas mentiras y agresiones" y Cuba con "igual coraje y fidelidad" (Díaz-Canel, 2019). Esta retórica del liderazgo del PCC puede, consiguientemente, significar un endurecimiento de la política relativa a los medios de comunicación.

3 Procesos de autocensura

La autocensura es una práctica que se encuentra en las culturas periodísticas de todo el mundo, pero es un fenómeno difícil de definir. Puede tratarse de procesos de autocensura no formales referentes a las prácticas de reportaje periodístico al seleccionar los artículos, las rutinas en la sala de redacción o las expectativas culturales. La autocensura puede también ser más formal y estar orientada por expectativas institucionalizadas en forma de reglas de conducta periodística o prácticas para evitar el castigo o las amenazas de las autoridades públicas (Elbaz et al., 2017; Lee, 1998; Skjerdal, 2010). El enfoque de este artículo se aproxima más a una comprensión formal de la autocensura, y partirá de la definición que hace Skjerdal (2010, p. 99) de "retención de material periodístico debido a que se siente una presión externa".

Las prácticas de autocensura están, de muchos modos, condicionadas por el sistema mediático del país y dependen del grado en que las estructuras de los medios favorezcan o restrinjan las opiniones disidentes (Elbaz et al., 2017). Por lo tanto, para elaborar este artículo tiene sentido limitar el estudio a países con un sistema de medios estatales algo similar al de Cuba, en vez de estudiar países geográficamente cercanos. Si bien se encuentra autocensura en América Latina, los medios estatales de la región se ven en general más retados por los medios privados de lo que es el caso en Cuba, pero debe destacarse que el populismo imperante en Ecuador, Venezuela y Bolivia ha ocasionado un control más estricto o la expropiación de los medios privados (Waisbord, 2012, p. 508). Sin embargo, se ha investigado poco sobre el modo en que los periodistas experimentan estos cambios. Existe en general necesidad de una mayor investigación sobre la aplicación y narrativas de las prácticas de autocensura por parte de los periodistas, algo que también señala Skjerdal (2010, p. 98). Este artículo intenta contribuir al conocimiento del modo en que los periodistas de países autoritarios experimentan la autocensura y se identifican con ella, así como a llenar algunos de los vacíos existentes en la investigación sobre el periodismo latinoamericano en general y sobre Cuba en particular.

En sociedades que tienen una larga tradición de autoritarismo, la norma de conducta periodística puede ser la tendencia a enterrar la información sensible, en especial, toda información crítica hacia el partido gobernante. Esto se debe a que los medios de comunicación no desempeñan el rol de "vigilante" de la sociedad, unido al hecho de la falta de fe de los periodistas en las declaraciones de libertad de expresión. Esto, a su vez, fomenta las estrategias de autocensura entre los periodistas. Algunos factores que contribuyen son el castigo y las recompensas por parte de las élites gobernantes (Elbaz et al., 2017, p. 128). Lee (1998, p. 58) sostiene que la autocensura surgió entre los periodistas de Hong Kong después de la transferencia de la soberanía a China, como consecuencia de la falta de mejores alternativas para enfrentarse a su poder para reprender o recompensar la cobertura periodística. Esta situación continúa hoy en China, donde las multas, los arrestos, las degradaciones y demandas por difamación inducen a los periodistas a autocensurarse (Xu, 2014). El temor a las consecuencias fomentó también la autocensura en Sudáfrica durante el Apartheid y en Indonesia, durante el régimen del Nuevo Orden, y son prácticas que continúan a pesar de la transición

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desde el autoritarismo (Merrett, 2001; Tapsell, 2012). En Rusia, tras una ola de ataques terroristas a partir de 1999, los periodistas acordaron elaborar directrices "de responsabilidad" para la cobertura del terrorismo, algo que Simons y Strovsky (2006, p. 205) consideran un elemento de compensación por la mayor severidad de las leyes sobre los medios de comunicación, y una manera de evitar que los medios sean objeto de multas y cierres.

Otros aspectos que promueven la autocensura son el compromiso del individuo con las creencias sociales, ideológicas o políticas (Elbaz et al., 2017, p. 131). Skjerdal (2010, p. 116) sostiene que los periodistas de Etiopía justifican la autocensura negando su propio papel en el sistema de medios de comunicación estatales, a la vez que se comprometen con la estrategia gubernamental del periodismo de desarrollo, ocultando información susceptible de dañar al país o a sus ciudadanos. Además, unirse frente a un enemigo común es algo que puede fomentar la autocensura en tiempos de conflicto, tendencia que se observa tanto en los países autoritarios como en los democráticos: en EE. UU., tras la invasión de Irak en 2003; en Rusia después de los ataques terroristas de 1999, y en Israel después de la Segunda Intifada (Nohrstedt y Ottosen, 2001; Simons y Strovsky, 2006; Zandberg y Neiger, 2005).

4 Imágenes del enemigo

Para los periodistas cubanos existe una variable externa que siempre debe tenerse en cuenta: las relaciones en curso con Estados Unidos. El riesgo de la "dominación capitalista y la subversión del orden social cubano" genera una tensión constante en el periodismo de Cuba (Alonso y Pérez, 2016, p. 199). Las perspectivas teóricas sobre la creación y preservación de las imágenes del enemigo pueden contribuir a comprender el modo en que los periodistas cubanos, como productores de éstas, se ven afectados en su situación laboral.

Luostarinen (1989, pp. 124 – 127) afirma que la relación entre los países afecta a los procesos de desarrollo de las imágenes del enemigo, pero también lo hacen los asuntos internos dentro de los mismos. Él define la imagen del enemigo como "una creencia sostenida por cierto grupo de que su seguridad y sus valores básicos están directa y seriamente amenazados por algún otro grupo". Las imágenes del enemigo implican siempre la posibilidad de violencia

y destrucción; no son simplemente sentimientos de antipatía. En países donde existe una situación permanente de conflicto o guerra, el Estado debe estar preparado en todo momento; no solo militar y económicamente, sino también culturalmente. La preservación de las imágenes del enemigo forma parte de la defensa; son "ejercicios mentales" de preparación para la guerra. Agregar una perspectiva temporal sirve para mejorar la imagen: el enemigo puede ser un archienemigo del pasado, pero también una amenaza para un futuro común. Las imágenes del enemigo tienen varias ventajas: pueden integrar grupos, disminuir el conflicto interno y fortalecer la identidad nacional (Luostarinen, 1989, p. 127).

Las imágenes del enemigo pueden construirse de varias maneras. Ottosen (2004, p. 218) hace una distinción entre imágenes del enemigo situacionales y disposicionales. Una imagen del enemigo situacional implica la descripción de un incidente específico de hostilidad. Si, con el tiempo, existen muchos incidentes de este tipo, podrá desarrollarse una imagen del enemigo disposicional, y se esperará un comportamiento agresivo por parte de éste. Las imágenes del enemigo disposicionales son difíciles de cambiar, ya que están integradas por estereotipos internalizados en el lenguaje y la cultura. Estas imágenes se reflejan en los medios a través de características estandarizadas del enemigo, aún cuando los periodistas no lo hagan deliberadamente.

5 Metodología

Mis datos consisten en 12 entrevistas cualitativas semiestructuradas con periodistas de los medios estatales cubanos. Por medios estatales me refiero a los medios de información subsidiados por el gobierno cubano o a cargo del presupuesto estatal. Las entrevistas se realizaron durante un viaje de trabajo de campo de dos meses de duración en el otoño de 2016. En el contexto cubano es importante el anonimato de los participantes. Los periodistas entrevistados trabajan en periódicos estatales y en la radiodifusión, siendo sus títulos desde redactores jefes hasta recién graduados. Se omiten en el artículo los nombres de los lugares de trabajo y los puestos de los periodistas. En vez de eso, los he dividido en tres grupos de edad y les pongo seudónimos. Había cinco reporteros jóvenes (20–34 años), cinco reporteros de mediana edad (35–49 años) y dos reporteros de edad madura (50+ años). Los participantes

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eligieron dónde querían que se llevara a cabo la entrevista y me reuní con casi todos ellos fuera del lugar de trabajo. Las entrevistas fueron grabadas tras pedir el consentimiento de los participantes. Todos ellos asintieron.

Tenía una persona de contacto en la Facultad de Comunicación (FCOM) de la Universidad de La Habana y me permitieron usar su Internet e Intranet para obtener datos de investigación de la facultad. Mi contacto me aconsejó solicitar un visado de investigación, ya que estimaba que ser investigadora extranjera con visado de turista y entrevistar a periodistas estatales nos podría causar problemas a mí y a la FCOM. Fue sin embargo difícil obtener el visado. Mientras lo esperaba, elaboré, en colaboración con mi contacto, una lista en la que figuraban principalmente periodistas que me parecían interesantes. Ya que es estudioso de periodismo, mi contacto tiene un amplio panorama de los periodistas cubanos, y sus aportaciones a la lista me resultaron muy valiosas, en vez de restringir mi investigación. Sin este contacto habría sido mucho más difícil acceder a los periodistas de los medios estatales. Él me ayudó a conseguir números de teléfono y a navegar por el intrincado sistema de establecimiento de contactos en una sociedad prácticamente sin conexión a internet y donde la telefonía móvil es extremadamente costosa, en comparación con los salarios estatales.

Utilicé una guía de entrevistas inspirada en el cuestionario del estudio *Worlds of Journalism* (WoJ, 2012). Trataba de los roles y valores profesionales, la construcción de noticias, las rutinas diarias, internet y las redes sociales. Las preguntas importantes para este artículo fueron: ¿Quién decide a qué historias hay que darles prioridad?; ¿Existen temas sobre los que no se debe escribir?; y ¿Cómo seleccionas tus fuentes? No pregunté directamente sobre la "autocensura", ya que no quería imponer ningún juicio normativo sobre el periodismo cubano, sino más bien escuchar historias del día a día laboral de los periodistas.

En general, descubrí que los participantes eran muy críticos, tanto en lo referente a su papel como respecto del sistema de medios estatales del que forman parte. Esto, sin embargo, se limitaba frecuentemente a afirmaciones generales o ejemplos hipotéticos. Sobre todo los reporteros más experimentados dudaban en compartir detalles sobre sus experiencias personales, algo que puede ser una muestra de recelo general hacia los extranjeros que opinan sobre los medios de comunicación cubanos, o de la preocupación por el uso indebido de la información. Los participantes más jóvenes

compartieron más detalles y ejemplos del modo en que su labor periodística estaba restringida por la mentalidad de plaza sitiada, y, por lo tanto, cito estas entrevistas con bastante frecuencia. Sin embargo, se puede esperar un cierto grado de sesgo de deseabilidad social (Bryman 2016) en esta selección, ya que como participantes periodistas representan a su medio de comunicación estatal y, a pesar del anonimato, es probable que no deseen expresar posturas que sobrepasen un límite aceptable. Por ejemplo, admitir que se trabaja para medios de comunicación no estatales (fuera del Estado) puede ser controvertido. (De esto tratan otros artículos elaborados para mi tesis doctoral, de la que forma parte este artículo; sin embargo, considero que estas consideraciones quedan fuera del ámbito del presente artículo).

Todas las entrevistas se realizaron en español. Las citas que reseño aquí fueron traducidas al inglés por mí y, luego, la traducción verificada por un corrector/revisor. Las respuestas de mi muestra no son aplicables a los periodistas de toda Cuba, pero las entrevistas dan ideas acerca de determinadas percepciones periodísticas en una sociedad inmersa en un proceso de cambio.

6 Aplicar la autocensura para proteger a la nación

Los periodistas de todos los grupos de edad han crecido en una sociedad marcada por la difícil relación con su vecino del norte. En las palabras del joven reportero Jorge (entrevista concedida, 09 de noviembre, 2016), después de contar cómo luchó su familia para conseguir penicilina benzatínica para curarle la fiebre reumática: "esa sensación de estar bajo sitio, la llevas en las venas porque naciste bajo ella y el país ha tenido que vivir de esa manera". En los medios de comunicación estatales hay una obligación de apoyar las políticas del Partido Comunista. Los tres principales periódicos de Cuba, *Granma, Trabajadores* y *Juventud Rebelde*, son todos órganos oficiales del PCC o de sus organizaciones afines. Sin embargo, eso no significa que los periodistas sean meras herramientas de propaganda o que carezcan de autonomía. Lo que se publica en los medios estatales depende con frecuencia de las decisiones tomadas por el redactor jefe, que puede ser más o menos conservador.

La formación en Periodismo en Cuba es actualmente un programa de cinco años, cursado por todos los periodistas

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empleados en los medios estatales. Los currículos son bastante extensos y suscriben muchos de los ideales de la formación periodística "occidental", como el periodismo de investigación, la crítica de lo que no funciona bien en la sociedad y la ética. Viniendo de una extensa formación periodística, la decisión sobre/disposición para la autocensura entre los participantes se basa en los procesos de adaptación de la Redacción, así como en el propio apoyo de los periodistas al proyecto socialista cubano y las políticas editoriales. Tania, una joven periodista, expresa: "Hay muchas cosas de las que creemos que no podemos hablar. No porque nos las hayamos inventado, sino porque hay una tradición de la que hemos aprendido" (Tania, entrevista concedida, 15 de noviembre, 2016).

Parte de esta tradición consiste en identificarse con el análisis cambiante del mundo exterior que hace el PCC, y, particularmente, con la relación con Estados Unidos. Si bien algunos periodistas cuestionan la utilidad de las directrices editoriales determinadas por el contexto con las que operan los medios de comunicación estatales, existe una aceptación general de las razones estratégicas y políticas subyacentes. Periodistas de todas las edades consideran que el proyecto socialista de Cuba está amenazado por Estados Unidos. Comparten la sensación de estar librando una pelea de David contra Goliat en el campo de la comunicación, que Cuba nunca podrá ganar. Una de las estrategias utilizadas por los periodistas es evitar compartir información en los medios de comunicación, manteniéndola, en su lugar, en círculos cerrados. Carmen, una reportera de edad madura, indica:

> Generalmente somos muy críticos hacia lo interno, porque cuando tú hablas en un micrófono y te paras allí para decir cuatro cosas, terminan en Miami, manipulándolo todo, y los que están aquí se creen que tú, lo que quieres, es subvertir el sistema. [...] Cuando verdaderamente se discuten las cosas no transcienden públicamente a través de determinados sistemas de comunicación. (Carmem, entrevista concedida, 11 de noviembre, 2016).

Cuando los periodistas se encuentran en las reuniones de la UPEC pueden tener lugar críticos y duros debates sobre cómo debería ser el periodismo cubano, o qué cambios se necesitan en los medios de comunicación estatales. Sin embargo, el contenido de estos discursos no ha de compartirse con el mundo exterior, a menos que uno esté dispuesto a asumir las consecuencias. Un ejemplo de ello fue cuando un periodista cubano publicó en su blog el discurso de

un subdirector de *Granma* en una conferencia de la UPEC. El discurso advertía que Cuba iba en camino hacia una nueva recesión económica y sobre las dificultades para lidiar con los disturbios públicos sin el liderazgo carismático de Fidel Castro. Esta crítica, procedente de los niveles más altos del PCC, fue captada por los medios de comunicación de Miami, lo que hizo que el periodista perdiera su trabajo de reportero de radio y fuera expulsado de la UPEC (Gámez Torres, 2016; Martínoticias, 2016).

7 Líneas borrosas

Sin embargo, los límites de lo que se puede y no se puede decir, y cómo y en qué foro debe expresarse, son difíciles de determinar. Además, establecer qué información podría ser útil para Estados Unidos o contribuir a noticias negativas acerca de Cuba en la prensa de Miami es un proceso incierto. Algunos periodistas parecen más cómodos que otros al filtrar la información apropiada. Jorge, un reportero joven, estima que si "alguna institución o nosotros mismos decidimos que no queremos hablar de esto, es siempre por consideración al bien supremo del país". Menciona el caso de que una empresa quiera establecerse en Cuba y crear empleos, y considera que tal información no debería difundirse en los medios: "Si la hacemos pública, lo que pasará seguidamente es que Estados Unidos impondrá una multa de millones de dólares a esa compañía, que se retractará y no emprenderá nada en Cuba. Entonces, ¿qué haces tú? Pues que no hablas de esa compañía" (Jorge, entrevista concedida, 09 de noviembre, 2016).

Según propone el estudioso cubano García Luis (2013, p. 154), esto podría constituir una norma establecida de (auto)censura que los periodistas cubanos deben tener en cuenta. Carmen, reportera de edad madura, considera que la práctica de la autocensura es más bien un acto de "equilibrismo". Ella describe un ejemplo hipotético: cómo se informará sobre la ruina de un edificio en los medios estatales, tema recurrente ya que la mayoría de las casas coloniales de La Habana están en pésimas condiciones. Ella refiere que *Granma*, como órgano oficial del PCC, cubrirá el evento y se centrará en la rapidez y eficacia del equipo de rescate, no en que el motivo del desplome del edificio hayan sido décadas de abandono: "¿Por qué? Porque si *Granma* es crítico, el reportaje irá directo al *Miami Herald*. En mi medio de comunicación

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podríamos dar más información de fondo, pero la cobertura debe siempre ser equilibrada para no caer en manos equivocadas. No debe ser censurada, ni ser tan crítica que acabe en Miami" (Carmem, entrevista concedida, 12 de noviembre, 2016).

Los periodistas están de acuerdo en mantener silencio con respecto a determinadas cuestiones para evitar que los medios de comunicación, en especial los de Miami, obtengan información que podrían usar "en contra" de Cuba. Paralelamente, las políticas editoriales que deben seguir los periodistas son a veces excesivamente restrictivas, según algunos profesionales. Por ejemplo, Tania, reportera joven, comenta que escribió un reportaje sobre los huérfanos cubanos y no lo publicó, pese a que los orfanatos reciben sustanciales subsidios estatales y están en buenas condiciones: "Nosotros no queríamos hablar de eso, porque si hablábamos de eso era que en Cuba había muchos niños huérfanos. En cualquier lugar del mundo hay niños huérfanos ¿verdad? Pero, ¡si es en Cuba!." (Tania, entrevista concedida, 15 de noviembre, 2016).

Ernesto, reportero de mediana edad, tuvo una experiencia similar cuando escribió una crítica teatral negativa. El director de la obra le dijo que no había necesidad de exponer los problemas al mundo exterior, ya que debían resolverse y ser analizados internamente. Para estos periodistas, pese a no estar de acuerdo inicialmente con los redactores y directores, la omisión de los temas considerados sensibles en relación con Estados Unidos fomenta la autocensura. Ernesto dice: "Entonces ya después, en otra ocasión, iba a hacerlo y dije: ¿para qué voy a gastar neuronas haciendo una crítica si no la voy a poder publicar?" (Ernesto, entrevista concedida, 09 de diciembre, 2016).

8 El coste de ocultar información

La manera cubana de configurar la sociedad, eliminar la hegemonía de la indiscutida superpotencia mundial y crear una sociedad fundada en ideales con un contenido ideológico diametralmente opuesto al de EE.UU. inspira orgullo y voluntad de sacrificio. Esto, para los periodistas cubanos, se convierte también en una especie de contradicción. Tienen que renunciar a ciertas normas profesionales para cumplir con los requisitos de la Revolución y proteger a la nación. Cuando los representantes

oficiales aprovechan su posición en aras de la seguridad nacional y se niegan a darles a los periodistas la información que necesitan sobre temas cotidianos, el perceptible conflicto crece, creando frustración. Esta práctica de los funcionarios estatales se conoce popularmente como secretismo. Fariñas (citado en Garcés, 2012, p. 76) escribe que el control sobre la información ejercido por las instituciones gubernamentales está acabando con la agilidad de la profesión: "Sería ingenuo negar que Cuba está sujeta a una guerra económica, pero también sería ingenuo negar que muchos de los cuadros se escudan en ese argumento". García Luis (2013, p. 153) afirma que controlar la prensa debido a las amenazas externas es contradictorio: "Desde luego, una prensa muda, inoperante y acrítica favorece más al enemigo que a nuestras posiciones".

María, reportera de edad madura, afirma que las instituciones solo distribuyen información a los periodistas si es en interés propio. Por ejemplo, si la ONU va a votar sobre el bloqueo, las instituciones pueden informar de los retos que se plantean. Si son los periodistas quienes inician el contacto, solo obtendrán esta información "con mucha dificultad". La política editorial de los medios de comunicación estatales promueve también la práctica del secretismo, ya que se requiere la declaración de un funcionario estatal en todos los reportajes sobre temas relacionados con el gobierno o la política oficial. Yanet, reportera joven, recuerda que quería escribir un artículo sobre una calle en mal estado, pero la persona a cargo se negó a conceder una entrevista, por lo que no pudo publicarlo. Ella reflexiona: "Te dicen: puedes criticar, lo que necesitas son fuentes que te hablen.[...] Llegas a un lugar, saben que eres periodista, saben que eres de un medio de impacto, y no te dan la información. ¿Por qué? Porque les perjudicas en su trabajo, porque los pueden botar" (Yanet, entrevista concedida, 19 de noviembre, 2016).

La falta de acceso a la información debida al secreto institucional promueve asimismo la autocensura, ya que los periodistas eligen temas menos difíciles de abordar. Siempre que se avecina un "día señalado en la Historia", o bien que hay otra institución dispuesta a compartir determinada información, los periodistas, frecuentemente, optan por estos reportajes menos polémicos, explica Jorge, reportero joven. La escasez de información que el secretismo, la censura y la autocensura provocan dificulta las cosas para los periodistas que estén dispuestos a desafiar las

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normas institucionalizadas ya que, simplemente, no les publicarán sus artículos. Dado que los medios de comunicación estatales representan frecuentemente la opinión del PCC, un portavoz oficial no comentará nada que esté sin confirmar o carezca de interés para el partido. En consecuencia, los medios de comunicación estatales no pueden escribir sobre rumores. Cualquier persona que pase tiempo en las calles cubanas se percatará de que abundan los rumores, y los medios informativos no estatales aprovechan estas insinuaciones en todo su potencial. Tania, periodista joven, siente preocupación por la supresión de los asuntos cotidianos de los cubanos: "[*The Miami Herald*] está escribiendo sobre un rumor que probablemente sea falso, pero que está cerca de uno, de su realidad [...], entonces, ¿cuál será la consecuencia de no mencionarlo? La gente buscará otras fuentes" (Tania, entrevista concedida, 15 de noviembre, 2016).

El escenario de la Guerra Fría que configuró los medios estatales se está volviendo cada vez más obsoleto, y los blogueros, los medios no estatales y los medios producidos en el extranjero retan la hegemonía de los medios estatales sobre las noticias. A pesar de que el impacto de los medios informativos no estatales es limitado, debido al costo del acceso a internet, estos sí que influyen en el contenido de los medios estatales. Por lo tanto, el silenciamiento de las noticias de signo negativo ni es eficiente ni les da legitimidad a los medios estatales. En ellos, por ejemplo, normalmente no se cubren temas tales como muertes, crímenes o robos. Tania describe un incidente en el que un ladrón apuñaló a un guardia. Un oficial de policía persiguió al ladrón y le disparó en el pie. El incidente fue filmado en un parque wi-fi por una persona que lo subió en línea. Se hizo viral. La filmación fue captada por los medios de comunicación del sur de la Florida, que hicieron 'un gran *deal about it*', y, al día siguiente, un periódico local cubano publicó un artículo sobre el robo. Tania reflexiona: "Y era la primera vez que se hacía un reportaje sobre un hecho, un crimen de sangre en Cuba. ¿Qué te indica esto? Que las nuevas maneras de comunicación están también imponiéndoles a los medios nuevos contenidos y nuevos criterios de noticiabilidad" (Tania, entrevista concedida, 15 de noviembre, 2016).

La restricción de la cobertura de ciertos temas a círculos cerrados en Cuba es también algo que los reporteros jóvenes rebaten, por creer que una mayor apertura fortalecerá

la Revolución, en vez de dañarla. Refiriéndose a la mentalidad de plaza sitiada, Carlos, reportero joven, afirma: "Yo cada vez estoy más convencido de que eso es falso, que las cosas hay que debatirlas públicamente, porque es peor la sensación de que la gente crea [...] que nosotros estamos conformes con lo que estamos haciendo. Eso es más peligroso de que se pueda malinterpretar en otro lugar" (Carlos, entrevista concedida, 17 de noviembre, 2016). Sin embargo, cambiar el sistema de medios de comunicación del Estado no es algo que un periodista pueda lograr por sí solo, aunque, de vez en cuando, haya reportajes que se desvían del patrón normal institucionalizado. Por ejemplo, el redactor jefe del periódico estatal *Juventud Rebelde* admitió un artículo en el que se narraba cómo el secretismo impidió a los periodistas escribir sobre la popular heladería estatal Coppelia (Bugallo, 2016). Es poco común leer una crítica pública a los funcionarios estatales. Además, las cartas de los lectores ejercen presión sobre las instituciones públicas, y esto surte un efecto dominó para muchos periodistas. Jorge dice: "Cuando le pedimos información, usted es un funcionario público y no puede quedarse callado, de lo contrario, pasará a engrosar la lista de Coppelia. Todo el mundo me contesta, confíe en mí, todo el mundo" (Jorge, entrevista concedida, 09 de noviembre, 2016).

9 Bajo asedio "enemigo"

Como se señaló en la reseña anterior, la investigación sobre la autocensura en los países autoritarios tiende a explicar el fenómeno a través de las consideraciones periodísticas de los castigos y las recompensas del partido gobernante. Estos factores entran decididamente en juego para los periodistas cubanos, pero quizás de un modo diferente a como lo hacen en Rusia y en China, por ejemplo. Las recompensas en el marco del periodismo estatal cubano consisten, ante todo, en la promoción de los periodistas y redactores jefes que muestran verdadera dedicación a la Revolución. Como lo demostró la entrada del blog donde se reseñaron las críticas internas formuladas en una reunión de la UPEC, si se sobrepasan los límites de la conducta aceptable, habrá consecuencias. Sin embargo, parece que la percepción individual de los valores ideológicos o sociales, así como la amenaza del enemigo, son elementos de igual

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importancia para las estrategias de autocensura de los periodistas de los medios estatales cubanos.

Los periodistas prestan un amplio apoyo al proyecto nacional de igualdad de oportunidades, distribución de la riqueza y anticapitalismo, y ven estos valores amenazados por el deseo de Estados Unidos de establecer una democracia liberal en la isla. De ser necesario, puede, por lo tanto, justificarse y explicarse fácilmente la autocensura en cualquier tema que pueda ayudar al enemigo a lograr sus fines. Si existe la posibilidad, real o imaginaria, de que un artículo pueda afectar negativamente al desarrollo de Cuba o conducir a una cobertura dañina en Miami, los periodistas hallan justificado privar al público de esta información o 'equilibrar' la cobertura, por lo que solo informarán parcialmente del asunto. En palabras de Jorge: "Es por el bien del país". Los periodistas se encuentran en la posición de 'cancerberos', cumpliendo los objetivos revolucionarios de oposición a la subversión de los valores cubanos.

Paralelamente, los valores éticos y profesionales de los periodistas se ven amenazados por dichas prácticas de autocensura. Los profesionales de la información de todas las edades y posiciones desean el cambio de los medios estatales, quieren, en particular, la ruptura de los estrechos vínculos que los unen con el Partido Comunista y avanzar en la dirección de los intereses del pueblo cubano. Los periodistas consideran que privar a la gente de información, ya sea mediante censura, autocensura o como consecuencia del secretismo, va en contra de los objetivos de la Revolución. García Santamaría (2017, p. 228) señala esta misma contradicción en su tesis doctoral sobre el periodismo cubano. La poderosa imagen de Estados Unidos como enemigo hace que la participación en mítines públicos u otras ceremonias conmemorativas sea importante para los periodistas que, con ello, "reafirman su pertenencia revolucionaria". Pero los periodistas están generalmente de acuerdo en que se hace una valoración exagerada de la amenaza. Es difícil distinguir el compromiso real de las presiones oficiales, que pueden también superponerse.

Los periodistas de los medios estatales cubanos pueden identificarse con el modelo de periodismo *leal-facilitador,* tanto en la variante que protege el *status quo* y a los que están en el poder, como en la que fomenta la pertenencia y el prestigio nacionales (Mellado y Van Dalen, 2013, p. 862). Durante más de medio siglo, los medios estatales han ido en esta dirección, y los periodistas más jóvenes

aprenden, a través de la socialización, el mejor modo de proteger al país. A medida que se desarrolla, la imagen de Estados Unidos como enemigo no solo es disposicional (Ottosen, 2004) en el sentido de que se espera una agresión, sino que también está bien internalizada en la cultura y mentalidad cubanas (Luostarinen, 1989). Por lo tanto, no es fácil separar los deseos de cada periodista, individualmente, de los deseos del colectivo, la nación. Esto puede servir también para explicar por qué los periodistas cooperan con un sistema que contradice los ideales profesionales de estos.

Por lo tanto, en un plano teórico o ideal, los periodistas parecen tener incentivos para oponerse a las estrategias de autocensura, o cambiarlas, pero les es difícil poner la teoría en práctica. El periodista podría ser castigado, si bien una consecuencia más probable y quizás más severa sería que le pusieran la etiqueta de antipatriota o incluso le tacharan de 'amigo del enemigo'. No es inusual poner esta etiqueta a los actores o blogueros no estatales que cuestionan el *status quo* (García Santamaría, 2017, p. 234). Además, los periodistas consideran conveniente aceptar el análisis actual del PCC sobre el "enemigo" y el mundo exterior. Culpar al "sistema" de la falta de cumplimiento de los ideales profesionales puede salvar la discrepancia entre estos ideales y la práctica, a la vez que implica no tener que abandonar la zona de confort. Skjerdal (2010, p. 113) encuentra la misma tendencia entre los periodistas etíopes; se sienten responsables individualmente de promover la prosperidad de la nación, pero también utilizan la rigidez del sistema de medios de comunicación del Estado para legitimar la autocensura y relajar sus normas éticas personales.

Cabría argumentar que los periodistas cubanos toman hasta cierto punto las riendas del encuadre externo al decidir qué información es adecuado presentar al "enemigo". Paralelamente, los periodistas pierden el control de lo que se dice sobre Cuba cuando se censuran o autocensuran segmentos enteros de interés público. Además, el hecho de que los cubanos recurran a las noticias del "enemigo", a los medios informativos de Florida, para leer artículos sobre asesinatos, crímenes u otras noticias nacionales de signo negativo conduce a la deslegitimación de los medios de comunicación estatales.

Sin embargo, como señalaba Tania, el creciente ecosistema de medios de comunicación de Cuba está aportando nuevos criterios de noticiabilidad a los medios estatales. A pesar de

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la cansina retórica del PCC de permitir la autonomía de los medios de comunicación, las fuerzas de la población mejor conectadas cambian y los periodistas más jóvenes están empujando los límites al ignorar, en parte, las restricciones institucionales dentro de los medios estatales. Las entrevistas analizadas en el presente estudio, así como la de García Santamaría (2017, p. 233), indican que los periodistas jóvenes son más audaces y están más dispuestos a exponerse a sanciones, mientras que los periodistas experimentados están más arraigados en la retórica de la Guerra Fría de protegerse contra el 'enemigo'. Tania menciona a título de ejemplo la entrevista que realizó a una destacada mujer cubana: "Y esta mujer habló tantas cosas no dichas y no debatidas y no contadas, opiniones fuertes, muy fuertes, muy tabú, y no pasó nada. Entonces yo me pregunto, ¿somos nosotros? ¿son reales aquellas filosofías de plazas sitiadas?" (Tania, entrevista concedida, 15 de noviembre, 2016).

10 Conclusiones

La amenaza de una invasión estadounidense que socave el sistema cubano es uno de los principales factores que consolidan a los medios de comunicación estatales como partidarios del Partido Comunista y de la Revolución. Que "la invasión de Playa Girón" perviva en el campo de la comunicación es una construcción funcional para las élites políticas que mantiene en vida las imágenes del enemigo, desviando el foco de atención de sus propios errores. Para los periodistas, la amenaza externa fomenta diversas formas de autocensura. Los periodistas acceden a evitar la cobertura de temas que puedan nutrir los intereses anticubanos en Estados Unidos. Esto significa que grandes segmentos de la vida pública de Cuba son silenciados por los medios de comunicación estatales: por ejemplo, las noticias sobre asesinatos, crímenes o establecimiento de nuevas empresas. Contrariamente a lo que indica mucha literatura sobre la autocensura en otros países autoritarios, el apoyo de los propios periodistas a la ideología del Estado, unido a las imágenes del enemigo, pesa más que las consideraciones sobre recompensas y castigos (Elbaz et al., 2017).

Simultáneamente, los periodistas consideran exagerado este escenario de la Guerra Fría y ven sus ideales profesionales

amenazados por una autocensura exhaustiva. Los periodistas jóvenes, en particular, sienten preocupación por la deslegitimación de los medios de comunicación estatales cuando los cubanos buscan en los medios informativos "enemigos" información censurada en Cuba. Es cierto que los periodistas dicen que quieren un cambio estructural lejos de los vínculos políticos, la censura y la autocensura, pero estas afirmaciones se mantienen en un nivel teórico o idealista. Los factores determinantes son la posibilidad de que le califiquen a uno de disidente o que sea más conveniente descargarse de responsabilidad que oponerse al "sistema". Sin embargo, los medios de comunicación no estatales desafían cada vez más las normas establecidas y los periodistas jóvenes están más dispuestos a exponerse a sanciones.

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10.2 Article 2

English version: Perceptions of and strategies for autonomy among journalists working for Cuban state media

Spanish version: Periodistas y medios estatales Cubanos: Percepciones y estrategias de autonomía

9

Perceptions of and Strategies for Autonomy among Journalists Working for Cuban State Media

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According to the Cuban academic Julio García Luis (2013, 127), friends or colleagues visiting Cuba have often asked him the following question: "Why, with your passionate Revolution, do you nevertheless have such a boring press?" One possible answer may be found by revisiting the well-known words of Fidel Castro: "Within the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing" (Castro 1961). Working for the state media in Cuba is difficult for journalists wanting to pursue "Western" professional ideals such as criticism and debate. This chapter addresses how some of these journalists navigate within the strict frame of what the Cuban Communist Party (Partido Comunista de Cuba, or PCC) defines as appropriate information for the public. The chapter seeks to answer the following research questions: What perceptions of autonomy do journalists working for Cuban state media have? What strategies do these journalists apply to broaden their journalistic autonomy?

Most journalists who work for Cuban state media are products of an extensive five-year university education in which the professional ideals they are taught are much closer to standard "Western" principles and paradigms of critique and debate than the reality they encounter once employed as members of the state media apparatus. This makes for difficult initial adjustments, constant professional compromises, and general discontent with the dearth of information offered to the people. The frustration of these journalists has increased through the recent expansion of Internet access on the island and by the veritable explosion of independent digital media outlets, which extend its reporters a far greater tolerance of journalistic autonomy. Indeed, these start-ups have been built around a clear expectation of such

autonomy combined with the classic journalistic ideals of impartiality, investigation, critique, and the generation of debate (Henken 2017).

The Competing Roles of the Cuban State Media and the "Blogosphere"

The function of the state media is to support the policies of the PCC. Moreover, all state media outlets are subject to the regulation and control of the PCC's Ideological Department (ID). As explained to me by the participants in this study, the lines of communication and control between the ID and the newsrooms can take various forms,[1] such as phone calls or personal visits where editors are informed by representatives of the ID about the Party's current media agenda. As *Granma* is the country's leading newspaper and the PCC's "official organ," what is written here is interpreted as a guide to other newspapers, which often reprint or digitally republish its articles verbatim. As a general rule, if *Granma* avoids a sensitive issue, no other newspaper will touch it.

A new policy on Information and Communication Technologies (referred to as TICs in Spanish) was approved as a decree law by Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel on July 4, 2019 (Díaz-Canel 2019).[2] Another TICs policy document, which supposedly has been approved by the Political Bureau of the Communist Party, has been in informal circulation for more than a year. Some journalists have considered it a slight loosening of control on state media. Others see little or no change in the new policy, except that it does not prohibit non-state actors specifically (*Periodismo de Barrio* 2018; Rodríguez 2018). In sum, there is a lot of confusion about what kinds of independent digital media are allowed and what are not in the wake of this new legal framework. Moreover, what if any real impact these new policies will have on state media is also so far unclear.

While the decree law does not state the rights and obligations of media outlets, the policy document does. It says: "The director of every media outlet is responsible, in a personal and nontransferable way, for the execution of the informative, editorial, and cultural policy in his or her organ" (PCC 2018, 12). At the same time, this policy document states that the PCC is "the director of social communication in the country, draws up the general policy for its development and controls it" (PCC 2018, 10). This means that there is a certain degree of autonomy within each newsroom. The various editors in chief decide what is printed or broadcast but the PCC plays an oversight role. According to the higher-ranking journalists included in this study, it is important to avoid crossing the invisible line that would provoke the ID of

the PCC to become directly involved in evaluating specific content. Thus, editors are responsible for anticipating and preemptively censoring topics the ID may object to. The risks of being punished or dismissed, for stepping out of line or across this invisible line is therefore a strong motivator for self-censorship. Furthermore, editors are often given this role by the PCC because they have proven over many years to be supporters of the system, and this makes the autonomy of journalists further down in the journalistic hierarchy extremely dependent on their particular editor. As noted by Garcés (2013), only fifty percent of leaders in the Cuban state media have journalistic training and in many cases this influences editorial decisions away from professional considerations and toward the interests of the PCC.

With the recent expansion of the Internet in Cuba, however, various kinds of non-state digital media have also appeared on the national scene, undermining the hegemony of the top-down Cuban state media system. Most non-state media—international newspapers and wire services such as *El País*, *New York Times*, *Reuters*, *EFE*, and the Associated Press—are accredited by the state-run Foreign Press Center (*Centro de Prensa Internacional*, or CPI) and risk losing authorization and legal residency status if they are too critical of the government.[3] On the other hand, the wide variety of emergent, independent media outlets (both those whom Henken (2017) calls "digital millennials" as well as the more bold "digital dissidents") tend to be more outspoken in their criticism of the Cuban government and its policies than the foreign press. As a result, these island-based independent digital media startups receive a constant stream of harassment and are periodically blocked from access via the state-controlled national servers whether via the island's growing web of public Wi-Fi networks or over the mobile 3G connections made available in December 2018.

Foreshadowing the appearance of these digital indie media outlets, a number of independent blogs were launched from Cuba starting around 2007–2008. The state's response to this was twofold. On the one hand, it portrayed the most prominent and overtly critical unauthorized bloggers as U.S. government mercenaries (or "lackeys of imperialism"); on the other, it actively and publicly embraced a handful of other blogs and bloggers, attempting to use them as a tool to counter what it considered "anti-Cuban" content online (Henken 2011; Vicari 2015). Following this, state media journalists were given Internet access from their homes under the condition that they open a blog (ostensibly a personal, unmediated space) representing an official point of view. Currently, the Cuban Union of Journalists (Unión de Periodistas Cubanos, or UPEC) lists over 160 blogs written by journalists from all over the country (UPEC 2018). However, when one attempts to

access these blogs, most either stopped publishing after 2012 or have been discontinued or deleted altogether (which is when the Cuban blogosphere started to wane). This trend is almost the reverse for the thirty blogs listed by *Granma*, where the majority are still active.

This is important because to some degree the blogging format could potentially still constitute an opportunity for freer expression for journalists working for Cuban state media. Now, most of the previously active independent bloggers have merged into journalistic collectives creating their own island-based news outlets (such as *14ymedio*, *Periodismo de Barrio*, *El Toque*, *El Estornudo*, and *Tremenda Nota*), something that Marreiro (2014, 30) had presciently foreseen. And for their part, Cuban youth are not taking to blogging but, rather, creating their own YouTube channels (Associated Press 2018) or signing up for Twitter (*OnCuba* 2019; Pentón 2019), or, more commonly, Instagram or Snapchat (or Tinder!) accounts, like other young people all over the world.

Journalistic Autonomy in Authoritarian Contexts

In order to understand journalistic autonomy in Cuba, it is relevant to briefly review differing understandings of autonomy around the world. According to Jane B. Singer, U.S. journalists consider autonomy to be fulfilling "their public service obligations of informing the citizenry, free from the influences of government or of obligations to any other force" (2007, 81). This is coherent within the professional milieu of the "detached watchdog" that Thomas Hanitzsch describes as "prototypical of the Western journalist" (2011, 485). Monitoring political and economic elites in this way ("keeping them honest" or "holding them accountable") is a function of journalism globally, and support for this role is found in countries worldwide (2011, 487).

Katrin Voltmer and Herman Wasserman (2014, 189) find that there are two parallel, and often conflicting, processes taking place when journalists in emerging democracies interpret press freedom. One understanding leans towards the premises common in what they call "Western discourses," such as claiming membership in a global professional community where holding those in power to account is a primary journalistic value. Another way of interpreting press freedom, however, is through historical and cultural aspects that may be in contradiction to this "Western notion." For instance, the way journalists perceive their role in society may guide how they define their responsibilities connected to freedom of the press. For example, in authoritarian countries like China, Indonesia, Russia, and Uganda the "opportunist facilitator role" dominates (although it is also found in all types of

political regimes, and in the West). Journalists in these countries see themselves largely as supportive of the government and cooperative with its official policies, a role which has come about through diverse political and historical factors in the respective countries (Hanitzsch et al. 2011, 282).

The presence of the state in news organizations is experienced by journalists as a limiting force in their perceived professional autonomy. Democratic forms of government are therefore a major condition for journalistic autonomy (Reich and Hanitzsch 2013, 149). Thus, analyzing autonomy in authoritarian countries calls for a somewhat different approach than studies focusing on journalistic autonomy in democracies. Journalists in authoritarian societies may negotiate between various goals, in addition to the fulfillment of their ideal role as professional journalists.

After the 1952 revolution, the Egyptian press was put under political control. In order to maintain some of the professional progress they had enjoyed before the revolution, journalists found closeness to those in power, through a role as experts or advisers a way to expand their autonomy. Also, by redefining their role in society towards that of "eyewitness or historian," journalists could develop counternarratives to official contemporary or historical accounts. In addition, new digital media outlets have exposed Arab journalists to Western journalistic practices. This has served as a bridge between cultures, which young Arab journalists have used to reform their societies (and their practice of journalism) from within (Mellor 2009, 318).

During the Soviet era, Estonian journalists practiced various forms of "silent resistance" against restrictions on their autonomy. Their strategies included emphasizing apolitical subjects to diminish the official ideological discourse and using linguistic means of circumventing the demands of the ruling party (Lauk and Kreegipuu 2010). Jingrong Tong (2009) holds that in more liberal Chinese media organizations external pressure from the government on the newsrooms makes self-censorship an important strategy for exposing social ills. For instance, by carefully calibrating reports by including official discourse, a sensitive issue can be addressed. Tong argues that this selective way of writing indeed increases autonomy as it helps newsrooms bypass political minefields and increase the possibility of publication on politically sensitive topics. However, as Reich and Hanitzsch (2013,152) suggest, there is a need for more qualitative data on how autonomy is experienced and negotiated by journalists in authoritarian and transitional societies. This chapter hopes to contribute to this body of literature by focusing on Cuban perceptions of and strategies for autonomy within the structure of Cuban state media.

Professional Autonomy

According to Silvio Waisbord (2013, 45–71), the liberal ideal of journalism as a marketplace of ideas is not sufficient to guarantee true autonomy. For journalism to be able to report on publicly relevant matters, it needs to distance itself from both state and corporate interests. In particular, Waisbord distinguishes between "press autonomy" and "professional journalism" (2013, 53). The first refers to the importance in democracies of guaranteeing the independence of the press from the state, while the latter is linked to a central element of professionalism: "the need to control boundaries vis-à-vis external actors (the state, the market, and organized politics) in order to serve the public interest" (2013, 54).

However, in liberal capitalist contexts, erecting a principled and impenetrable firewall between journalistic practice and corporate interests is an almost impossible ideal to achieve. But professional journalists do not necessarily succumb to external actors' attempts of control; autonomy is also contingent on journalists' own willingness to preserve boundaries of the profession. Strategies for maintaining autonomy consist of trying to maintain or regain sovereignty over their professional jurisdiction or attempting to make livable arrangements that strike a principled balance between professional journalistic ideals and outside forces such as the market, the government, or bureaucracy. The result is a constant negotiation between professional considerations and nonprofessional anticipations (Waisbord 2013, 150).

The Cuban scholar Julio García Luis (2013, 87) considers that the media has "the transcendent role as producer and reproductive agent of the political system, of the values, and of the culture of society." The press can be viewed as an open system that interacts with other systems such as the political, juridical, economic, cultural, or individual. These systems relate to each other in different ways. If it is an *obligatory* relation, the system is *rigid*. If it is possible to substitute one element with another and keep functioning, the relation is *optional* and thus more *flexible* (2013, 88). These elements constitute what "regulates" the press (as opposed to the outright control of it as state propaganda). At the same time, the press is a system in itself, with its own internal structures that are able to "self-regulate" its activity. However, "self-regulation" is only functional if a good "regulation" exists; otherwise it is merely a euphemism for "self-censorship."

García Luis also argues that the constant external threats to Cuba from the U.S. in the years following the triumph of the 1959 Revolution (often understood as a "state of siege" that gave birth to a "siege mentality" among

Cuban officials) caused Cuban leaders to see the role of journalism as one directly related to the interests of the Communist Party and the defense of national sovereignty embodied by the Revolution and state socialism (2013, 90–101). This has fatally undermined the Cuban press's ability to "self-regulate." Therefore, it has lost the authority to make decisions and choose the best solutions to professionally fulfill its role in society—becoming a mere propagandistic instrument of the political-ideological system. This is not a judgment about the journalists working in the media themselves as good or bad professionals. Instead, it is about the system itself, a system which—in García Luis's consideration—Cuba should have been able to change in the years since the early 1960s. For example, in a questionnaire to which Cuban journalists responded, García Luis found that only 11 percent considered media leaders to have power over editorial decisions while over 50 percent considered the leaders of the PCC to exercise most influence over the media. According to García Luis, such regulation may in turn cause the people working in state media to be "like little birds in their nest, waiting for you to feed them everything [already] chewed up" (2013, 158).

Methodology

The data analyzed here consists of in-depth interviews with twelve journalists who work in Cuban state media. These interviews were conducted during a fieldwork trip to Cuba in 2016. Due to the challenges of access for foreign researchers and the sparse diffusion of research originating in Cuba (and a general lack of research itself) little research on state media journalists has been done. The exclusive selection of state media journalists was not the original intention. I had initially hoped to draw on a more diverse sample of practicing journalists so that I could compare the experiences and struggles for journalistic autonomy across different kinds of outlets, including those who work for non-state outlets. However, the process of applying for and being granted a research visa by the Cuban government made a more inclusive approach impossible.

To secure participants' anonymity, journalists were given pseudonyms and placed within three age categories: young (20–34), middle-aged (35–49), and senior (50+). Participants ranged from newly graduated reporters to long-established editors, but titles and affiliations have been omitted. The responses from the journalists interviewed are not applicable to all journalists throughout Cuba. However, they are indicative of key journalistic trends and strategies and offer some illustrative points of view on autonomy for state media journalists in a changing society.

The interview guide used in the research was inspired by the framework of the *Worlds of Journalism Study* (WJS 2012). It covered daily routines, autonomy, and changes in the Cuban media landscape, while also leaving room for participants to elaborate on subjects particularly important to them (Bryman 2016). Important questions for this study were: What does journalistic autonomy mean to you? Who decides which stories should be prioritized? How much do you decide over your journalistic production? Have any of your articles been withheld or rewritten? I have translated transcriptions of these interviews from Spanish to English and verified them with a native Spanish-speaking proofreader. Additionally, for this project, five group interviews with journalism students were conducted. I will refer to data from these interviews to supplement my quotations from the working journalists themselves.

Perceptions of Autonomy

When asked to define autonomy at a general level, most of my interviewees defined it as a responsibility residing between obligations to the collective and to the individual. A young reporter, Carlos, believes that the media should uphold values such as "anti-imperialism, defending ideas and struggles of the third world, supporting the weak and not the strong [. . .], and it should defend Cuban independence and sovereignty." Autonomy for him is then both protection of Cuba as a nation-state and personal agency in the journalistic profession: "Autonomy is the capacity of every individual, every journalist, to guide their actions, their written works towards these values. [At the same time,] nobody needs to come and tell me what I should write, how I should write it, or in which form." However, when describing what autonomy means in practice, the journalists answer in diverse ways. Many start by claiming that journalists work with substantial self-determination. For instance, the middle-aged reporter, Luis, says:

> I do not believe that censorship exists here. Censorship is when there is a dictatorship and there is a censor that comes with a red pen and a magnifying glass and draws a line and harasses you. [. . .] I mean, nobody writes because they are commanded, mandated, forced. That is impossible.

Many journalists who work in the state media emphasize the importance of freedom from corporate interests. A middle-aged reporter, Juan, exemplifies this by claiming: "I believe the Cuban journalist sometimes works with a little more freedom than in many places of the world. I mean the journalist

edits his story, he does not have to negotiate with the owners or his superior." Nevertheless, the Cuban state media depends on the degree of liberty the PCC grants it at any given moment. Juan continues his argument by saying that his journalistic autonomy depends on the topic not being "very important," which implicitly means an issue that does not question the political leadership.

This leads to the second part of what autonomy means for journalists: something situated "within the limits." Journalists often explain these limits by referring to the "editorial guidelines" of each media outlet. As senior reporter María explains, the problem with these guidelines is that neither do they grant much autonomy nor are they always followed. Juan claims that if one agrees with the editorial line there is substantial space for movement. If one does not agree, however, one should leave and "look for another place to work, that could be in a foreign media outlet or you could make your own blog."

Strategies of Autonomy

Leaving the state media and entering another type of outlet is more easily said than done. The content, writing style, and remuneration in non-state media are key elements that attract young journalists to this emerging option, but there is not room for everyone. Many young journalists therefore attempt to keep one foot in the more stable but less autonomous state sector and another in the more unreliable but freer and better-paid independent realm (García 2016). Another way for state media journalists in Cuba to gain autonomy is to avoid the coverage of sensitive or particularly "delicate" topics. For example, the young reporter Tania considers that "this is an exercise of balance and battle. National issues, relating to the domestic reality, are the most difficult themes to breach [in one's journalism]."

Several journalists say that they have never experienced censorship, but then they also emphasize that they work with issues on the margins of what may be considered political by the PCC, such as culture, information technology, or international subjects. The young reporter Jorge says: "I used to write about sports, which is no big deal. So, it was not politics or national issues." Among journalism students the avoidance of politics is also reflected when they discuss in which state media outlet they would like to spend their two to three-year obligatory internship after graduation. None of the students wanted to work on domestic issues, although several commented that they know there is censorship in sports and cultural reporting as well.

The structural conditions of the state media are not favorable for

journalists who want to denounce social problems or institutional failures through their work. According to the journalists interviewed, the Cuban News Agency (Agencia Cubana de Noticias, or ACN) functions as a "headquarters" for determining which events and stories the state media should cover. Journalists may also propose subjects for coverage, but the events of "maximum interest for the state" often leave few resources for other stories. One of the journalists interviewed had several strategies for overcoming the limitations when covering the news. Working in a state broadcasting company, the journalist volunteered to host an early morning program:

> That gave me many opportunities because I got to have a space there of ten minutes, to talk about whatever politics I wanted. At that time [in the morning], there were not many decisions made, so there aren't many bosses who bother you too much because of the contents that you are covering, and I had a lot of freedom. And there were things that I said in that time slot that were never repeated later during the day, but I said them in the morning.

Another way of creating a space for strong opinions is to get a prominent person, tolerated by the PCC, to state it. Intellectuals in Cuba enjoy a wider space of autonomy than journalists, and can therefore make more challenging public claims, even if these too always must remain "within the limits" (Garcia Santamaria 2017, 33). In a broadcast series interviewing the aforementioned group, the journalist promoted stories of hard work and sacrifice—but it was also:

> . . . an excuse to expose some of the problems of the press. And some very strong things were said, things that I could never have stated in the news [myself], but if [the Cuban intellectual] Raúl Garcés is telling me, then Raúl Garcés is telling me. And this content is heating up the debate on the problems that the media in Cuba have with the authorities.

This means that the relative freedom of prominent intellectuals and academics can promote a trickle-down effect to expand the autonomy for journalists working for state media outlets.

Using Blogs

Among the many contradictions in the Cuban state media system, one that is particularly restraining on journalistic ideals is that everything printed in state newspapers may be interpreted as official policy. This means that

journalists cannot make critical comments about foreign regimes in the state media, as this may be interpreted as a message from the Party, which in turn can cause difficulties in bilateral relations. For instance, as indicated by the young reporter Carlos, if a Middle Eastern country were to lend Cuba money, state newspapers would then be unable to write about human rights violations in that country. Responding to the push and pull between state obligations and professional ideals, some journalists feel they have no choice but to leave the profession. Others still remain within the official media but resolve to avoid sensitive topics or become resigned from doing much serious work at all, which according to Carlos can be understood as a strategy of protest (but can also arguably be taken as a form of consent, obedience, acquiescence, and self-censorship).

However, in addition to collaboration with non-state outlets, another strategy for autonomy among state media journalists is to turn to their personal blogs. Indeed, three of the participants in this study used blogs for this specific purpose. The middle-aged reporter Roberto explained that it would be impossible for him in his official journalistic work to directly question a minister or directly criticize someone in the government, Party, or bureaucracy: "I wouldn't do that, because I know that it won't be published. You don't write to not get published. I'd put that in my blog." He said that there have been reactions to his using his blog in this manner but refrained from specifying how these episodes played out or what they were in relation to. Instead, he simply (if a bit cryptically) claimed: "I am still here, but one also [has to] know the rules of the game."

The young reporter Carlos considers his blogging strategy to be "a way of applying pressure so that people understand that what was published on the Internet, on the blog, could easily have appeared in the [official] paper without being considered a catastrophe." In fact, he claims that several times editors, even "leaders," have called him to say that his blog posts could have been published in the news outlet, which also is the case with one of his stories. Carlos says he has not had any problems with the content of the blog, which he considers to be true to the values mentioned earlier (anti-imperialism, support for the weak, etc.). If one day he encountered problems, he said, "I would refer to those values, and if they do not agree with those values, I would quit my job."

It seems that keeping a certain degree of transparency towards the political elite is key in order to be able to continue blogging as a way to let off steam. Roberto says he started working with a government institution, informing them about important issues in his blog, and this raised awareness in other governmental bodies such as the Ideological Department. Importantly, he

managed to make a relevant ministry see that there were subjects lacking proper reporting in the state media: "I do not think that any government institution has been surprised with the things I have done, because they knew that I was involved in this."

Another journalist, a middle-aged reporter named Ernesto, has experienced how difficult it is to know where the limit is for acceptable utterances in blogs. Once, he wrote a blog post on a public march by self-employed workers and was afterwards fired from his news outlet. However, the UPEC got involved, and he was allowed to return after a month-long layoff. A while later, he published a speech made by a government official at an internal meeting on his blog. This caused him to be fired permanently, and he was also suspended from the UPEC. Ernesto says: "What was said [at the meeting] was such an elemental thing. Everybody knew it. It is not like I revealed a state secret. [. . .] I didn't think it would create such a big thing. If I had known, I wouldn't have published it, because I lost my job." Ernesto contends that the autonomy he thought he had had on his blog turned out to be a fiction since he could not publish anything there that went against the agenda of the state media outlet where he worked: "I mean, if you go outside the line of what they want you to say, or what is supposedly correct for a journalist to publish, the same thing that happened to me will happen to you." The self-censoring effect such layoffs can have on other journalists working for state media should not be underestimated.

Navigating Autonomy

Managing boundaries with external actors is an important feature of what Waisbord (2013) defines as "professional journalism." Ideally, neither states nor corporations should exercise influence over journalistic decisions. While such a normative ideal is difficult to obtain in any political system, the role of the state media as promoters of the PCC "party line" in Cuba makes this impossible to achieve for journalists who practice their profession in these official outlets. Still, it does not mean that such journalists have completely given up maintaining, negotiating, navigating, or eventually regaining autonomy within official structures.

The extensive university education where criticism and debate are encouraged rather than avoided is a big advantage for Cuban journalists. They are well aware of the possibilities of criticism, accountability, and debate in their practice of journalism if the structure would allow them develop these journalistic traits.[4] Indeed, this may be the case for many journalists in countries with limited media freedom. Examining twelve countries with limited

or no media freedom, Josephi (2010) concludes that "journalism education cannot be used as a sign of how free or not free the country's media system is."

Although Cuban state media journalists fall firmly within the "loyal facilitator role" (Mellado et al. 2017; Olivera and Torres 2017), Cuban journalism students show a much greater interest in political issues than their counterparts in Ecuador and Venezuela. About half of the Cuban student respondents (N=383) claim to be very or extremely interested in politics (Alonso et al. 2017, 254). The stark contrast between a strong journalistic preparation coupled with interest in politics, and the disconcerting reality in state media outlets, make the dissonance between ideals and practice difficult to swallow for journalism graduates (Natvig 2018).

As for how state media journalists define autonomy, they find themselves torn between a dual responsibility: they should consider the needs of the nation, but at the same time work without interference from the PCC. The Cuban system (often referred to as a "regime" by its critics) is a heavily politicized subject, not only internally, but also—perhaps especially—internationally. Cuban journalists are acutely aware of the possible resonance a media story can have far beyond the shores of the island. They are thus bound, both formally and informally, to certain obligations to protect the state, especially since the siege-like atmosphere on the island allows the government to conflate itself with the Party and the nation. Anyone who has wandered the streets of Havana, or any other Cuban town, knows that political discussions are abundant among vendors, friends, and families. It is revealing that, despite the high level of interest in politics displayed by journalism students, established journalists seek to avoid this subject in their work because of the implicit limitations on autonomy. Although some journalists argue that it is a collective responsibility to work from within in creating structures to broaden autonomy, most consider the system to be too rigid to change without political will from above.

Even the emerging crop of independent, non-state media startups on the island often carefully engage in strategic avoidance of politics as an important survival strategy. For example, many use *el paquete* (a digital compilation of a wide variety of media circulated via flash drives) as a method of distribution. However, the distributors of this service assiduously follow the "no porn and no politics" rule. Lacking a legal basis, this practice of self-censorship is one of the costs of staying in the game (Henken 2021).

If stories are seen to be questioning the political regime (state socialism or the Revolution), censorship, withdrawal of tolerance, or outright repression awaits. This outcome was the fate of the influential independent magazine,

El Estornudo (Álvarez 2018; Álvarez 2019). Upon its being blocked, its editors published a letter saying that its editorial decisions would not "move an inch" towards the expectations of the political powers. An easier path for journalists, whether official or independent, is to simply avoid these "areas of contradiction," as some journalists put it. Writing about sports, culture, or technology makes the dissonance between journalistic ideals and reality easier to bridge, and contradictions appear more seldom. However, even in these safer thematic areas, one can never be fully confident of when or how a new "area of contradiction" might suddenly appear in what would otherwise be an innocuous topic or story. In other words, the line between what is considered "within the [digital] Revolution" and outside or even against it is perhaps purposely nebulous, leading to the common practice of self-censorship by journalists working in both the state and independent media.

As noted by both Waisbord (2013) and García Luis (2013), autonomy is a precondition for journalistic practice, and a legal framework is an essential element to secure journalistic autonomy. While Cuban journalists and intellectuals have called for less dependence on the PCC (Elizalde 2013; Garcés 2016; García Luis 2013), these demands remain theoretical and avoid direct criticism of the political elite. As mentioned earlier, the newly established Cuban communication policy and decree law (a process which has taken five years, and of which journalists in this study have had great expectations) has not defined a framework securing journalistic autonomy, but rather created further confusion about the invisible parameters drawn by the PCC.

For those journalists who choose to write on the difficult topic of politics, one way to carve out space for opinions that differ from the Party line is to find programs and publications that are less scrutinized or to use intellectuals accepted by the PCC as a foil or a voice of complaint. However, this way of moving around requires a certain status within the journalistic hierarchy and thus is not easily accomplished by the average or rookie reporter. More accessible platforms for expanding autonomy are blogs, collaboration with non-state outlets, or leaving the state media altogether.

The fluidity of what can and what cannot be written without consequences is perhaps the most striking aspect of the analysis of the three bloggers interviewed for this chapter. Roberto and Ernesto are largely at opposite ends of the spectrum in how they approach the invisible "glass ceiling" of tolerated expression. Roberto accepts a certain limitation on autonomy by striving towards keeping different bureaucratic units of the PCC informed about his planned blogging activities at any given time. Such openness runs the risk of backfiring since their knowledge of his intentions could lead to his being prohibited from posting stories he deems important. On the other hand, he

has thus far been able to stay in the "game" for a long time and has managed to expand his autonomy and to gain a modicum of political acceptance for his agenda. This approach directly relates to strategies described by Waisbord (2013) in journalists making livable arrangements with outside forces to protect shares of autonomy.

In contrast, Roberto adheres to ideals closer to standard "Western," liberal democratic paradigms of autonomy such as denouncing social problems and exposing malfunctions. He considers that information relevant to people's lives should be published and he should be able to do this on his own blog. However, in an authoritarian state where even the role of critically minded "state-friendly journalistic blogs" committed to the revolutionary project are potentially suspect, such ideals are likely to provoke negative consequences. In losing his job and the following chain of events leading to difficulties in getting a new job, he completely lost his space to maneuver. The third blogger, Carlos, has given up his job in the state media and started working for a non-state media outlet. Editors and leaders in the non-state media are mostly professionally trained journalists themselves. Despite having to avoid politics, they often prioritize stories that simply are unavailable in state media. Although Carlos pragmatically (and idealistically or perhaps a bit naively) sought to use his blog as a way of improving the state media from within, it seems that the "system" did not appreciate his efforts.

Conclusions

Fidel's "Words to the Intellectuals" may in fact sum up some journalistic strategies for autonomy in the Cuban state media. If journalists move within boundaries ("within the Revolution") and are always aware where the often arbitrary line of the acceptable is drawn at any given moment, they are likely to expand their degree of autonomy and keep their jobs. My interviews have shown that if journalists move too far "outside," much less turn "against the Revolution," all bets are off and all doors to autonomy "within the Revolution's" media system are shut, making it impossible for them to maintain a career as a journalist in the state media.[5] While there is general agreement that the state media is too far removed from the public agenda and too concerned with the political agenda (Elizalde 2013), a common way of seeking journalistic autonomy is merely by avoiding national issues and politics. Therefore, the state media remains "fossilized" (Marreiro 2014: 7), stuck within a Cold War paradigm recently exacerbated by the return to an antagonistic policy by the U.S. Trump administration.

The recent ascension to the Cuban presidency of Miguel Díaz-Canel has so far not shown any promising signs of more autonomy for state or non-state media actors. Indeed, in his speech to the UPEC in 2018 Díaz-Canel criticized non-state media outlets in general, and those he claimed to have financing from the U.S. government in particular, stating that: "they have been escalating the attack on what unites us–the Party–and what defends us–our press–continually disqualifying both and trying to fracture and separate what comes from the same root and grows in the same trunk." This quite visually shows what the leadership of the Party consider to be the role of journalists working for the state media: They are to defend the political leadership and the Revolution from outside forces. In fact, Díaz-Canel considers Cuban journalists and the Party to be two branches of the same tree. According to the president, this task is so important that the interests of the individual are unimportant (*Granma* 2018).

Thus, while the Revolution may still wield considerable power, it has also created a media system incompatible with journalistic autonomy from the political leadership, forcing many journalists to take creative risks to achieve a modicum of autonomy. It seems that the state media will remain "boring" as described by García Luis (2013: 123). However, as this chapter has shown, journalists apply various strategies to gain autonomy from this "too close for comfort" relationship. For instance, issues that might not pass otherwise can be addressed in publications that receive little editorial scrutiny. Others channel stories through their personal blogs, while making sure that stories are not very confrontational. Also, having Cuban intellectuals comment on issues that may be controversial, is a way of getting something published, because of the freer leeway some prominent intellectuals enjoy in Cuba. Finally, many journalists maintain jobs both in state media and the non-state media, as this allows them a broader range of autonomy.

Notes

1. Journalism students interviewed for this study explain that during periods of practical training they often encounter sensitive issues when writing articles, and many have had their work rewritten or been told to change content themselves. It seems that newly educated journalists or journalism students learn to navigate sensitive issues through "socialization" (Breed 1955, 328). Journalism students also appear more willing to oppose established norms than do journalists working in the state media (see Natvig 2018).

2. Briefly outlined, the objectives of the decree law are as follows: continue the "computerization" of the country, develop TICs as an instrument in the defense of the Revolution, promote access and "responsible use" of TICs by the population, and promote the

use of TICs among state and government bodies, as well as securing the "technological sovereignty" of TICs in the development of the computerization of the country (Díaz-Canel 2019, 764).

3. Mauricio Vicent of *El País* lost his accreditation because the CPI considered his coverage offered a "partial and negative" image of Cuba (*El País* 2011). The same reason was given for not renewing the visas of Gary Marx of the *Chicago Tribune* and César Gonzáles-Calero of the Mexican newspaper *El Universal* (Reporters Without Borders 2007). For the same reason, Fernando Ravsberg, formerly of the BBC, closed his blog *Cartas Desde Cuba* after reporting from the island for almost thirty years (Pentón 2018).

4. The fallout over the recent July 2019 case of the official Cuban media's total silence in the face of rolling blackouts that the government had previously publicly promised would not occur is a good example of this dilemma. In a pair of tweets sent out on July 18, Elaine Díaz, a former professor of digital journalism at the University of Havana and now director of the independent news site *Periodismo de Barrio*, called Cuba's state journalists to task for their journalistic failure with a direct reference to the role critical pedagogy played in their university educations. "During these days of silence about the blackouts, I have been asking myself how so many journalists could remain mute. How could they reconcile what they had learned in the academy with their news blackout?" (https://twitter.com/elainediaz2003/status/1152015188456955905) "How could they read and debate *In Cold Blood*, the Watergate case, the reportage of Tom Wolfe, *La noche de Tlatelolco*, [. . .] and still remain silent today. Remain silent everyday. Or report only part of reality?" (https://twitter.com/elainediaz2003/status/1152015195050348544).

5. For instance, the former state media journalist Reinaldo Escobar, who is now running the independent digital startup *14ymedio* with Yoani Sánchez, "went too far" when working at *Juventud Rebelde*. In 1988 he wrote an article about a principal who did not let pupils with long hair enter school buses, although it was not in the school rules. It created a scandal, and since he did not try to make good afterwards, he was expelled from the Young Communist League (UJC) and lost his position as a reporter with the newspaper (Rodríguez 2013).

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9

PERIODISTAS Y MEDIOS ESTATALES CUBANOS: PERCEPCIONES Y ESTRATEGIAS DE AUTONOMÍA

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Según el académico cubano Julio García Luis, los amigos o colegas que visitan Cuba a menudo le hacen la siguiente pregunta: «¿Por qué, ustedes, con una revolución tan apasionante, tienen sin embargo una prensa tan aburrida?» (2013b:127). Se puede encontrar una posible respuesta al revisitar las conocidas palabras de Fidel Castro: «Dentro de la Revolución, todo; contra la Revolución, nada» (1961b). Trabajar para los medios estatales en Cuba es difícil para los periodistas que quieren perseguir ideales profesionales «occidentales», como la crítica y el debate. Este capítulo aborda cómo algunos de estos periodistas navegan dentro del estricto marco de lo que el PCC define como información «apropiada» para el público y busca responder las siguientes preguntas: ¿qué percepciones de autonomía tienen los periodistas que trabajan para los medios estatales cubanos?, ¿qué estrategias aplican para ampliar su autonomía periodística?

La mayoría de los periodistas que trabajan para los medios estatales cubanos son producto de una extensa educación universitaria de cinco años. Los ideales profesionales que les enseñan en la universidad están mucho más cerca de los principios y paradigmas «occidentales» de crítica y debate que de la realidad que encuentran una vez empleados en los medios estatales. Esto conlleva ajustes iniciales difíciles, compromisos profesionales constantes y un descontento general con la escasez de información ofrecida. La frustración de estos periodistas dentro de medios oficiales ha aumentado con la reciente expansión del acceso a Internet en la Isla y por la verdadera explosión de medios de comunicación digitales independientes, que ofrecen a sus reporteros mucha más tolerancia con la autonomía periodística. De hecho, estas nuevas empresas se han construido alrededor de una clara expectativa de autonomía, combinada con los ideales periodísticos clásicos de imparcialidad, investigación, crítica y debate (Henken, 2017).

La función de los medios estatales es apoyar las políticas del PCC. Además, todos los medios de comunicación estatales están sujetos a la regulación y el control del Departamento Ideológico del PCC. Como me explicaron los participantes en este estudio, las líneas de comunicación y control entre este y las salas de redacción pueden adoptar diversas formas,[1] como llamadas telefónicas o visitas personales en las que sus representantes informan a los editores sobre la agenda actual de los medios del Partido. Como *Granma* es el principal periódico del país y el «órgano oficial» del PCC, lo escrito en él se interpreta como una guía para otros periódicos, que a menudo reimprimen o republican de manera digital sus artículos, textualmente. Como regla general, si *Granma* evita un tema delicado, ningún otro periódico lo tocará.

El 4 de julio de 2019, el presidente de Cuba, Miguel Díaz-Canel, aprobó una nueva política sobre las TIC como Decreto-Ley 370.[2] Asimismo, otro documento al respecto, que supuestamente ha sido aprobado por el Buró Político del PCC, ha estado en circulación informal durante más de un año. Algunos periodistas lo consideraron un ligero aflojamiento del control sobre los medios estatales. Otros vieron poco o ningún cambio en la nueva política, excepto que no prohibía en específico a los actores no estatales (*Periodismo de Barrio*, 2018; A. Rodríguez, 2018b). Tampoco quedaba claro qué impacto real tendrían esas nuevas políticas en los medios estatales. Sin embargo, a principios de 2021, el Gobierno publicó nuevas regulaciones para el ejercicio del trabajo por cuenta propia y en agosto legalizó las micro, pequeñas y medianas empresas. No obstante, practicar de manera privada o autónoma casi todas las profesiones seguía estando prohibido, incluyendo el periodismo.

[1] Los estudiantes de periodismo entrevistados para esta investigación explican que, durante los períodos de capacitación práctica, a menudo encuentran problemas al escribir artículos delicados. Otras personas han reescrito su trabajo o se les ha dicho que cambien el contenido ellos mismos. Parece que los periodistas recién graduados o los estudiantes de periodismo aprenden a navegar temas delicados a través de la «socialización» (Breed, 1955:328); también parecen estar más dispuestos a oponerse a las normas establecidas que los periodistas que trabajan en los medios estatales (cfr. Natvig, 2018).

[2] Resumidos, los objetivos son: continuar la «informatización» del país, desarrollar las TIC como un instrumento en la defensa de la Revolución, promover su acceso y «uso responsable» por parte de la población y entre los organismos estatales y gubernamentales, así como asegurar su «soberanía tecnológica» en el desarrollo de la informatización del país («Decreto-Ley no. 370…», 2019:764).

Si bien el Decreto-Ley 370 no establece los derechos y obligaciones de los medios de comunicación, el documento de política sí lo hace. Literalmente, establece que «[e]l director de cada medio de comunicación es responsable, de modo personal e intransferible, de la ejecución de la política informativa, editorial y cultural en su órgano» (PCC, 2018:12). Al mismo tiempo, este documento de política establece que el PCC es «rector de la comunicación social en el país, traza la política general para su desarrollo y ejerce su control» (ibíd.:10). Esto significa que hay un cierto grado de autonomía dentro de cada sala de redacción. Los diversos directores deciden qué se imprime o se transmite, pero el PCC desempeña un papel de supervisión. Según los periodistas de alto rango incluidos en este estudio, es importante evitar cruzar la línea invisible que provocaría que el Departamento Ideológico se involucre de modo directo en la evaluación de contenido específico. Por tanto, los directores son responsables de anticipar y censurar de manera preventiva los temas a los que se pueda oponer. Los riesgos de ser castigado o despedido, por salirse de o cruzar esta línea invisible son, por tanto, una fuerte motivación para la autocensura. Además, el PCC a menudo asigna a los directores este papel porque han demostrado durante muchos años que son partidarios del sistema, lo cual hace que la autonomía de los periodistas situados en la base de la jerarquía periodística sea demasiado dependiente de su director. Como señaló Garcés (2013a), solo 50% de los líderes de los medios estatales cubanos tienen capacitación periodística y, en muchos casos, eso influye en las decisiones editoriales fuera de las consideraciones profesionales y hacia los intereses del PCC.

Sin embargo, con la reciente expansión de Internet en Cuba, han aparecido en la escena nacional varios tipos de medios digitales no estatales, socavando por completo la hegemonía del sistema de medios estatales cubanos. La mayoría de los periódicos internacionales y servicios de cable (*El País*, *The New York Times*, *Reuters*, *EFE* y *Associated Press*) están acreditados por el CPI, administrado por el Estado, y corren el riesgo de perder autorización y residencia legal si son demasiado críticos con el Gobierno.[3] Por otro lado, la gran variedad de medios de comunicación emergentes e independientes —tanto los que Henken (2017) denomina «*millennials* digitales» como los más audaces «disidentes digitales»— tienden a ser más abiertos en sus críticas al gobierno

[3] Mauricio Vicent, enviado especial de *El País*, perdió su acreditación porque el CPI consideró que su cobertura ofrecía una imagen «parcial y negativa» de Cuba (*El País*, 2011). Se dio la misma razón para no renovar las visas de Gary Marx (*Chicago Tribune*) y de César Gonzáles-Calero (*El Universal*) (*Reporteros sin Fronteras*, 2007). Por la misma razón, Fernando Ravsberg, exmiembro de la *BBC*, cerró su blog *Cartas desde Cuba* después de informar desde la Isla durante casi treinta años (Pentón, 2018).

cubano y sus políticas que la prensa extranjera. Como resultado, estos nuevos medios digitales independientes basados en la Isla reciben un flujo constante de acoso. Algunos son incluso bloqueados por servidores nacionales controlados por el Estado, ya sea la creciente red pública de acceso Wi-Fi o a través de las conexiones móviles 3G habilitadas en diciembre de 2018.

Presagiando la aparición de estos medios digitales independientes, se abrieron varios blogs desde Cuba, especialmente en el período 2007-2008. La respuesta del Estado fue doble. Por un lado, retrató a los blogueros no autorizados más prominentes y abiertamente críticos como mercenarios del gobierno de Estados Unidos («lacayos del imperialismo»). Por otro, abrazó activa y públicamente a un puñado de otros blogs y blogueros, intentando utilizarlos como una herramienta para contrarrestar lo que consideraba contenido «anticubano» (Henken, 2011a; Vicari, 2015). Después de esto, los periodistas de los medios estatales tuvieron acceso a Internet desde sus hogares con la condición de que abrieran un blog —en teoría un espacio personal sin mediación— que representara un punto de vista oficial. Así, la UPEC enumera más de ciento sesenta blogs escritos por periodistas de todo el país (2018). Sin embargo, cuando uno intenta acceder a estos blogs, la mayoría dejó de publicarse después de 2012 o se suspendió o eliminó por completo —momento en que la blogosfera cubana comenzó a disminuir—. Esta tendencia funciona a la inversa para los treinta blogs que aparecen enlazados en el periódico *Granma*, la mayoría de los cuales todavía están activos.

Esto es importante porque, hasta cierto punto, el formato de blog podría potencialmente constituir una oportunidad para que los periodistas que trabajan para los medios estatales cubanos puedan expresarse con más libertad. Ahora bien, la mayoría de los blogueros independientes antes activos se ha unido alrededor de colectivos periodísticos, creando sus propios medios de comunicación basados en la Isla (*14ymedio*, *Periodismo de Barrio*, *El Toque*, *El Estornudo* y *Tremenda Nota*), algo que Marreiro (2014:30) había previsto. Por su parte, los jóvenes cubanos de hoy en día no se dedican tanto a los blogs, sino que han creado sus propios canales de YouTube (*AP*, 2018) o páginas personales en Twitter (*OnCuba*, 2019; Pentón, 2019), Instagram o Snapchat —incluso Tinder—, como otros jóvenes de todo el mundo.

Autonomía periodística en contextos autoritarios

Para comprender la autonomía periodística en Cuba, es relevante revisar brevemente las diferentes interpretaciones de la autonomía periodística en

perspectiva comparada. Según Jane B. Singer, los periodistas estadounidenses consideran que la autonomía está cumpliendo «sus obligaciones de servicio público de informar a la ciudadanía, libre de las influencias del gobierno o de cualquier otra fuerza» (2007:81). Esto es coherente dentro del rol profesional del «vigilante independiente» que Thomas Hanitzsch describe como «prototipo del periodista occidental» (2011:485). Monitorear las élites políticas y económicas de esta manera —«mantenerlas honestas» o exigirles una «rendición de cuentas»— es una función del periodismo a nivel mundial y el apoyo a este rol se ha identificado en países de todo el mundo (ibíd.:487).

Katrin Voltmer y Herman Wasserman (2014:189) encuentran que hay dos procesos paralelos, y a menudo conflictivos, que tienen lugar cuando los periodistas en las democracias emergentes interpretan la libertad de prensa. Algunos países se inclinan hacia las premisas de lo que ellos llaman comúnmente «discursos occidentales». Eso puede ser reclamar la membresía en una comunidad profesional global en la que pedir cuentas a quienes ostentan el poder se ve como un valor periodístico esencial. Sin embargo, otra forma es a través de aspectos históricos y culturales que pueden estar en contradicción con esta «noción occidental». Por ejemplo, la forma en que los periodistas perciben su papel en la sociedad puede guiar cómo definen sus responsabilidades respecto a la libertad de prensa. En países autoritarios como China, Indonesia, Rusia y Uganda predomina el «rol de facilitador oportunista» —se puede encontrar este rol en todos los tipos de regímenes políticos y en países occidentales—. Los periodistas allí perciben su rol profesional como apoyo al Gobierno, cooperando con políticas oficiales; un rol que ha surgido a través de diversos factores políticos e históricos en los respectivos países (Hanitzsch *et al.*, 2011:282). Sin embargo, los periodistas pueden experimentar la presencia del Estado como una fuerza que limita su percepción de autonomía profesional. Detener un gobierno democrático es una condición importante para la autonomía periodística (Reich y Hanitzsch, 2013:149). Por tanto, analizar la autonomía en los países autoritarios requiere un enfoque diferente de aquellos estudios centrados en la autonomía periodística en las democracias occidentales. Los periodistas en sociedades autoritarias pueden negociar entre varios objetivos, además de cumplir sus roles ideales como profesionales.

Por ejemplo, tras la revolución de 1952, la prensa egipcia fue puesta bajo control político. Con el fin de mantener parte del progreso profesional del que habían disfrutado antes de la revolución, los periodistas encontraron cercanía con los que estaban en el poder a través de un papel como expertos

o asesores, lo que vieron como una forma de ampliar su autonomía. Además, al redefinir su papel en la sociedad hacia el de «testigos oculares o historiadores», podían desarrollar contranarrativas a relatos oficiales contemporáneos o históricos. Hoy en día, el fácil acceso a los nuevos medios digitales ha ayudado a exponerlos a las prácticas periodísticas occidentales más fácilmente. Esto ha servido como un puente entre culturas que los jóvenes periodistas árabes han utilizado para reformar sus sociedades —y su práctica del periodismo— desde dentro (Mellor, 2009:318).

Durante la era soviética, los periodistas estonios practicaron diversas formas de «resistencia silenciosa» contra las restricciones a su autonomía. Sus estrategias incluían enfatizar temas apolíticos para disminuir el papel del discurso ideológico oficial y usar medios lingüísticos para eludir las demandas del Partido (Lauk y Kreegipuu, 2010). Jingrong Tong (2009) sostiene que, en las organizaciones de medios de comunicación más liberales de China, la presión externa del Gobierno sobre las salas de redacción, combinada con cierta autocensura, paradójicamente ha permitido visibilizar males sociales. Por ejemplo, al calibrar con cuidado los informes e incluir el discurso oficial, se pueden abordar temas delicados. Tong argumenta que esta forma selectiva de escritura aumenta de hecho la autonomía, ya que ayuda a las salas de redacción a evitar campos minados políticos y aumenta la posibilidad de publicar sobre temas sensibles a nivel político. Sin embargo, como sugieren Reich y Hanitzsch (2013:152), se necesitan más estudios cualitativos sobre cómo los periodistas experimentan y negocian la autonomía en sociedades autoritarias y en transición. Este capítulo espera contribuir a estos debates, al enfocarse en las percepciones y estrategias de autonomía que utilizan los periodistas que trabajan dentro de la estructura de los medios estatales cubanos.

Autonomía profesional

Según Silvio Waisbord (2013:45–71), el ideal liberal del periodismo como mercado de ideas no es suficiente para garantizar una verdadera autonomía. Para que el periodismo pueda informar sobre asuntos relevantes para el público, debe distanciarse de los intereses estatales y corporativos. En particular, distingue entre «autonomía de prensa» y «periodismo profesional» (ibíd.:53). La primera se refiere a la importancia de garantizar la independencia de la prensa del Estado en democracia, mientras que el segundo está vinculado a un elemento central del profesionalismo: «la necesidad de

controlar los límites frente a los actores externos (el Estado, el mercado y política organizada) para servir al interés público» (ibíd.:54). Sin embargo, en contextos capitalistas liberales, erigir un cortafuegos de principios impenetrables entre la práctica periodística y los intereses corporativos es un ideal casi imposible de lograr. Pero los periodistas profesionales no necesariamente sucumben a los intentos de control de actores externos; la autonomía también depende de la propia voluntad de estos de preservar los límites de la profesión. Las estrategias para mantener la autonomía consisten en tratar de mantener o recuperar la soberanía sobre su jurisdicción profesional o intentar hacer arreglos que logren un equilibrio de principios entre los ideales periodísticos profesionales y las fuerzas externas como el mercado, el gobierno o la burocracia. El resultado es una negociación constante entre consideraciones profesionales y factores no profesionales (ibíd.:150).

El académico cubano Julio García Luis (2013b:87) considera que los medios tienen «el papel trascendente como agencia productora y reproductora del sistema político, de los valores y cultura de la sociedad». La prensa puede ser vista como un sistema abierto que interactúa con otros sistemas como el político, el jurídico, el económico, el cultural o el individual. Estos sistemas se relacionan entre sí de diferentes maneras. Si es una relación obligatoria, el sistema es rígido. Si es posible sustituir un elemento por otro y que sigan funcionando, es opcional y, por tanto, más flexible (ibíd.:88). Estos elementos constituyen lo que «regula» la prensa —en oposición al control absoluto de la misma como propaganda estatal—. Al mismo tiempo, la prensa es un sistema en sí mismo, con sus propias estructuras internas que son capaces de «autorregular» su actividad. Sin embargo, la «autorregulación» solo es funcional si existe una buena «regulación»; de lo contrario, es simplemente un eufemismo para la «autocensura».

García Luis también argumenta que las constantes amenazas externas a Cuba por parte de Estados Unidos en los años posteriores al triunfo de la Revolución en 1959 —a menudo entendida como un «estado de sitio» que dio origen a una «mentalidad sitiada» entre los funcionarios cubanos— influyeron en la visión del periodismo por parte de los líderes cubanos, que lo vieron como una institución relacionada de manera directa con los intereses del PCC y con la defensa de la soberanía nacional encarnada por la Revolución y el socialismo de Estado (ibíd.:90-101). Esto ha socavado fatalmente la capacidad de la prensa cubana de «autorregularse». Por tanto, ha perdido autoridad a la hora de tomar decisiones y elegir las mejores soluciones para cumplir en lo profesional su papel en la sociedad, convirtiéndose en un mero instrumento propagandístico del sistema político-ideológico.

Este no es un juicio sobre los periodistas que trabajan en los medios como (buenos o malos) profesionales. En cambio, se trata del sistema en sí, un sistema que, en consideración de García Luis, Cuba debería haber podido cambiar en los años transcurridos desde principios de la década de 1960. Por ejemplo, en un cuestionario al que respondieron los periodistas cubanos, descubrió que solo 11% consideraba que los líderes de los medios tuvieran poder sobre las decisiones editoriales, mientras que más de 50% consideraba que los líderes del PCC ejercían la mayor influencia sobre los medios. Según García Luis, dicha regulación puede a su vez hacer que las personas que trabajan en los medios estatales estén «como los pajaritos en el nido, esperando a que les caiga en la boca todo masticado» (ibíd.:158).

Metodología

Los datos analizados en este capítulo se basan en entrevistas a 12 periodistas que trabajan en medios estatales cubanos, realizadas durante un trabajo de campo en Cuba en 2016. Debido a los desafíos de acceso para los investigadores extranjeros y la escasa difusión de las investigaciones originadas en la Isla —y la falta general de investigación en sí—, el estudio sobre los periodistas en los medios estatales ha sido limitado. La selección exclusiva de periodistas de medios estatales no era la intención original. Inicialmente, esperaba utilizar una muestra más diversa para poder comparar las experiencias y las luchas por la autonomía periodística en diferentes tipos de periodistas, incluidos aquellos que trabajan para medios no estatales. Sin embargo, el proceso de solicitar y obtener un visado de investigación por parte del gobierno cubano hizo imposible un enfoque más inclusivo.

Para asegurar el anonimato de los participantes, se les dio seudónimos a los periodistas y se los colocó en tres categorías de edad: jóvenes (20-34), de mediana edad (35-49) y adultos mayores (50+). Los participantes van desde reporteros recién graduados hasta editores de larga data, pero se han omitido títulos y afiliaciones. Las respuestas de los periodistas entrevistados no son aplicables a todos los periodistas en Cuba. Sin embargo, son indicativos de tendencias y estrategias periodísticas clave y ofrecen algunos puntos de vista ilustrativos sobre su autonomía en una sociedad cambiante.

La guía de entrevista utilizada en la investigación se inspiró en el marco del Estudio de Mundos del Periodismo (WJS, 2012). Cubrió las rutinas diarias, la autonomía y los cambios en el panorama de los medios cubanos, al mismo tiempo que dejaba espacio para que los participantes elaboraran

temas particularmente importantes para ellos (Bryman, 2016). Las preguntas clave para este estudio fueron: ¿qué significa para usted la autonomía periodística?, ¿quién decide qué historias deben priorizarse?, ¿cuánto decide usted sobre su producción periodística?, ¿alguno de sus artículos ha sido retenido o reescrito? Además, se realizaron cinco entrevistas grupales con estudiantes de periodismo. Me referiré a los datos de estas entrevistas para complementar aquellas a periodistas profesionales.

Percepciones de autonomía

Cuando les pedí que definieran la autonomía a nivel general, la mayoría de mis entrevistados lo hicieron como una responsabilidad que navega entre las obligaciones con el colectivo y con el individuo. Un joven periodista, Carlos, cree que los medios de comunicación «deben ser antimperialistas, deben defender las ideas y luchas del Tercer Mundo, deben posicionarse a favor de los débiles y no de los fuertes [...] y deben defender la independencia y soberanía cubanas». Para él, la autonomía es tanto la protección de una Cuba autónoma como un tipo de agencia personal en la profesión periodística: «La autonomía sería la capacidad que tenga cada individuo, cada periodista, de guiar sus acciones, sus escritos sobre esos valores. Y no que tenga que venir nadie a decirte qué tienes que escribir o cómo tienes que escribirlo o de qué forma». Sin embargo, al describir lo que significa autonomía en la práctica, responden de diversas maneras. Muchos comienzan afirmando que trabajan con una autodeterminación sustancial. Por ejemplo, un periodista de mediana edad, Louis, dice: «Yo no creo que aquí exista censura; censura es cuando hay una dictadura, que hay un tipo que se llama censor, que viene con un lápiz rojo y una lupa, y te tacha una línea, y te amenaza. [...]. O sea, nadie escribe porque esté mandado, mandatado, obligado. Es imposible».

Muchos periodistas que trabajan en los medios estatales enfatizan la importancia de la libertad de los intereses corporativos. Un periodista de mediana edad, Juan, ejemplifica esto: «[Y]o creo, que el periodista cubano, a la hora de enfrentarse a su trabajo, a veces trabaja con un poco más de libertad que en muchos lugares del mundo. O sea, el periodista redacta su reportaje, no tiene que estar negociando por ejemplo con editorial o con su jefe lo que va a decir». Sin embargo, los medios estatales cubanos dependen del grado de libertad que el PCC les otorgue en cada momento. Juan continúa su argumento diciendo que su autonomía periodística depende de que el

tema no sea «muy importante», lo que implícitamente significa un tema que no cuestione el liderazgo político.

Esto lleva a la segunda parte de lo que significa la autonomía para los periodistas: algo situado «dentro de los límites», que a menudo explican al referirse a las «pautas editoriales» de cada medio de comunicación. Como aclara la reportera principal María, el problema con estas pautas es que ni otorgan mucha autonomía ni siempre se siguen. Juan afirma que, si uno está de acuerdo con la línea editorial, hay un espacio sustancial para el movimiento. Sin embargo, si uno no está de acuerdo, debe irse y «buscar otro lugar para trabajar, que puede ser tal vez en un medio extranjero o hacerse su propio blog».

Estrategias de autonomía

Salir de los medios estatales e ingresar en otro tipo de medio es más fácil de decir que de hacer. El contenido, el estilo de escritura y la remuneración en los medios no estatales son elementos clave que atraen a los periodistas jóvenes a esta opción emergente, pero no hay espacio para todos. Por tanto, muchos periodistas jóvenes intentan mantener un pie en el sector estatal, más estable pero menos autónomo, y otro en el ámbito independiente, menos confiable pero más libre y mejor pagado (A. García, 2016). Otra forma de que los periodistas de medios estatales en Cuba ganen autonomía es evitando la cobertura de temas sensibles o particularmente «delicados». Por ejemplo, la joven reportera Tania considera que «[e]so es un ejercicio de balance y de batalla. Hay medios y temas más fáciles que otros. Los temas nacionales, hacia la realidad doméstica, es donde más difícil es».

Varios periodistas dicen que nunca han experimentado censura, pero también enfatizan que trabajan sobre temas al margen de lo que el PCC pueda considerar política, como la cultura, las tecnologías de la información o temas internacionales. El joven periodista Jorge dice: «Solía escribir sobre deportes, lo cual no es gran cosa. Por lo tanto, no se trataba de cuestiones políticas o nacionales». Entre los estudiantes de periodismo, la evasión de la política también se refleja cuando discuten en qué medio de comunicación estatal les gustaría hacer su pasantía obligatoria de dos a tres años después de graduados. Ninguno declara querer trabajar sobre asuntos domésticos, aunque varios comentaron que saben que también hay censura en los informes deportivos y culturales.

Las condiciones estructurales de los medios estatales no son favorables para los periodistas que desean denunciar problemas sociales o fallas institucionales a través de su trabajo. Según los periodistas entrevistados, la

ACN funciona como una «sede» para determinar qué eventos e historias deberían cubrir los medios estatales. Los periodistas también pueden proponer temas, pero los eventos de «máximo interés para el Estado» a menudo dejan pocos recursos para otras historias. Uno de los periodistas entrevistados tenía varias estrategias para superar las limitaciones existentes al cubrir las noticias. Trabajando en un medio de difusión estatal, se ofreció como voluntario para organizar un programa temprano en la mañana:

> *Eso me dio muchas oportunidades porque yo llegué a tener un espacio ahí de 10 minutos para hablar de política, de lo que me diera la gana. A esa hora no hay muchas decisiones tomadas, así que no hay muchos jefes que te molesten demasiado por los contenidos que tú estás contando, y tuve mucha libertad. Y hubo cosas que yo dije en esa revista que después no se dijeron más durante el día, pero las dije yo por la mañana.*

Otra forma de crear un espacio para opiniones fuertes es conseguir que una persona prominente, tolerada por el PCC, lo declare. Los intelectuales en Cuba disfrutan de un espacio de autonomía más amplio que los periodistas y, por tanto, pueden hacer reclamos públicos más desafiantes, incluso si estos también deben permanecer «dentro de los límites» (Garcia Santamaria, 2018b:33). En una serie de televisión que entrevistó al grupo mencionado, el periodista promovió historias de trabajo duro y sacrificio:

> *[p]ero también lo uso como excusa para visibilizar algunos problemas de la prensa. Y se han contado ahí cosas muy fuertes que se dicen en una reunión que yo no podría a lo mejor hacer en un comentario en el noticiero sobre eso, pero si me lo está contando Raúl Garcés, me lo está contando Raúl Garcés. Y de paso lo que está contando está poniendo el debate caliente sobre los problemas que tienen los medios en Cuba con autoridades, personas que son autoridades.*

Esto significa que la relativa libertad de intelectuales y académicos prominentes puede promover un efecto de goteo para expandir la autonomía de los periodistas que trabajan para los medios de comunicación estatales.

Usar blogs

Entre las muchas contradicciones en el sistema de medios estatales cubanos, una que restringe particularmente los ideales periodísticos es que todo

lo impreso en los periódicos estatales puede interpretarse como una política oficial. Esto significa que los periodistas no pueden hacer comentarios críticos sobre los regímenes extranjeros en los medios estatales, ya que puede interpretarse como un mensaje del Partido, que a su vez puede causar dificultades en las relaciones bilaterales. Por ejemplo, como lo indicó el joven reportero Carlos, si un país de Oriente Medio le hiciera un préstamo a Cuba, los periódicos estatales no podrían escribir sobre violaciones de derechos humanos en ese país. En respuesta al empuje y atracción entre las obligaciones estatales y los ideales profesionales, algunos periodistas sienten que no tienen más remedio que dejar la profesión. Otros aún permanecen dentro de los medios oficiales, pero deciden evitar temas delicados o renunciar a hacer mucho trabajo serio, lo que, según Carlos, puede entenderse como una estrategia de protesta, pero también puede tomarse como una forma de consentimiento, obediencia, aquiescencia o autocensura.

Sin embargo, además de la colaboración con medios no estatales, otra estrategia para la autonomía entre los periodistas de los medios estatales es recurrir a sus blogs personales. De hecho, tres de los participantes en este estudio los usaron para este propósito específico. El periodista de mediana edad, Roberto, explicó que sería imposible para él en su trabajo periodístico oficial interrogar a un ministro o criticar directamente a alguien en el Gobierno, el Partido o la burocracia: «Eso yo no lo haría porque sabría que eso no me lo van a publicar. Tampoco tú escribes para que no te publiquen, lo he hecho en mi blog». Dijo que ha habido reacciones adversas a su blog, pero se abstuvo de especificar cómo se desarrollaron estos episodios o con qué estaban relacionados. En cambio, solo —aunque un poco críptico— afirmó: «Han pasado muchas cosas, pero estoy aquí, [y] uno sabe también las reglas del juego».

El joven periodista Carlos considera que su estrategia de bloguear es «una forma de presionar para que las personas entiendan que eso que salió en Internet en el blog, perfectamente pudiera salir en el periódico sin ser considerado una catástrofe». De hecho, afirma que varios editores, incluso «personas nos que dirigen», lo han llamado para decirle que las publicaciones de su blog podrían haberse publicado en el medio de comunicación estatal, como también es el caso de una de sus historias. Carlos dice que no ha tenido ningún problema con el contenido del blog, que considera fiel a los valores antes mencionados. Si un día encontrara problemas, dijo: «Yo me remitiría a esos valores, y si ellos no están de acuerdo con esos valores, pues yo me iría del periódico».

Parece que mantener cierto grado de transparencia hacia la élite política es clave para poder seguir blogueando como una forma de desahogarse.

Roberto dice que comenzó a trabajar con una institución gubernamental, informándoles sobre temas importantes en su blog y esto generó conciencia en otros organismos gubernamentales como el Departamento de Ideología. Es importante destacar que logró que un ministerio relevante viera que había temas que carecían de información adecuada en los medios estatales: « No creo que ninguna instancia de dirección se haya sorprendido con las cosas que yo he podido hacer o denunciar, porque lo sabían que ya yo estaba en eso».

Otro periodista, de mediana edad, llamado Ernesto, ha experimentado lo difícil que es saber dónde está el límite para los enunciados aceptables en los blogs. Una vez, escribió una publicación en el blog sobre una marcha pública de trabajadores independientes y luego fue despedido de su medio de comunicación. Sin embargo, la UPEC se involucró y se le permitió regresar luego de un mes de separación. Un tiempo después, publicó un discurso pronunciado por un funcionario del Gobierno en una reunión interna en su blog. Esto provocó que lo despidieran permanentemente y fuera suspendido de la UPEC. Ernesto dice: «Lo que dijo fue una cosa tan elemental que eso lo sabía todo el mundo, no es que reveló un secreto de Estado [...]. Yo no pensé tampoco que fuera a crear una cosa así, porque si lo hubiera sabido no lo hubiera publicado porque perder mi trabajo... perdí mi trabajo». Sostiene que la autonomía que pensó que tenía en su blog resultó ser una ficción, ya que no podía publicar nada que fuera en contra de la agenda del medio de comunicación estatal donde trabajaba: «Es decir, si tú te sales de la línea que ellos quieren que tú digas, o de lo que supuestamente es correcto para ellos que un periodista publique, ya ahí te pasa lo que me sucedió a mí». No debe subestimarse el efecto de la autocensura que pueden tener esos despidos en otros periodistas que trabajan para los medios estatales.

Navegando la autonomía

Gestionar las relaciones con actores externos es una característica importante de lo que Waisbord (2013) define como «periodismo profesional». Idealmente, ni los Estados ni las corporaciones deberían ejercer influencia sobre las decisiones periodísticas. Si bien este ideal normativo es difícil de cumplir en cualquier sistema político, el papel de los medios estatales como promotores de la «línea partidaria» del PCC en Cuba hace que esto sea imposible de lograr para los periodistas que ejercen su profesión en ellos.

Aun así, no significa que estos periodistas hayan renunciado por completo a mantener, negociar, navegar o eventualmente recuperar la autonomía dentro de las estructuras oficiales.

La amplia educación universitaria donde se fomentan las críticas y el debate es una gran ventaja para los periodistas cubanos. De hecho, los entrevistados son conscientes de las posibilidades de crítica, responsabilidad y debate en sus prácticas periodísticas si la estructura les permitiera desarrollarlas.[4] De hecho, este puede ser el caso de muchos periodistas en países con una libertad de prensa limitada. Examinando doce países con libertad de medios limitada o nula, Josephi concluye que «la educación periodística no puede usarse como una señal de cuán libre o no es el sistema de medios del país» (2010).

Aunque los periodistas de los medios estatales cubanos cumplen firmemente con el papel de facilitador leal (Mellado *et al.*, 2017; Olivera y Torres, 2017), los estudiantes de periodismo cubanos muestran un interés mucho mayor en temas políticos que sus contrapartes en Ecuador y Venezuela. Cerca de la mitad de los estudiantes cubanos encuestados (N=383) afirman estar muy o en extremo interesados en política (Alonso *et al.*, 2017:254). El marcado contraste entre una fuerte preparación periodística unida al interés en la política y una realidad desconcertante en los medios de comunicación estatales hace que la disonancia entre ideales y prácticas sea difícil de asimilar para los graduados en periodismo (Natvig, 2018).

En cuanto a cómo los periodistas de los medios estatales definen la autonomía, se encuentran divididos entre una doble responsabilidad: deben considerar las necesidades de la nación, pero al mismo tiempo trabajar sin interferir con el PCC. El sistema cubano —a menudo referido como un «régimen» por sus críticos) es un tema muy politizado, no solo a nivel interno,

[4] Las consecuencias del reciente caso del silencio de los medios de comunicación oficiales cubanos en julio de 2019 ante los apagones que el Gobierno había prometido públicamente que no ocurrirían, es un buen ejemplo de este dilema. En un par de tuits enviados el 18 de julio, Elaine Díaz, exprofesora de periodismo digital en la Universidad de La Habana y ahora directora del sitio de noticias independiente *Periodismo de Barrio*, llamó a los periodistas estatales cubanos a asumir su fracaso periodístico en directa referencia al papel que desempeñó la pedagogía crítica en su educación universitaria. «En estos días de silencio sobre los apagones me preguntaba cómo tantos y tantos periodistas podían callar. Cómo reconciliaban lo que habían aprendido en la academia con ese apagón informativo» (https://twitter.com/elainediaz2003/status/1152015188456955905). «Cómo pudieron leer y discutir "A sangre fría", el caso Watergate, los reportajes de Tom Wolfe, "La noche de Tlatelolco", editados por la Pablo y aun así callar hoy. Callar todos los días. O contar solo una parte de la realidad» (https://twitter.com/elainediaz2003/status/1152015195050348544).

sino también, quizás, sobre todo, internacional. Los periodistas cubanos son muy conscientes de la posible resonancia que puede provocar una historia publicado en medios estatales fuera de las costas de la Isla. Por tanto, están obligados, tanto formal como informalmente, a ciertas obligaciones de proteger al Estado, en especial porque la atmósfera de asedio en la Isla permite que el Gobierno se confunda con el Partido y la nación. Cualquiera que haya deambulado por las calles de La Habana, o cualquier otra ciudad cubana, sabe que las discusiones políticas abundan entre vendedores, amigos y familias. Es revelador que, a pesar del alto nivel de interés en política que muestran los estudiantes de periodismo, los periodistas establecidos buscan evitar este tema en su trabajo debido a las limitaciones implícitas en su autonomía. Aunque algunos argumentan que es una responsabilidad colectiva trabajar desde adentro para crear estructuras para ampliar la autonomía, la mayoría considera que el sistema es demasiado rígido para cambiar sin voluntad política desde arriba.

Incluso la emergente cosecha de nuevas empresas independientes de medios no estatales en la Isla se dedica cuidadosamente, a menudo, a la evasión estratégica de la política como vía de supervivencia importante. Por ejemplo, muchos usan «el paquete» como método de distribución. Sin embargo, los distribuidores de este servicio siguen asiduamente la regla de «ni porno ni política». Al carecer de una base legal, esta práctica de autocensura es uno de los costos de permanecer en el juego (Henken, 2021).

Si una historia mediática puede ser interpretada como cuestionadora del régimen político (socialismo de Estado o Revolución), se puede esperar la censura, la retirada de la tolerancia o la represión. Este resultado fue el destino de la influyente revista independiente *El Estornudo* (M. E. Álvarez, 2018; C, M. Álvarez, 2019). Al ser bloqueada, sus editores publicaron una carta diciendo que no van a «modificar un ápice la línea editorial» en dirección hacia las expectativas de los poderes políticos (*El Estornudo*, 2018). Un camino más fácil para los periodistas, ya sean oficiales o independientes, es simplemente evitar estas «áreas de contradicción», como lo expresan algunos periodistas. Escribir sobre deportes, cultura o tecnología hace que la disonancia entre los ideales periodísticos y la realidad sea más fácil de superar, y las contradicciones parecen ser más escasas. Sin embargo, incluso en estas áreas temáticas más blandas, uno nunca puede estar siempre seguro de cuándo o cómo podría aparecer de repente una nueva «área de contradicción», en lo que de otro modo sería un tema inocuo. En otras palabras, la línea entre lo que se considera «dentro de la Revolución [digital]» y fuera, o incluso en contra de ella, es quizás deliberadamente nebulosa, lo que lleva a

la práctica común de la autocensura por parte de los periodistas que trabajan tanto para el Estado como para los medios independientes.

Como señalaron Waisbord (2013) y García Luis (2013b), la autonomía es una condición previa para la práctica periodística y un marco legal es elemento esencial para garantizar la autonomía periodística. Si bien los periodistas e intelectuales cubanos han pedido una menor dependencia del PCC (Elizalde, 2013; Garcés, 2016; García Luis, 2013b), estas demandas siguen siendo teóricas y evitan las críticas directas a la élite política. Como ya se mencionó, la establecida política de comunicación y el Decreto-Ley 370 —un proceso que ha llevado más de cinco años, y del cual los periodistas en este estudio han tenido grandes expectativas— no han definido un marco que asegure la autonomía periodística, sino que crearon más confusión sobre parámetros invisibles esbozados por el PCC.

Para aquellos periodistas que optan por escribir sobre el difícil tema de la política, una forma de crear espacio para opiniones que difieren de la línea del Partido es encontrar programas y publicaciones que sean menos escrutadas o utilizar a intelectuales aceptados por el PCC como una lámina o una voz de queja. Sin embargo, esta forma de moverse requiere un cierto estatus dentro de la jerarquía periodística y, por tanto, el reportero promedio o recién graduado no lo logra fácilmente. Las plataformas más accesibles para expandir la autonomía son los blogs, la colaboración con medios no estatales o abandonar los medios estatales por completo.

La fluidez de lo que se puede y lo que no se puede escribir sin consecuencias es quizás el aspecto más sorprendente del análisis de los tres blogueros entrevistados para este capítulo. Roberto y Ernesto están en gran medida en los extremos opuestos del espectro en la forma en que se acercan al «techo de cristal» invisible de la expresión tolerada. Roberto acepta cierta limitación a su autonomía al esforzarse por mantener informadas a las diferentes unidades burocráticas del PCC sobre las actividades que planea en su blog en cualquier momento. Tal apertura corre el riesgo de ser contraproducente, ya que el conocimiento de sus intenciones podría llevar a que se le prohíba publicar historias que considere importantes. Por otro lado, hasta ahora ha podido permanecer en el «juego» durante mucho tiempo y ha logrado expandir su autonomía y ganar un mínimo de aceptación política hacia su agenda. Este enfoque se relaciona directamente con las estrategias descritas por Waisbord (2013); periodistas que hacen arreglos con fuerzas externas para proteger partes de su autonomía.

En contraste, Ernesto se adhiere a ideales más cercanos a los paradigmas de autonomía asociados con las democracias liberales «occidentales»,

como la denuncia de problemas sociales y la exposición de fallas. Considera que la información relevante para la vida de las personas debería publicarse y debería poder hacerlo en su propio blog. Sin embargo, en un Estado autoritario donde incluso los blogs periodísticos comprometidos con el proyecto revolucionario son potencialmente sospechosos, es probable que tales ideales provoquen consecuencias negativas. Al perder su trabajo y la siguiente cadena de eventos que condujeron a dificultades para conseguir uno nuevo, se vio despojado por completo un espacio de maniobra. El tercer bloguero, Carlos, renunció a su trabajo en los medios estatales y comenzó a trabajar para un medio no estatal. Los editores y líderes de los medios no estatales son en su mayoría periodistas capacitados en lo profesional. A pesar de tener que evitar la política, a menudo priorizan historias que no están disponibles en los medios estatales. Aunque Carlos, de modo pragmático —con idealismo o quizás un poco de ingenuidad— trató de usar su blog como una forma de mejorar los medios estatales desde adentro, parece que el «sistema» no apreció sus esfuerzos.

Conclusiones

Las «Palabras a los intelectuales» de Fidel contienen en sí mismas algunas estrategias periodísticas para evaluar la autonomía en los medios estatales cubanos. Si los periodistas se mueven dentro de los límites («dentro de la Revolución») y siempre están conscientes de dónde se dibuja la línea, a menudo arbitraria, de lo aceptable en cada momento, es probable que amplíen su grado de autonomía y conserven sus trabajos. Mis entrevistas han demostrado que, si los periodistas se mueven demasiado «afuera» o se vuelven «contra la Revolución», todas las apuestas están cerradas y todas las puertas a la autonomía «dentro del sistema de medios de la Revolución» se cierran, lo que les hace imposible mantener un carrera como periodista en los medios estatales.[5] Si bien existe un acuerdo general de que los medios estatales están demasiado alejados de la agenda pública y preocupados por la agenda política (Elizalde, 2013), una forma común de buscar la autonomía periodística es

[5] Por ejemplo, el experiodista de medios estatales Reinaldo Escobar, que ahora dirige el sitio web *14ymedio* con Yoani Sánchez, «fue demasiado lejos» cuando trabajaba en *Juventud Rebelde*. En 1988 escribió un artículo sobre un director que no permitía que los alumnos con el pelo largo entraran en los autobuses escolares, aunque no estaba en las reglas de la escuela. Creó un escándalo y, como no trató de retractarse después, fue expulsado de la UJC y perdió su puesto como reportero en el periódico (Y. Rodríguez, 2013).

evitando políticas y problemáticas nacionales. Por tanto, los medios estatales permanecen «fosilizados» (Marreiro, 2014:7), atrapados dentro de un paradigma de Guerra Fría recientemente exacerbado por el retorno a una política antagónica con la administración de Donald Trump en Estados Unidos.

La ascensión a la presidencia cubana de Miguel Díaz-Canel, hasta el momento, no ha mostrado signos prometedores de una mayor autonomía para los actores de los medios, estatales o no. De hecho, en su discurso ante la UPEC en 2018, Díaz-Canel criticó a los medios de comunicación no estatales en general, afirmando que reciben financiamiento del gobierno de Estados Unidos, afirmando que: «Han ido escalando en el ataque a lo que nos une —el Partido— y lo que nos defiende —nuestra prensa—, descalificando continuamente a ambos y tratando de fracturar y separar lo que viene de una misma raíz y crece en un mismo tronco». Esto muestra cómo los líderes del Partido consideran el papel de los periodistas que trabajan para los medios estatales: deben defender el liderazgo político y la Revolución de las fuerzas externas. De hecho, Díaz-Canel considera que los periodistas cubanos y el Partido son dos ramas del mismo árbol. Según el presidente, esta tarea es mucho más importante que los intereses del individuo (*Granma*, 2018).

Por tanto, si bien la Revolución aún puede ejercer un poder considerable, también ha creado un sistema de medios incompatible con la autonomía periodística, obligando a muchos periodistas a tomar riesgos creativos para lograr un mínimo de autonomía respecto al sistema político. Parece que los medios estatales seguirán siendo «aburridos», como los describe García Luis (2013b:123). Sin embargo, como ha demostrado este capítulo, los periodistas aplican varias estrategias para ganar autonomía en esta relación «demasiado cercana para la comodidad». Por ejemplo, problemas que de otra manera no podrían salir a la luz pueden abordarse en publicaciones que reciben poco escrutinio editorial. Otros canalizan historias a través de sus blogs personales, mientras se aseguran de que las historias no sean muy conflictivas. Además, hacer que los intelectuales cubanos comenten temas que pueden ser controvertidos es una forma de darles visibilidad, jugando con la libertad que algunos intelectuales prominentes disfrutan en Cuba. Por último, muchos periodistas mantienen trabajos en medios estatales y no estatales, ya que esto les permite un rango más amplio de autonomía.

10.3 Article 3

Diverging ideals of autonomy: Non-state media in Cuba challenging a broken media monopoly

journal of alternative and community media

Diverging ideals of autonomy: Non-state media in Cuba challenging a broken media monopoly

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Abstract

News outlets funded by actors other than the state are broadening the range of movement for journalists in Cuba. How are these non-state outlets affecting ideals of autonomy in the state media? Through qualitative interviews, this study finds an emerging generational divide in Cuba between journalism students and journalists in state media. A majority of students want to work in non-state media because it means they can choose their own stories, have a more meaningful work day and earn more money. Most journalists are, on the other hand, sceptical of private businesses entering the media sector, and refer to the importance of ideology.

Keywords

Autonomy, Cuba, journalistic roles, journalism students, normative theory, state media

Introduction

The Cuban Communist Party (PCC) had a near-monopoly on information in the country after the 1959 revolution, until the island gained access to the internet in 1996. However, limiting and controlling access to the internet has been an important concern for state authorities (Hoffmann, 2011: 6). The recent increased access to internet in Cuba has promoted the establishment of non-state media outlets and other actors filling information gaps left by the state media. This situation has resulted in fractures between different generations of journalists. This article explores journalistic ideals and perceptions of autonomy among journalism students and journalists in the Cuban state media . It seeks to answer two questions: How do research participants perceive the role of the state and non-state media in Cuba? And what do the participants evaluate as being important for professional autonomy?

Since the state media are to various degrees controlled by the PCC, journalists have found it difficult to create boundaries against external actors. Although journalists, academics and politicians have called for less censorship and institutionalism in the state press since the 1970s (Marrero, 2006), it has remained steadily resistant to change. A media policy, which has been in the making since 2013, was released in 2018. Journalists had hoped for the establishment of a framework that the profession was lacking, and a definition of the role of non-state outlets, currently operating in a legal vacuum. The policy document states that the media can only be 'state or social' property, and it can never be owned by 'private' companies. At the same time, the policy opens up the possibility of earning income from publicity, donations and 'cooperation

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national and internationally' (PCC 2018: 14). How this policy document will affect journalists working for the state media, and those in the non-state media, is yet to be seen. While it does not seem to grant journalists working for the state media more autonomy, the document may nevertheless signal that the political leadership cautiously recognises that new digital platforms are in Cuba to stay.

The Cuban media landscape

Reporters Without Borders (2018) ranks Cuba 172 out of 180 countries on press freedom, observing that the Castro family 'maintains an almost total media monopoly'. It is, however, necessary to nuance this picture, hence the following overview of access to the internet and to different categories of media outlets in the country today.

According to official statistics, the use of the internet among the Cuban population rose from 23 per cent to 40 per cent in the years 2011–16 (ONEI, 2016a). Although Freedom House (2016) declares a similar increase, it considers that only 5 per cent of users have access to uncontrolled internet. Due to the state company Etecsa's deal with Google, the number of wi-fi spots has multiplied, and in May 2019 private internet connections were finally legalized (Reuters 2019. Internet access at state-run wi-fi spots costs CUC$1 (US$1) per hour. This is expensive considering that a monthly state salary is about CUC$30 (US$30) (ONEI, 2016b: 13). Most Cubans accessing the internet regularly do so at their workplace or as part of their study at universities. However, in August 2018 mobile users could connect outside wi-fi spots during an eight-hour test of free nationwide internet. The service was fully launched in December 2018, but as it costs about CUC$7 for 600 MB it is not something average Cubans can afford. Access to free nationwide internet may, however, weaken government control over public information.

Statistics do not, however, cover the informal channels of internet connection, which can be quite inventive. Wireless black-market antennas, for instance, replicate internet signals for entire neighbourhoods. Still, the most important contribution to break the state information monopoly is 'the weekly package'. Every week, for a very low price, local dealers upload the newest entertainment shows from Latin America and the United States on memory sticks and distribute them to subscribers.

The Cuban media ecosystem

There is a diverse range of Cuban media outlets. Building on Henken (2017), I have chosen to organise these into three broad categories: state media, non-state media and oppositional media.

State media

The Cuban state funds television and radio, but it is the PCC or connected organs that fund newspapers. Therefore, 'state media' is a term that is disputed by some participants. As there is only one political party in Cuba, I consider state media to include both sources of finance. Before the 1959 revolution, the Cuban media were privately owned. The PCC was constituted in 1965, and in the following years the press became aligned with politics (García Luis, 2013: 81). For at least 40 years, the PCC had an almost complete monopoly on information, with the exception of publications from the Roman Catholic Church and academic outlets (Hudson, 2001: 268). Today, the most important national newspapers are *Granma*, *Juventud Rebelde* and *Trabajadores*. All are connected to sub-organs of the PCC and often publish the same stories, mainly reflecting an institutional point of view.

Non-state media

Some participants in this study differentiate between private media (funding from private companies) and alternative media (funded by NGOs, embassies and so on). The reason is that private capital is viewed by some participants as more threatening to the Cuban media system

than donations from organisations; however, many participants consider such categorisations irrelevant. Among many of the participants, and also among academics studying Cuba, various terms are used interchangeably.

In the literature, the concept of the 'alternative media' is used interchangeably to refer to alternative funding or alternative content. In the Cuban context, both types of non-state media outlets represent alternatives to state media content. As such, they could be designated alternative media; however, in keeping with the distinction that some of the research participants draw between different sources of funding, this study has opted to use 'non-state media' as a generic term for all such media in order to avoid confusion with the local usage of 'alternative media'.

Henken (2017) uses the term 'independent' to describe news outlets funded by actors other than the Cuban state. He breaks this into sub-groups such as digital millennials, critical digital revolutionaries, the digital diaspora and digital dissidents. Using these categories as a point of departure, I will briefly outline the make-up of these sub-groups.

Digital millennials refer to young Cubans establishing news magazines or websites to counter what they see as a lack of information due to the restrictive media policies of the PCC. These outlets are mainly apolitical, focusing on arts, music and entertainment. Journalism students in this study frequently mention a number of these. The entertainment magazine *Vistar*, sports magazine *Play Off* and fashion magazine *Garbos* are distributed on paper. *Cibercuba* and *Cachivache Media* are popular online platforms (Henken, 2017: 438). The funding for these projects varies. For instance, the online magazine *El Toque* is funded by RNW media, an NGO situated in the Netherlands.

Non-state outlets originating outside Cuba also have to be registered and accredited by the Foreign Press Centre (CIP) and may lose accreditation if seen to be too critical of the government (Marreiro, 2014: 29). El Toque was initially denied accreditation as a foreign press agency, but has been managed from within Cuba since 2016. Nevertheless, state media journalists collaborating with the magazine run the risk of permanently losing their jobs in state media (Henken 2017: 440).

Critical digital revolutionaries refer to outlets run by young Cubans who view themselves as revolutionaries, but who at the same time are openly critical of the Cuban government (Henken, 2017: 443). *Havana Times, La Joven Cuba* and *Periodismo de Barrio* are among these, with *Periodismo de Barrio* perhaps being the most prominent and visible actor. It is run by Elaine Diaz, a former professor of digital journalism at the University of Havana and earlier Harvard visiting fellow. *Periodismo de Barrio* is a crowdfunded website focusing on climate change and sustainability at a local level.

The *digital diaspora* is a group of news and entertainment outlets based outside Cuba – for instance, Café Fuerte, Cubaencuentro and Cuba Net. The hybrid *OnCuba Magazine* is funded by the Miami-based company of Hugo Cancio, a Cuban-American, but it is accredited as a foreign press outlet and has an editorial office in Havana.

Until recently, non-state media were characterised by a low degree of professionalisation and their content was more likely to be opinion pieces than journalism adhering to ideals of objectivity (Henken, 2017: 435). This group is, nevertheless, becoming more mixed, with a particular growth in the number of young journalist collaborators. A study of 142 journalism graduates between 2010 and 2014 showed that 55 per cent held a variety of jobs, both in state and non-state media. Of these, between 15 and 20 per cent worked exclusively in non-state outlets (García, 2016: 119).

Another group of outlets does, however, need to be distinguished from my definition of non-state media:

Oppositional media

Oppositional media, or digital dissidents, refer to a group of outlets that cannot be accessed through public wi-fi spots. The most well-known oppositional news outlet is probably *14ymedio*, initiated by citizen journalist Yoani Sanchez. Its collaborators are subject to harassment by the Cuban State Security (Henken, 2017: 437). When asking student and journalist participants about working in these outlets, the responses were laughter and headshaking. However, as displayed and elaborated in the methods section, a social desirability bias is not only likely, but almost certain, when it comes to oppositional media. If some of the participants indeed wanted to work, or were working for oppositional outlets, this is not something they would admit to, even if their anonymity were guaranteed. If one wants to keep a job in state media, collaboration with oppositional outlets is not really an option; therefore most collaborators of *14ymedio* are not trained journalists (Henken, 2017: 437).

Conceptions of journalistic roles

In the research literature, journalists with a similar set of professional orientations and self-images of their functions in society are often grouped in categories according to their perceptions of their roles. A multitude of comparative quantitative studies distinguishes journalistic roles, particularly through the Worlds of Journalism Study (Donsbach & Patterson, 2004; Hanitzsch et al., 2011; Hanitzsch et al., 2012). In this growing body of literature, post-authoritarian societies have also been examined (Andresen, Hoxha & Godole, 2017; Josephi, 2017; Tejkalová et al., 2017); however, few qualitative studies have been conducted on role conceptions with a particular focus on authoritarian or transitional societies. This study aims to contribute to a qualitative understanding of role conceptions, drawing inspiration from quantitative frameworks.

The four role conceptions defined by Hanitzsch (2011) are useful in assessing journalistic roles in Cuba and in countries with similar political systems. The detached watchdog plays an important role as an unbiased observer, scrutinising government and business elites, and is most opposed to supporting official policies or influencing public opinion. The populist disseminator is also oriented towards a role as a detached observer – albeit with a focus on soft news and entertainment rather than investigative journalism. The critical change agent sees advocating for social change and influencing the public agenda as important, but also has a critical attitude towards political and business leadership. The opportunist facilitator considers journalism to be a constructive partner of government with regard to development and political transformation. Among the 18 countries in the Hanitzsch (2011: 487) study, Indonesia, China, Russia and Uganda are particularly relevant comparisons to Cuba. In these countries, the opportunist facilitator dominates, leaving some room for the critical change agent and the populist disseminator, but almost suppressing the detached watchdog.

Applying the framework proposed for the Journalistic Role Performance project (Mellado, 2015), a comparative study of five Latin American countries (Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico and Cuba) finds that Cuba ranks higher than the others in the interpretation and use of opinion. This is explained as being due to their historical tradition of militant and advocacy-type journalism. The watchdog role is hardly present in Cuba, while the loyal facilitator dominates (Mellado et al., 2017: 9–10). Complementing this, Olivera and Torres (2017: 143) find in an analysis of Cuban state media news articles (N=627) that the loyal facilitator role dominates in 75 per cent of the sample.

Theories about the 'good society'

In viewing the emergence and circulation of norms in the Cuban media landscape, I aim to understand Cuba on its own terms rather than try to fit the country into an existing press system

model. Nevertheless, it is necessary to define normative theories and outline some influential frameworks.

Normative theories say something about what the press *should do*; they are closely connected to larger claims about the 'good society'. Such theories, although constructed and overlapping, are components when states or institutions shape media policies. These in turn influence both the teaching of journalism and journalistic behaviour (Benson, 2008). For Cuba, such theories are becoming important as the Communist Party no longer sets the political agenda on its own, and the makeup of the 'good society' is debated among journalists. In principle, there are as many theories of ideal functions of the press as there are political systems. Historically, the classic attempt at explaining press–society relations is perhaps the *Four Theories of the Press* (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956). It distinguishes between four theoretical frameworks: libertarian, socially responsible, authoritarian and the Soviet model, of which two are democratic and two non-democratic. The book has been criticised for its reductionist and universalistic approach, and for being an 'Americanised' way of viewing the world (Christians et al., 2009; Waisbord, 2012: 506)

Hallin and Mancini (2004: 9) aim to give *Four Theories* a 'decent burial' by treating media systems as particular historical formations and not ideal-typical models. Nevertheless, their models, based on research in selected countries in Western Europe and North America, are not necessarily suited to understanding authoritarian contexts. As Zhao (2012: 143) notes, 'the Soviet communist model as described in *Four Theories* is still alive and kicking in a rising China'. In the discussion in this article, I draw on aspects from Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) in attempting to understand how Cuban journalists evaluate the journalistic profession.

Media systems in emerging democracies

Katrin Voltmer (2012: 235) suggests broadening the theoretical framework proposed by Hallin and Mancini to 'de-westernise' media studies. In emerging democracies, the media system goes through a transformation carrying norms and power relations of the past. This may create hybrid media structures that may not fit into categories based on Western democratic media systems.

In post-communist countries such as the former Soviet Union, the politicised media content of the past still shapes communication today. International media conglomerates seized ownership of newspapers in particular as the media industry became privatised, and these remain opinionated and politicised despite new ownership (Krishna-Hensel, 2017, Voltmer 2012).

In Latin America, military dictatorships dominated during the Cold War. The stability of these regimes was built on depoliticisation instead of ideology. A strategy for the media to survive was staying away from politics, instead promoting entertainment programs. When democratisation in these countries started during the 1970s, the media did not transform into democratic institutions because the Anglo-Saxon notion of independent media corresponds neatly with commercialisation (Matos, 2012; Voltmer, 2012).

In Africa, authoritarian developmental one-party states with weak state institutions have shaped the region. The media have largely been seized by a small group of political elites, leaving them vulnerable to political interference (Nyamnjoh, 2005; Voltmer, 2012)

Research on Cuban journalism

This section discusses Cuban scholars' views on the challenges and ideals of the Cuban media. I have limited the review to three of the most influential Cuban journalism academics: García Luis (2013), Elizalde (2013) and Garcés (2013, 2016). García Luis (2013: 21) worries about the 'inertia and dogmatism' that are impeding a change in the media that the younger generations especially demand and expect. García Luis believes that socialist societies are theoretically better suited than

capitalist ones to maintaining important functions of the media, although this has not been achieved in practice (2013: 35–46, my translation).

Referring to Marx and Engels, García Luis (2013: 34) asks: 'What kind of press freedom is it that rests on depriving the right to possess and utilise the media for over ninety percent of the population, concentrating it in the hands of giant conglomerates and transnational monopolies?' García Luis argues that the inability of socialism to create a better model has allowed the liberal model to be perceived as 'common sense'. He believes the Cuban press should practise 'universal functions of journalism', albeit in accordance with Cuban values and interests. He sums it up in eight points:

1 Provide relevant, useful and timely information, with maximum objectivity.

2 Contribute to the interpretation of the main events in Cuba and the world.

3 Express opinions on matters requiring guidance and clarification.

4 Contribute to the goal of keeping alive the historical traditions of the people and link them to the present.

5 Sustain the continuity and development of our culture, education, ideology and values in all areas.

6 Participate in the establishment and conduct of the public agenda of our society.

7 Help social mobilisation oriented towards the main economic, political and social objectives of the country.

8 Investigate facts and contribute the results to the vitality of the political system, and to the production and reproduction of the same. (García Luis, 2013: 34)

Journalist and editor Elizalde (2013: 44, my translation) states that the five main obstacles for Cuban state journalists are: '1. Deficient connectivity and information technology. 2. Serious material and budgetary limitations. 3. Loss of professional culture. 4. Low salaries. 5. Incoherent application of information policy.' According to Elizalde, a lack of resources and strict regulation of media content contribute to a deficient professional culture. With the loss of professionalism, other problems emerge, such as 'a loss of credibility and trust in the sector and demoralisation and low self-esteem' (2013: 76–86). Elizalde (2013: 111, 113) proposes that national media policy guarantees freedom of expression, universal access to information and the right of different societal groups to decide which models, institutions and communicational processes should be established. At the same time, she states that public policy should recognise the 'role of the Cuban Communist party as a political vanguard' and that the media should be social property with the ability to sustain itself.

Garcés (2016) points out the absurd contrast of a highly educated society and a media discourse 'plagued with simplifications'. New generations will assume power in Cuba, and they have neither the 'symbolic capital nor the legitimacy' of the leaders of the 1959 revolution. To maintain the 'anti-capitalist project of Cuba', an immediate priority must be to give the youth influence in decision-making. Garcés (2013, my translation) considers that the Cuban press has replaced 'reasoned judgement for propaganda, interpretation for numbers, news for events, arguments for adjectives, the richness of processes for a caricatured synthesis of its results'. He states that if the problems of the official media are not resolved, they will lose both credibility and persuasive power. The challenge of the profession, according to Garcés, is that only 50 per cent of the directors and editors in the state media have journalistic training, in addition to a general lack of editorial freedom and creativity.

Method

The study is based on qualitative interviews with 12 journalists in the Cuban state media and five focus groups with 19 journalism students. The interviews were conducted in Cuba in the autumn of 2016. An interview with a Cuban sociologist is included for an academic point of view.

Students were recruited through participation in lectures and through research assistants at the Faculty of Communication at the University of Havana. The groups ranged in size from three to eight students, which made the recruiting easy since numbers were smaller, but an obvious disadvantage is that small groups limit the range of experience and expressions accessed (Krueger & Casey, 2009: 69). Nevertheless, I generally found that group conversations brought up subjects and considerations unknown to me beforehand (Guldvik, 2002: 36). Since participation by students was voluntary and not decided through random selection, it may be that only a certain type of student was willing to participate. However, as the students showed varying points of view regarding where they wanted to work, and how they viewed the state-financed and private media, I believe the selection covers some of the possible groupings of opinion among students. Two focus groups did, however, distinguish themselves. In one of them, a research assistant ended up dominating the dialogue, to some degree suppressing the voices of the other students. In another group, the students had a very critical dialogue regarding the Cuban media system, yet also showing support for the same system; this group is therefore quoted frequently in the findings section.

Conducting research among Cuban journalists is ethically challenging. I knew that many journalists in the state media collaborate with non-state outlets, but I was not sure whether bringing this up in the interviews could put the participants in a difficult situation. It is my responsibility as a researcher to prevent harm to participants (NESH, 2016: Article 12). During the interviews, I asked such questions as: 'Have you noticed any change in Cuban journalism in the last five years?' And 'Are digital media challenging the traditional media?' I wanted to signal a neutral stance as a researcher, not implying support for one group or the other. Although most participants had critical reflections on Cuban media and their own role in the system, it is likely that the criticism fell within acceptable limits – what Dilla (in Alfonso, 2014) calls a 'consented criticism'.

Some degree of social desirability bias (Bryman, 2016) has probably played a part in the participants' answers. For instance, one journalist participant named a non-state outlet he considered threatening to Cuban sovereignty and said he would never work there. After finishing the fieldwork, I noticed that the same person had published an article with this very outlet. This discrepancy may have been affected by letting participants choose the place and time of the interview. As the journalist mentioned wanted to do the interview inside a state media newsroom, it may have promoted ideologically correct opinions, as open support for non-state outlets is not necessarily acceptable.This shows that although I had the impression that it was a relatively open dialogue, what affects participants' responses in an authoritarian context may be difficult for a foreign researcher to detect. This calls for a particularly careful approach in order to avoid causing any harm to participants.

In addition, a social desirability bias may complicate the analysis of participants' views on state/non-state media. It is by no means certain that I can trust their answers. At the same time, this uncertainty points to issues at the core of Cuban society. In an authoritarian society, where 'counter-revolutionary' activities can have repercussions, it makes sense to avoid exposure to subjects on the borderline of acceptable behaviour. I will base my interpretations on what the participants chose to say, and not what they possibly omitted. The consequence is that participants – particularly journalists in state media – appear to be quite consistent with state ideology.

I have translated the interview transcripts from Spanish to English and verified with a proofreader. For anonymity, the journalists have been given pseudonyms and placed within three

age categories of reporters: young (20–34), middle-aged (35–49) and senior (50+). Although the data are not generalisable to journalism students or to journalists in Cuba, it is a contribution and a starting point for research on Cuban state media, about which there is little previous literature.

Boundaries between state and non-state media

As a former media monopoly, the institutionalism in the Cuban state media has been almost unchallenged for decades. Now, the entrance of non-state outlets forces journalists in the state media to review their own practice. Of the journalists I interviewed in the state media, none mentioned collaboration with non-state outlets. Nevertheless, some participants are almost unconditionally welcoming of change. Young reporter Tania said:

> The private media make us debate, alert us, and sometimes put us in embarrassing situations, because they cover things that we should have been covering. And I repeat, there are people who think this is a problem, and that we should diminish the importance of these people. I do not believe so. I believe the best way of confronting this is being better. (Tania, 2016)

Consistent with Tania's thoughts, many participants displayed ambivalence in the face of a changing media environment. Young reporter Carlos said the non-state media allowed journalists to express things that were unacceptable in the state media:

> Think about it, it is positive that there exists a possibility of saying these things, but at the same time I am asking myself if it is worth it, do the means justify the ends? (Carlos, 2016)

Lurking behind this scepticism towards non-state media is the legacy of media monopolies dominating Cuban journalism before the 1959 revolution. While appreciated and admired for their storytelling and content, the non-state media are also feared, as they may signal a paradigm shift – the beginning of the end for Cuban socialism. Senior reporter Carmen claimed that non-state media were 'more inventive', but she also described the economic competition between non-state and state outlets as 'a fight between a lion and a tied-up monkey'. She said the interests behind non-state money were questionable:

> As long as there is a country that wants to change the regime in Cuba, I mean, it would be naive to think that a private media network could be allowed here, the capital of course, where is it going to come from, to whose interests are they going to be subject? (Carmen, 2016)

Middle-aged reporter Roberto shared the same perception. He said of a market-driven press:

> Private journalism is not independent, that's a lie, that's a great story, a myth. Their agendas and decisions may be subject to even more, less clear, less transparent mechanisms. (Roberto, 2016)

Most of the journalists view a system of *private* media as being just as harmful to the practice and function of journalism as the current dependency on the PCC. This weighing practice between corporations and the state was also displayed when Carlos talked about young journalists working for the non-state outlet *OnCuba*:

> I find dangerous the fact that the young, talented, intelligent, clever are contributing to a project that does not necessarily coincide with what they believe … Although those that work for Hugo may say that I am working for the Communist Party and that's the same just inverted. Yes, it's a big dilemma. (Carlos, 2016)

Not all participants worried about capitalism getting a foothold through non-state outlets operating in Cuba today. Middle-aged reporter Juan said the influence of the non-state media was exaggerated in the sense that they got more publicity than readers. Along with others, he merely dismissed non-state media as unimportant 'foreign constructs' due to the lack of Cuban visitors online. However, internet access is rapidly expanding and thus so is the impact of non-state media.

Senior reporter Carmen observed that the non-state media were drawing young journalists away from state media, but considered that changing rigid systems and media regulation was a political issue:

> Because I want to tell you that what I am talking about, we discuss this every day in the journalist forums, in the conversations about the country's authorities, etc. But there has been a setback in this, in this situation that is a vision of economic delay, which is not so much the professional outlook as the political perspective. (Carmen, 2016)

Student perceptions

Most of the student participants, however, did not want to wait out a process of debate and political restructuring. One of the students had worked both for state and non-state media outlets, and saw the latter as the only real alternative:

> In alternative [non-state] media I feel that I have more freedom, they do not impose topics on me. They do not add content to my texts, I write on the subject that I think I want to write. The journalists in the alternative [non-state] media are almost always journalists of my generation ... and I understand them much better. (SG 2, 2016)

According to the discussion in one of the groups, the way to keep the younger journalists in the state media was to give them space to reflect other stories, and let the media sustain themselves economically. For now, the restrictions were causing young journalists to look for opportunities beyond the state media. One said, 'It already seems a little late, the youth have found their own space, the youth don't want to be here anymore.' He continued by telling me about a friend who had published a sports article in the state-sponsored *Granma*:

> And I had read the original, and I told him: "No, but now to the whole of Cuba you look like an imbecile who doesn't know how to write." They rip things apart and put it together as they like, and so what do the youth do? They leave. (SG 2, 2016)

The pay in the non-state media was also a big drawcard. Journalists in the state media make only about CUC$30 a month, among the lowest salaries in the country. Almost all the student participants considered the state media salary the biggest disadvantage of becoming a journalist. Middle-aged reporter Roberto observed a large degree of apathy among his colleagues in the state media: 'Today many journalists are dissatisfied and tired. Those who have a greater commitment [to the revolution] believe in what we do and believe it is necessary. But we do not have the arguments to convince the new generation.' He seems to have been right, because non-state media are seen as very 'attractive' for the students. One student emphasised the greener pastures in the non-state media:

> A lot of them do good journalism, journalism marked by all the things we learn in academia ... They have the possibility of paying you for the work you do. So, it's like, I don't think there is a confrontation between the conventional media and the alternative [non-state] media, but they do represent the places where everybody wants to go. (SG 4, 2016).

A few students were somewhat hesitant towards non-state outlets. One student said he identified with the political agenda in Cuba, 'therefore I do not mind putting my profession to the service of my nation, but that does not mean that I will defend a total standstill'. Another considered that it would 'give me an income, but it may be in contradiction to the ethical principles that I as a student journalist, as a journalist educated at a Cuban academic institution, should have'.

The majority, nevertheless, did consider the best opportunities for 'self-realisation' to be outside the state media. In contrast to the attitude of journalists considering the non-state media 'inflated', some of the journalism students were eager for the non-state media to shout louder and claim their space in the Cuban media landscape. One participant said, 'We could have been

much more critical, we are not.' (SG 2, 2016) One reason is that affiliation with non-state outlets can have negative consequences for those who hold multiple jobs, as another explained:

> I collaborate with some of these media, and I have been in meetings, we meet with the other collaborators, and they have said: 'Do not publish strong articles now because he, and he, and he is here, and they are studying or working in *Granma*. We do not want to publish anything that could affect them, so let's lower the volume.' (SG 2, 2016)

A third considered it a problem that few Cubans currently had access to non-state media online: 'We think we are discussing, fixing the country, and in the end, we are listening to each other and reading each other. It is a circle and there is no feedback.' (SG 2, 2016)

Defining a broken information monopoly

Journalists agree that the state press mainly reflects political discourse and ignores citizens' right to information. A structural and economic change is what most participants call for, allowing the state media to be less dependent on both direction and funding from the PCC. Senior reporter Carmen wanted social ownership over the media:

> No one wants the model to be like the one in Miami, any alternative but Miami ... So, what is it that we want? Well, the core values that has, ehhh, moved this society the last 50 years. That is the possibilities of access for the majority, to have social justice, to have opportunities for all. (Carmen, 2016)

Her point of view departs from a consideration that the media's function is to achieve the goals of the revolution, providing information people need – not just what will sell – with the goal itself not being democracy, but rather equality within a socialist system. Many of the journalists believe that advocating for a model of public media with 'real autonomy' should be done by working from within the state media apparatus. Young reporter Tania said:

> I would not go to the private media and criticise the system that exists. I would not go to USA and criticise the system that exists. I have no right to criticise if I did not participate in its construction. (Tania, 2016)

The construction process may take many years. Middle-aged reporter Ernesto said he no longer believed in changing the frameworks piece by piece. He had recently lost his job in state media for stepping outside the limits of acceptable behaviour and said:

> If there were many more journalists who, who were willing to look for trouble, maybe there would be a change of press in Cuba. But I do not think so, I do not think so, because people are very afraid.

According to the interviewed sociologist, what is at stake is the Cuban Revolution itself. He did not believe any individual journalist could change the structures of state media, and felt that the old men in the political elite needed to be replaced by more 'flexible generations'. In his view, if nothing happens, or the PCC takes a restrictive attitude, it may be 'fatal':

> The consensus will be reduced, the unity of the revolution will be broken. I believe that they [the PCC] have no choice but to respond to the new social situation, the new generational evolution and the demand for a public sphere in a flexible, open, creative way (Sociologist, 2016).

Diverging ideals

This section turns to the second research question, focusing on what the participants view as important for professional autonomy. The only certainty for journalists in state media is that their points of view are divided. Although some welcome the journalistic mentality in non-state outlets, shaking up the 'inertia' from decades of state monopoly, most display some degree of indifference or ambivalence towards the non-state outlets. While non-state outlets are viewed as unimportant, they also threaten the social order created by the revolution of opposition to capitalism and

imperialism. The ideological perspective and the perceived threat of outside forces wanting to dismantle the revolution have played a central role in maintaining the function of the state media as organs of the PCC.

Hanitzsch (2011: 491) concludes that in state-owned media there is a 'substantial ideological pressure on the journalists to make a contribution to their country's economic development and social well-being'. This is partially in line with the argumentation of Cuban scholars Elizalde (2013), García Luis (2013) and Garcés (2016) that the PCC should have a role as 'political vanguard', and the media should serve as an upholder of tradition and ideology. At the same time, Cuban scholars also argue for the media to expose societal problems within the frameworks of the revolution. The ambivalence of journalists towards non-state media can perhaps be understood in light of this dual function served by the state media. Journalists consider the lack of an ideological foundation in non-state media problematic, as it may benefit forces wishing to undermine the system. At the same time, non-state outlets conduct the kind of journalism they would like to see in the state media. The journalists working for non-state outlets are to some degree seen as removing themselves, or perhaps even working against the common goal of preserving the revolution, while also contributing positively by shedding light on important topics censured by state media (see also García Santamaría, 2017: 234).

The partial opposition to non-state media may also be understood by examining the self-perception of state media journalists. They do not see themselves as victims, or as subjects controlled by a strictly censorial regime. Journalists view themselves as closer to a point made by Voltmer (2013: 123): they are beneficiaries due to being exempt from market competition and the volatile tastes of audiences, and see themselves as educators and mobilisers in a historical project.

At the same time, the structures of the state apparatus provoke a loss of professionalism, credibility and self-esteem (Elizalde, 2013). The Communist Party has for decades called for the media to be 'objective, constant and critical' (PCC, 2011: 23), but restrictions are never loosened; therefore, journalists seek change, but it is not their mission to criticise the government. They rather see it as their job to improve and perfect the socialist system. The ideal press for journalists in the state media is a 'public' system upholding values such as social justice and opportunities for all, as defined by Carmen. This means that journalists have some ideals connecting to social responsibility theory, but also a much larger emphasis on preservation, as found in the Soviet normative framework (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956).

It is as difficult to compare the media landscape in Cuba with that of other countries as it is to apply press models created in the West – or, more specifically, the United States – during the Cold War. Connecting Cuban media to the Soviet framework is a Western way of viewing the world, according to media scholar García Luis (2013: 42–65, my translation). To counter this, he has created three models founded on a Cuban perspective. The market model responds to US liberalism; the state press model emphasises ideology, and is publicly owned and responsible; and the Soviet model considers the press a tool for the bureaucracy. Commenting on these, García Luis firmly places the Cuban system within the state press model – while noting that the state media are currently far from achieving this. García Luis's models are interesting, as they propose a way of viewing media systems that Western theories perhaps fail to capture.

Autonomy ideals of state journalists in Cuba can be seen as somewhat similar to the goals of development journalism (apart from governmental independence) as defined by Xiaoge (2009) of working with the state in developing the country while also being critical of the same system. I consider the journalists in the state media to largely support the ideals of the opportunist facilitator role, while also drawing on aspects of the populist disseminator role when considering the 'ideal' Cuban press. They largely support official policies when these are seen as a public good and are positive towards influencing public opinion. At the same time, journalists maintain a critical view of their own profession, albeit within closed circles. The opportunist facilitator role

is exceptionally widespread among state media journalists in Uganda, China, Indonesia and Russia, mainly because this is a way for the government to exert control. While the legacy of dictatorial regimes has contributed to the dominance of the opportunist facilitator in Indonesia and Chile (Hanitzsch, 2011: 488), it is a combination of authoritarian leadership and the external threat of US intervention in the communication field that promotes this role in Cuba.

Hanusch and Uppal (2015: 573) find that being both a 'detached watchdog' and 'an advocate of social change' are indeed relatively common traits in non-Western contexts. Such ambiguous frameworks correspond with Cuban journalistic perceptions of wanting to promote a common good while also accepting the frames of the PCC's ideology. Journalists see autonomy as being partly free from the over-arching political framework, the goal being less of a shuttling between one's own journalistic expectations and those imposed by the PCC (Waisbord, 2013).

When consulting previous research, it seems that ten years ago student perceptions were closer to the opinions of journalist participants today. A survey of 198 journalism students in Havana (Estenoz & Martínez, 2006: 124) concluded that the ideal journalism was a 'press for the people, which alerts and denounces social wrongdoings'. Students also claimed that the principal strengths of Cuban journalism were 'the commitment to the Revolution, social responsibility, the social ownership of the media and the disaffiliation with commercial interests, and the educative function of the press' (2006: 124).

Today, students at the Faculty of Communication dress like average Miami students and watch the same TV series and movies. The static media agenda in state outlets does not reflect the world they see through the Weekly Package and in non-state media. From that follow other ideals. Students see freedom as more than merely an absence of censorship; they want to have a meaningful workday and a living wage. Working towards a common project under the revolution is not what journalism students in 2016 see as important, nor is independence from commercial interests. Students consider that making use of skills learnt at university and writing about subjects they choose themselves is what makes them function well as journalists. They get this in the non-state media, along with a better personal economy.

For most of the students, professional ideals are put first, even if that means seeing these through with private capital. Getting a message out that matters to people – not ideological belonging – is what matters. While students do not mention ideals such as objectivity or neutrality, they emphasise their desire to inform and criticise societal structures. Some want to go further than the current range of movement in non-state media allows, particularly in terms of criticising the political system. At the same time, the students are supportive of the Cuban system, and against US imperialism – yet they consider exposing problems without the static frame of ideology to be good for Cuba. For journalism students, the conception of the professional role is closer to the populist disseminator in wanting to write interesting and critical stories on subjects important to the people. This means students are willing to include aspects of libertarian and social responsibility ideals when conducting journalism (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956).

Student ideals of autonomy exist within a broader framework. Students do not make an evaluation of whether state or non-state media, or a mixture of these, would be the ideal model; rather, they want to be allowed creativeness and inventiveness, not just the opportunity to cover political acts. The non-state media are opening up a space where this is now possible, but students also express that the state press would be attractive if it gave journalists more self-determination on topics. Students thus have a pragmatic attitude, seeking the space closest to 'professional journalism' (Waisbord, 2013). It should not be forgotten that the students who are hesitant about the non-state media represent a group with ideals closer to those of established journalists. These nuances in opinion could have been elaborated in a study with more participants.

One may argue that students can uphold ideals that are difficult to maintain once they start working, and thus perceptions of autonomy become less divergent when internalised in the state

media system. However, as the study by García (2016: 119) demonstrates, more than 50 per cent of graduates hold multiple jobs, both in state and non-state media. It therefore seems that young journalism graduates who have completed their mandatory two- to three-year internship in state media continue to look for possibilities in non-state media. It should be noted, however, that the job possibilities for journalism students are greater in state media, and that short-term collaboration with non-state outlets continues to be more common than full-time employment. Young journalists working in state media who participated in this study did, however, claim to be uninterested in working for non-state media. This may be due to a small sample size, the composition of sources who were possibly more dedicated to the state system, a social desirability bias or a mixture of these.

Over the past few years, journalists in non-state media in Cuba have observed that their range of movement has deteriorated, and that harassment and censorship have intensified. Further, the UPEC has proposed restrictions on collaboration with non-state outlets for state media journalists. In a speech for the PCC in February 2017, Miguel Díaz-Canel, successor to Raúl Castro for the Cuban presidency, announced that the government planned to close the OnCuba digital platform (García, 2017). While the new press policy released in 2018 keeps the legality of non-state outlets an open question, the document includes 'donations' and 'cooperation nationally and internationally' (PCC, 2018: 14) as a source of income, something that may grant more room for manoeuvre for some of the non-state outlets. However, in his closing speech to the journalists at a UPEC congress, president Díaz-Canel spent a large part of his speech attacking outlets with financing from the United States: 'No matter how many attempts there are to return us to the past of sensationalism and private press under new masks, neither the Cuban official media nor its journalists are for sale' (Granma, 2018). It thus seems that the conditions for work outside the state media are facing an uncertain future.

If the spaces for expression in non-state outlets are closed, and state media are left unreformed, it is reasonable to believe that the worries of the sociologist (2016) and Garcés (2016) may prove true: frustrations among the youth may have a 'fatal' outcome for the support of the revolution. This point of view is also shared by Bye (2017: 111), who considers that the continuing low prospects for socioeconomic improvement in Cuba decrease public tolerance for living with restricted freedoms.

Conclusions

Diverging ideals of autonomy between students and journalists point to multiple normative frameworks currently interchanging in the Cuban media landscape. The PCC's broken promises of structural change in the media, along with new online platforms, have contributed to a generational divide between journalists in Cuba.

Among students, perceptions of autonomy and ambitions for different lifestyles have expanded with the non-state media. Ten years ago, Cuban journalism students claimed to be in opposition to private capital, considering the revolution to be the major strength of the media (Estenoz & Martínez, 2006: 124). In this study, the majority of the student participants looked towards non-state outlets, emphasising journalistic opportunities over ideology. This does not signal that students want the Cuban system to fail: they are merely pursuing their own professional interests. Drawing on Hanitzsch (2011), students appear to be closer to the *populist disseminator* role, while journalists in state media largely remain within the *opportunist facilitator* role.

Journalists in the state media uphold the belief that the media should be anchored within the ideological framework of the revolution, with the Communist Party as 'political vanguard' (Elizalde, 2013: 113). At the same time, journalists advocate for more autonomy than they are permitted today, and they worry about the loss of professionalism caused by restrictions. Still, non-state media are not considered a legitimate strategy to gain more autonomy. The

contradictions in how journalists view non-state media point to a profession in flux, where norms and ideals within the group are not cohesive. If the PCC chooses an unendingly restrictive line regarding both state and non-state media, it will likely provoke more conspicuous reactions than seen in previous generations.

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10.4 Article 4

Cuban journalism students: between ideals and state ideology

Cuban journalism students: between ideals and state ideology

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Abstract

Cuban journalism students find that journalistic ideals learnt in university are incompatible with the media-reality they encounter during periods of practical training in state media. Journalism education in Havana pertains, in many ways, to aspects of 'Western' journalistic ideals, such as providing criticism, investigative journalism and reporting on social ills. In the propagandistic defence paradigm of Cuban state media, such ideals are very difficult to pursue. Although enjoying the hands-on experience, students also become frustrated and demotivated with censorship and institutionalised news criteria during training periods. Many thus look for opportunities in non-state outlets, where journalistic ideals are closer to those learnt in university.

Introduction

Periods of practical training can be perceived as a 'shock' for students in various fields when going from the theoretical approach of universities to real life experience (Edwards and Mutton, 2007, Parsons and Stephson, 2005).

As Heggen and Smeby (2012) note, it is important that programmes that have the education of professionals as their goal, establish for students a clear coherence between the training and the professional practice. Although coherence is a subject thoroughly researched within profession-oriented career programmes such

as teacher and nursing training, there is a lack of literature on practical experiences in journalism education.

In journalism studies, the focus is more on how periods of training reflect back on education programmes. A common conclusion is that curricula in universities ought to be changed to prepare journalism students better for a changing media environment (Hovden et al., 2016, Mensing, 2010). In Cuba, this is different, if not the reverse. Journalism students in Havana consider that the university teaches them the kind of journalism they want to practice. During training periods, students become frustrated with censorship, institutionalism and a resistance to change in the state media. In this article, I will reflect on what happens when professional journalistic ideals are confronted with a different set of rules. This may explain the reasons for the discrepancy between the expectations of journalism students and the current situation in the state media.

The article seeks to answer the research question: How is the transition from journalism education to the state media during training periods perceived by student journalists in Cuba? The article will also evaluate possible future outcomes of student discontent in a changing media landscape in Cuba.

Background

Before the 1959 revolution, the press in Cuba was dominated by US-based companies, and the island was used as a testing ground for new technology. Both radio and television broadcasting started well before the revolution (Louis, 2013, p. 75). The first journalism school in Cuba was created in 1942, and in the following years the education programme was spread throughout the country. These programmes were closely connected to US journalistic ideals. In the wake of the post-revolutionary processes in 1960, existing journalism schools were closed down. With the 1962 University Reform, journalism was again considered part of tertiary education. The first degree course in journalism at the University of Havana was opened as late as 1965 (Alonso and Pérez, 2016, p. 137).

In constructing a new type of press model separated from both the market and the state, the state media experienced a 'golden age' after the revolution, but that all changed with the 1965 constitution of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC). Thereafter, the press was aligned with politics, justified in resistance to foreign threats. Many journalists working under the US paradigm were removed from their posts, inciting ruptures in journalistic styles and genres (Louis, 2013, pp. 75-85).

The Cuban state media is financed, controlled by and serves the interests of the PCC. The state media has radio and TV broadcasters and newspapers in every province of the island. Non-state media outlets now proliferate, both online and offline. In particular, content uploaded on memory sticks is serving as an important alternative information channel. Despite the breaking of the long-standing state media monopoly, the low rates of internet connectivity in the population allows state media to continue as the most important source of information for the average Cuban (Freedom House, 2017).

Most of the non-state outlets are registered at the Foreign Press Centre. These outlets can be closed down if found to be too critical of the government. Due to the lack of a press law, non-state outlets also operate in a legal vacuum and, therefore, students cannot engage in their training periods or internships outside outlets run by the state. There also exists a body of outlets that are openly critical of the Cuban government, so-called 'dissidents'. Associating with one of these would mean closing the doors to any other job opportunity and thus is not considered a viable option among students.

This is the scenario facing journalism students entering the profession today. Journalism education is a five-year long undertaking. Throughout this time, students generally have a one-month period of practical training in state media each semester. The article is based on the experiences students have during these periods. When finishing the programme, students are obliged to take a two- or three-year internship in a state media outlet, referred to as 'social service'. Students are assigned to either a radio, television or newspaper outlet, but they are not necessarily the students' preferred type of media. A study of 142 Cuban journalist interns finds that 50% are indifferent to or dissatisfied with their placement (García, 2016, p. 93). The salary for state media journalists is one of the lowest in the country, less than 30CUC$, which equals 30US$. During the internship period, students make less than $20 a month.

Despite the poor remuneration, journalism is a popular topic of study. According to the homepage of the Faculty of Communication at the University of Havana (FCOM), more than 500 students applied to study journalism in 2017. To qualify for any university study, one must pass tests in mathematics, Spanish and history. The journalism programme only accepts about 60 students annually, and the students must go through a three-step admissions process. The first is a test of general culture, which 200 students in 2017 qualified

to take. This was passed by 50% who proceeded to make a journalistic piece. Out of these, only 72 qualified for the last round consisting of individual interviews (Seguera, 2017, December 11). In January 2018 a TV studio opened on the premises of the FCOM, making journalistic practice within the university on television possible for the first time. The show *Nexos*, which can be translated *Connections*, will broadcast through Facebook streaming via the online state outlet *Cubadebate* (FCOM, 2018).

Research on journalism education

In the book *Journalism Education in Countries with Limited Media Freedom* (Josephi, 2010c), 12 countries with limited or no media freedom are examined in order to propose a framework other than journalism education acting as the 'fourth estate in a democratic country' (Josephi, 2010b, p. 1). The study concludes that 'journalism education cannot be used as a sign of how free or not free the country's media system is'. For example, both Russia and Singapore are ranked as 'not free' as far as regards media freedom, but their journalism education programmes retain standards that would allow students to take jobs anywhere in the world. According to Vartanova et al. (2010, p. 203) the ideology-laden courses in Marxist-Leninism and the like in Russian journalism education are replaced with socioeconomic and humanitarian subjects. In Singapore, educators strive towards Western ideals while also preparing students to deal with government control at home. One teacher says students need to develop 'soft social skills' in order to approach an uncooperative government strategically (Duffy, 2010, p. 41).

Josephi (2010a, p. 254) considers that the Western paradigm of the media acting as watchdogs of the government and thus informing citizens is 'trending to become universal' in journalism education, largely due to NGOs gaining access to and influence of education programmes. In China, it was the economic growth and influence of the market that forced journalism education to shift from a purely political training to one focusing on the audience (Han, 2017, p. 74).

In the project *Journalism Students Across the Globe*, researchers have conducted a variety of comparative studies. One article examining eight countries in all continents except Asia concludes that the motivations for becoming a journalism student is a 'liking' of the profession, a belief in a talent for writing and a wish to contribute to social change (Hanusch et al., 2015, p. 154). While the countries in the study are ranked as 'free', with only one as 'partly free', it still indicates that the motivations for joining the profession are somewhat similar across different continents.

However, the structures of the media systems into which journalism students enter vary. A study of Swedish journalism interns shows that subcontracting and cost efficiency in news production is worrying students. The continuous pressure to produce more news, on different platforms, with fewer reporters, is experienced as straining and in contradiction to students' professional ideals (Wiik, 2016, p. 279).

The socialisation process in the newsroom is weighted as extremely important in journalism research (Breed, 1955). Donsbach (2004, p. 143) considers that persuasive processes such as pressure from seniors, managers or owners are psychological and implicit, rather than forced compliance: 'Cases where journalists consciously make news decisions against their better knowledge are the exception rather than the rule.' Gravengaard and Rimestad (2016, p. 301) studied how Danish journalism students learn criteria for a good news story during their internships. They conclude that students learned 'tacit expert knowledge' of what constitutes a good news story and became more competent members of the profession, yet also consider that 'news criteria' to assess ideas for a good story are insufficient, and as such are a deficiency in Danish journalism education.

In the discussion, the consequences of learning 'Western' ideals in a Cuban context will be debated, along with similarities and differences between Cuba and journalism education elsewhere.

Research on Cuba

In a comparative study between Cuba, Ecuador and Venezuela, Alonso et al. (2017) distributed questionnaires to 82% (N=383) of all journalism students enrolled in state universities in Cuba. About half of the students evaluate the journalism education to be good, or very good (2017, p. 254). While traditional media is still preferred by Cuban students, (television 27%, newspaper 18%, radio 9%), more than 8% claim to be oriented towards online outlets. This number is four times higher than in Ecuador and Venezuela, where

only about 2% answer the same (2017, p. 257).

In a study conducted among journalism students in Havana in 2006, participants consider that the state media is censored, politicised, boring, and lacks creativity and criticism (Estenoz and Martínez, 2006, p. 96). A decade ago, students called for a press 'for the people, that alerts and denounces social ills' (ibid, p. 97). In the same study, some students report that training periods are positive, despite some 'obstacles'. Others experience being prohibited from publishing, finding the system rigid and thus becoming demotivated (ibid, p. 116).

A diploma thesis with questionnaires for journalism graduates (N=142) in Havana from the years 2010–14, found that 70% reported being 'very motivated' at the beginning of the programme. Upon finishing, only 23% maintained a high motivation for becoming a journalist. Qualitative interviews in the study confirm that such a sense of demotivation is provoked by the impossibility of continuing the critical environment at the university when working as a full-time journalist (García, 2016, p. 91).

Method

The data consists of five group interviews with a total of 19 student journalists in the 3rd, 4th and 5th years of their study programmes. These were conducted during a two-month period of fieldwork in late 2016. I chose not to include the 1st and 2nd year students, as I considered it useful to draw on the experiences of participants who had studied a few years of theory, and gained some practical exposure, in interviews. Participants consist solely of students in Havana, a group that may hold different opinions compared to students on the periphery due to the more developed internet infrastructure in the capital.

Following Guldvik (2002), I found it useful that participants in the group interviews could ask their own questions and discuss among each other. In that way, responses were not solely dependent on my questions, thus opening a space for information unknown to me. I also liked that the group interviews diminished my role as a researcher, as I was outnumbered by the participants. I found participants to be much more critical than I had expected.

I recruited students by presenting my project at lectures, talking to students in the library, and through a research assistant. The first group interview was composed by the research assistant, and he was present during the session. He became a very dominant figure in the interview, supressing the voices of the other participants. For that reason, the first group interview is not used as much as the others in the findings section.

Participation was voluntary. This can affect responses, as it may be that only a certain group of students found the project to be of interest. However, the diversity of views on the topics discussed does indicate that there is some breadth in the participant group. It is, nevertheless, important to keep in mind that I, as a foreign researcher, may lack a shared understanding of symbols, meanings and vocabulary with participants (Madriz, 2003). On the other hand, being a foreigner has some advantages in that one takes little for granted and may ask questions with an outsider's perspective (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011, p. 395).

I also gathered the curricula corresponding to the 3rd and 4th year of the programme (the 5th year comprises the writing of the thesis only), the reason being that I considered that more in-depth, less introductory curricula would be useful as a possible comparative tool to journalism education elsewhere. In retrospect, I see that the curricula of the first two years would have been useful because literature on journalistic norms, skills and social responsibility in Cuba seem to be lacking. Getting access to the curricula was dependent on a librarian uploading the content—it was not accessible for me on the FCOM intranet. The curricula are composed of a muddle of PDFs, PowerPoint and Word documents, grouped in folders. It is difficult to know if each folder pertains to one specific class, or a variety thereof. I will, however, make the assumption that the name of the folder corresponds to the name of the class. The lack of structure makes it difficult to use the content comparatively. It will therefore be presented as an overview.

The quotes in the findings section are selected as typical responses or because they show a variety in opinion. Some quotes are included if they shed light on important aspects of students' experiences during periods of practical training. Students are anonymous; both their year of study and references that could have identified them have been omitted. I have translated the quotes in the article from Spanish to English. Translations are verified by a proofreader. The Norwegian Centre for Research Data has approved the study.

Journalism curricula

Here I will briefly go through the curricula of the journalism education for 3rd and 4th year students.

Third year: What is most striking, for both the 3rd and 4th years, is the number of subjects related to aspects other than journalism. Students go through courses in *English Language*, *Psychology* and *Latin American Literature*. The latter possibly reflects the valued trait of 'having culture', meaning knowing Cuban art and literature. Further, students study a variation of political subjects. In *Political Science*, the works of Plato, Aristotle, Marx, Engels, Machiavelli, Montesquieu and Rousseau are studied. In the subject *Politics*, students are presented theories about civil society from a Marxist perspective and a capitalist perspective, as well as theories about democracy.

In *Political Economy,* the syllabus focuses on the creation and circulation of capitalism. Some of the objectives of the course are: 'identify the socioeconomic foundations of contemporary capitalism'; 'understand the dialectic of development and underdevelopment as an expression of the crisis in contemporary capitalism'; 'understand the role of monopolistic state regulation in the development of capitalism', and 'evaluate some of the economic and socio-political trends in contemporary capitalism.' In the subject *History*, students learn about many of the former countries of the Soviet Union, such as Russia, Yugoslavia and Hungary. An objective of the course is to understand: 'The emergence and development of imperialism, the evolution of contemporary socialism, [and] the rise and development of the anticolonial and independence movements'.

Finally, students go through four courses directly related to journalism. One, *Methods of Investigation*, goes through methodological designs for academic investigation. *Hypermedia Journalism* considers texts on how Cuba should respond to and deal with the internet in the specific context of the country. In the subject *Ethics*, lectures and texts on the relationship between the USA and Cuba are important. In addition, the ethical framework of the journalists' union (UPEC), and guidelines from 'the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party to increase the informative efficiency of the nation's mass media' are provided. Finally, a course related to the training periods called *Practice in Newsrooms* is given.

Fourth year: The curriculum here is less extensive. Students continue to study *English*, and build on literature with *History of Cuban Art*. Also, *Cultural Processes in Cuba* considers the development of the country from pre-colonial times to the present. Further, *Cuban Economy* is studied, particularly post-revolution, meaning after 1959. Finally, a course in *Investigative Journalism* is given, where literature on Watergate and other US investigative stories are studied.

Between 'should be' and practice realities

Students consider that journalism education at the university promotes journalistic ideals, where informing the public, criticism and 'digging up the dirt' are important components. One student says: 'In the faculty they do not teach you skills enabling you to work in state media. They teach you to be a journalist, to "do" journalism. Of course, there are 40 professors throughout the programme, and each one of them has their own way of seeing things.'

Although some professors consider defence of the nation a primary objective, others believe journalists should write about society's darker corners. The general impression from students is that the university studies prepare them for the 'should be'. During practical training periods, students realise that these ideals can only be put into action in state media with great difficulty. A student says: 'When all is said and done, they teach us a lot of things here, but when we arrive at the media institutions things are done differently, or they do the opposite. That's the reality.'

At the same time, the periods of practice are highly valued among students, and most want more than just three to four weeks per semester. One student considers that: 'there is not really that big of a difference between the university and the newspaper, because if there was, the training periods would be a disaster, whereas in reality we really enjoy the practice.'

Even if the training periods are valued for their insights into the profession, the division between theory and practice also frustrates students. One considers the lack of journalistic training among leaders in the state media, which is only about 50% (Garcés, 2013), a serious problem: 'This disturbs me, because if they spend five years telling us that we need to recognise what is news and what is not, what is a good story, and what is not, then how is someone who is not a journalist, who doesn't have any training, going to evaluate our work?'

Practice stories

The students interviewed had all completed various periods of practical training in different types of state media outlets. Students highlight that training periods allow them to take part in the entire process, from writing and editing to printing. The degree of control and the experience of professional freedom are, however, described otherwise. One says: 'In the majority of the media I have worked in, they give you quite a lot freedom to work as you wish, and they treat you like just another journalist.' Another says: 'In the practice, we form part of the media's production system, and so in the same way they censor the work of the professional journalists who are working in the media, they censor our work too.'

The student quoted above explains that she wrote a review on the presentation of a book held by a famous Cuban author who is not accepted by the state. The article could not be published. She says: 'The explanation they gave me was that [the author] has said bad things about journalists. Is that a reason to censor a story?' Similar types of censorship have been experienced by many of the students during practice. In group two, the discussion proceeded thus:

> *S2.1: For example, I once went on a job where I had to go to a conference. The conference was given by three intellectuals, one of whom had made statements earlier in the year that he did not like the state, and so they told me that I could only say there were just two intellectuals at the conference.*
>
> *S2.2: It is like the Soviet photo where they erased people, but this is a written version.*

These types of stories are difficult to obtain from more experienced journalists already working in state media. It seems that the rules of the game become incorporated, and that self-censorship is used as a strategy before superiors need to employ direct censorship. Students, on the other hand, are unfamiliar or perhaps somewhat in opposition to these unwritten rules, emerging as they are from a different set of standards at university. One student wrote a story to fulfil the requirements of the university course *Investigative Journalism*, where the objective was to write an in-depth report about 'a social problem'. He wrote a story on illegal workers who, due to the risk of losing their jobs, wished to remain anonymous: 'I mean, it is a story that is relevant, that is approved by the academy and the journalists themselves [in the practice journal]. But all because of a single aspect of the media's editorial guidelines, it could not be published.'

Non-state outlets write stories in a different way than state media. This changing media scenery in Cuba contributes to making students aware of possibilities elsewhere, where the divides between theory and practice are not as great. One student says: 'To go to a media organisation and write about, I don't know, just the facts, and that's all, they presented such-and-such work, so-and-so were present, it's not enough! I am not studying here for five years only to write these kind of stories.' With the proliferation of non-state outlets in Cuba, students have the real choice not to spend their careers in state media. Many of the participants in this study collaborate with non-state outlets or other online platforms and see it as a way to realise journalistic ambitions that are currently impossible in state media. One student says: 'So, for journalists to view society from another point of view, they have to leave the [state] media and become a blogger. I mean, a journalist cannot be accomplished in the Cuban press that we have now.'

Students want the leaders in state media to delegate more trust and responsibility to the youth, but emphasise that they do not see themselves as victims. One says that perhaps students need to stand up for their work to a larger degree:

> *I think that the problem has a lot to do with wanting to do it, in daring oneself to do it. I do not think we are victims either, but obviously neither do we have all the channels and the facilities open to us, it takes struggle, it takes sacrifice, but it could be worse, they don't put us in prison, they don't beat us up, they don't abuse us, there is debate.*

Belief and demotivation

Despite the differences between *is* and *ought* in state media, many of the students see themselves arriving at a good time in Cuban journalism—a time when they can possibly steer state media closer to what they learn in university. One student says: 'I believe that it is up to the new dawn of journalists, marked by emigration and by the desertion [of journalism], that those who stay fight to make our profession something better.'

Another student considers that it is a 'moment of decision' in Cuba now, where the youth can be part of reorganising the press, changing it for the better: 'We can take part in thinking about the press, thinking about

what we should be doing, thinking about what we have been doing wrong all this time, thinking about how we can reach to the Cuban on the street better, how to reflect the real problems in society.'

But students have seen the previous graduates begin their work in state media without being able to change much, due to structural conditions. Some honourable exceptions are mentioned, of graduates succeeding in putting the public agenda in the news. Still, students experience that there is a scepticism towards them as journalists. One says:

> *Sometimes in the street they ask you: "What are you studying? Ah, journalism!" People look at you as if saying: "Ah, journalists, you never talk about what interests the people, you say what they tell you to." And this is a disadvantage, because we are studying here, we are the new generation that will arrive in the media, and like all those who have graduated before us, hope to change things, but in the end we don't know if we are going to succeed or not.*

Discontent is accentuated by students looking for jobs elsewhere or by avoiding state media content. One says: 'It is not common for a young person to get information from newspapers. [...] So there is a deception, it is like a divorce between an entire generation and the conventional press that is being produced in this country.' Therefore it is and will increasingly be a challenge for Cuban decision-makers to maintain the support of the youth in a system that keeps promising change, but where real progress is yet to be seen. In group two, the students agree that the lethargy in the system is damaging motivation:

> *During the UPEC congress [the journalists' union congress in 2013] we believed that everything was going to change, that everything was going to get better, but now we are disillusioned. You see moments where things are getting better, when they say things are going to change, but you end up being a cynic, they take away your hopes. And we are much too young for them to take our hopes away.*

Managing a share of autonomy

Periods of practical training are just one component in journalism education, but they are important in the sense that they connect students to the realities of the work they are about to enter. No theoretical study can fully prepare for all aspects of working life, and matching university curricula to the changing world of any profession is difficult. Trying to analyse this interplay in the Cuban context is, however, different from experiences in the Nordic countries as described by Wiik (2016) and Gravengaard and Rimestad (2016). They call for university curricula to better reflect practical realities for Swedish and Danish students entering a scenario where there are fewer jobs and increasing online competition.

For Cuban students, this is happening in reverse. They are secured a job in state media, but they are not allowed to use their skills in this system. Students want the newsrooms to incorporate the ideals and values that they learned at university. This discrepancy between theory and practice in Cuba shares similarities with studies from other countries with limited or no media freedom (Duffy, 2010, Vartanova et al., 2010). A theoretical framework situated in the 'West' inevitably complicates a transition to a work situation controlled and regulated by the state. In Cuba, participants in this study and graduates interviewed by García (2016) share perceptions of uneasiness and discontent over not being able to put journalistic ideals into practice. In 2016, as well as in the study by Estenoz and Martínez (2006), students wanted the same: to reflect problems in society, write about necessary topics, and make pertinent criticism.

Despite the many current changes in the Cuban media landscape, with non-state actors and access to the offline internet blooming via memory sticks, the state media remains steadily resistant to reform. The official discourse of the Communist Party (PCC) often claims that more flexibility and autonomy is needed for journalists (PCC, 2011), but these words seldom translate into action. Students say they are losing hope for a future in state media when nothing happens. Thus, the pull towards exploring other possibilities in outlets outside the conventional state media increases for students. That almost one in ten journalism students are interested in online media jobs (Alonso et al., 2017), despite low rates of connectivity in Cuba, confirms this.

Considering that state media is the only option in both practice and internship periods, it may be reasonable to question whether the journalism education in Cuba is too little adjusted to the practice reality facing students. According to García (2016, p. 93), the graduates most content during internship were those continuing within academia as teachers or researchers, not those working for traditional media. In Singapore, teachers claim to attempt a balance between international and national expectations in journalism education (Duffy, 2010). However, leaving Cuba to find work outside is rare and, for many journalism students, economically impossible. In conversations with teachers and journalists, leaving the country is, to some degree,

also viewed as deserting the revolutionary project. It is therefore a contradiction that students are trained in more or less international/Western standards, when these are almost impossible to achieve when working in Cuban state media.

Viewing Cuba from the outside, it also seems probable that the political elite would be interested in controlling information in state-financed universities. While ideologically driven aspects still are part of the Cuban journalist education, why do the PCC allow a 'Western' education? For some authoritarian regimes, a certain degree of independence and autonomy in selected sectors is indeed acceptable and even necessary as a pressure release, albeit within certain limits. Lee (1998, p. 56) describes this as the case for Hong Kong media when incorporated as an administrative region of China.

Following the same line of thought, giving limited freedom to selected groups may also be a strategic choice by the PCC. The intellectuals in Cuba have been marginalised in the state media, but critical discussions in their own publications, such as the magazine *Temas*, have passed state scrutiny. The same goes for the somewhat critical publications of the Catholic Church in their magazine *Espacio Laical*, translating to *Lay Space* (Marreiro, 2014, pp. 13, 16, Karlsen, 2013).

Students do not, however, enter spaces such as those mentioned above, pertaining to similar journalistic paradigms as those they learn in university. It is possible to argue that the 'dissident' media, to some degree, also share 'Western' ideals of journalism: criticising social structures and government failures. But these outlets are far from being an option for students. The frictions experienced by students, of compromising their journalistic ideals in state media, would probably be diminished if their education was more in tune with practice realities. But encouraging a self-censoring process among students, rather than striving to change a media system frozen in a Cold War defence paradigm, would be a waste of the university's share of liberty.

The experiences students have of direct censorship seem to diminish as journalists become incorporated in state media practice. The socialisation process as described by Breed (1955) is a compelling force. Although structures of censorship in Cuban state media are more informal than forced, journalists in a Cuban context do make news decisions against their better knowledge—contrary to what Donsbach (2004) claims. It seems that self-censorship is a mechanism that sooner or later becomes a strategy if journalists are to preserve their jobs in the state media; this is also seen in other authoritarian contexts (Skjerdal, 2008; Skjerdal, 2010; Tong, 2009; Lauk, 2005). Therefore, bearing a different set of ideals learnt in journalism education can be extremely valuable. It gives students and also more experienced journalists a tool to analyse the media reality they are part of from a different perspective. If and when the possibility to make changes arrive, at least the younger journalists are ready to incorporate these.

But the ideals students hold may also become a problem for the political power block. As Bye (2017, p. 109) mentions, there is less tolerance for waiting out reforms among average Cubans, and there is a sinking confidence in the political leadership among younger generations. Economic prospects have not improved despite the reforms initiated by Raúl Castro (Torres Pérez, 2016). Venezuela has recently also withdrawn its support to Cuba due to internal economic and political turmoil, which will cause further economic hardships for the country. As noted by Hoffmann (2011), if autonomous civil action sparked by online voices are able to connect to offline public debate, it will challenge the regime's plan for the state-society relationship. Young journalists are already looking towards non-state platforms to exercise journalistic ideals closer to those learnt in university. These students may, therefore, increasingly become a driving force in defying the structures currently maintained by the Communist Party.

Conclusions

Cuban journalism is caught between rupture and continuation. New media platforms are opening up, managing to gain an unstable foothold among online consumers. The state media steadily protects its position as promoter of the Cuban revolution, the Communist Party and of anti-imperialism. Journalist students stand with one foot in each camp, learning journalistic ideals incompatible with the reality in state outlets.

Building on Antonovsky and Lev (2000), Heggen and Smeby (2012) consider that coping with new situations depends on an experience of comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness. This means that students must be able to understand the coherence between education and practice, must believe they can navigate it, and that the work is understood as meaningful. This perspective may be useful in analysing the uneasiness and discontent students report in relation to training periods. Education situated in the 'West', with training periods in a strict Cold War defence paradigm, makes for a difficult shift for students. When these two worlds do not meet, students experience that the abilities they have acquired in five years of study are not put to use. The manageability for students during practice is consequently reduced. Many have expe-

rienced direct censorship and are opposed to editors who belong to a different paradigm deciding over their work, in contrast to journalists already internalised in the system.

The transition from education to practice is not experienced as meaningful as students have to let go of the ideals of investigative journalism, criticism and providing information to the public. Although some are optimistic, hoping for a change soon, others look, rather, to outlets outside the conventional state. In these ideals at least partly overlap. While a discrepancy between education and practice is found in various other countries with limited or no press freedom (Josephi, 2010c) the case is somewhat different in Cuba. The situation of non-state outlets being in a position to challenge state media has only existed for a short time. Having a real choice of where to develop journalistic skills is a relatively new state of affairs, and seemingly embraced as a number students and graduates collaborate with non-state outlets on a regular basis (García, 2016). The willingness to wait out political reforms is decreasing along with the country's deteriorating economic foundation. Maintaining support from the youth in Cuba will, in all likelihood, be difficult for the political elite if they do not promote a more progressive media policy.

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APPENDICES

A. Interview guide journalists (Spanish/English)

Cuestionario para periodistas Perfil profesional

1. Háble me de su trabajo:
    a. ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas trabajando como periodista?
    b. ¿Cuál es su cargo (título) dentro de la organización?
    c. Describe un día normal en el trabajo.
    d. ¿Qué tipo de historias escribes/supervisas?
    e. ¿Cómo se obtiene la información para sus últimas historias?
    f. ¿En promedio, cuántos artículos periodísticos produces/editas durante una semana normal?
    g. ¿Con qué persona en la sala de redacción tienes más contacto?
    h. ¿Con qué frecuencia participa usted en la coordinación editorial y de la redacción (por ejemplo, asignar periodistas, reuniones editoriales etc.)?

2. ¿Está haciendo trabajo periodístico por otros medios de comunicación o tienes otro tipo de trabajo?
    a. Si es así, cuenta me un poco.

3. ¿Por qué se hizo usted periodista?
    a. ¿Qué nivel de educación tienes?
    b. ¿Te has especializado en algún medio de comunicación?
    c. ¿Por cuánto tiempo ha trabajado en su trabajo actual?
    d. ¿Por qué trabajas aquí?
    e. ¿En tu opinión, cuáles son las ventajas/desventajas de ser periodista?

Construcción de noticias

4. Cuéntame sobre cómo se producen noticias e historias periodísticas.
    a. ¿Quién (dentro o fuera la redacción) determina lo que se debe priorizar?
    b. ¿Qué historias te animan (otras personas) de escribir?
    c. ¿Hay temas/historias que no se debe escribir?
    d. ¿Tiene artículos que ha sido detenidos/reescritos?
    e. ¿En tu opinión, cuánto puede decidir tu mismo sobre el producto?
    f. ¿Hay posibilidad de ser crítico (a personar o instituciones en poder)?

5. Uso de fuentes
    a. ¿Cómo se seleccionan las fuentes?
    b. ¿Hay fuentes que se utilizan con más frecuencia que otros? ¿Confía usted en esta información?
    c. ¿Hay grupos que se utilizan poco como fuentes?
    d. ¿Hay otras personas en la redacción o externas que tiene opiniones sobre el uso de fuentes en su producto periodístico?

Internet y redes sociales

6. ¿Ha notado algún cambio en el periodismo cubano en los últimos 5 años?
    a. ¿La competencia de otros medios (privados)?
    b. ¿Los blogs o redes sociales?
    c. ¿Opiniones de la audiencia? (en Granma los viernes, por ejemplo)
    d. ¿Hay influencia o presión para cambiar el periodismo cubano desde otros países? (EE. UU., Europa, América Latina)
    e. ¿Desafían los medios digitales a los medios tradicionales?

7. ¿Puede describir como era de ser periodista antes? (en los 90, 2000)
    a. ¿Cómo ha sido el proceso de cambio con la llegada de sitios webs? (que hacen otra forma de periodismo)

Valores profesionales

8. ¿Qué considera usted son las principales funciones/responsabilidades de la prensa (frente a los receptores)?
    a. ¿Qué responsabilidad tiene las periodistas frente a los receptores?

9. En su trabajo qué significa para ti:
    a. ¿Ser objetico/subjetivo?
    b. ¿Ser comprometido/imparcial?
    c. ¿Autonomía?

10. ¿Cuales consideras son las características de la prensa estatal en Cuba?
    a. ¿Hay otros tipos de medios? (de oposición)
    b. ¿Qué los caracteriza?
    c. ¿Es posible hacer crítica dentro de los medios estatales?
    d. ¿Hay modos de trabajar para desviar reglas que existe?
    e. ¿La prensa estatal – es un sistema que funciona?

11. ¿Es suficiente su libertad periodística? ¿Quieres más?
    a. ¿Si fueras periodista de otro país, qué sería?
    b. ¿Tienes algunos deseos de como el trabajo pueda cambiar para que pueda trabajar como tú quieres?

12. ¿Hay algo más que no te he preguntado que piensas es relevante?

1.1.2 Journalist questionnaire

Professional profile

1. Tell me about your work
    a. How long have you been working as a journalist?
    b. What is your position (title) within the organisation?
    c. Describe a normal day at work.
    d. What kind of stories do you write / supervise?
    e. How did you get the information for your latest stories?
    f. On average, how many newspaper articles do you produce/edit during a typical week?
    g. Who in the newsroom do you have the most contact with?
    h. How often do you participate in editorial coordination or management within the newsroom (for example, assigning journalists, editorial meetings, etc.)?

2. Are you working for other journalistic outlets or do you have another type of job?
    a. If so, tell me a little.

3. Why did you become a journalist?
    a. What level of education do you have?
    b. Have you specialised in any particular type of media?
    c. How long have you been working in your current job?
    d. Why do you work here?
    e. In your opinion, what are the advantages / disadvantages of being a journalist?

News construction

4. Tell me about how news stories are produced.
    a. Who (inside or outside the newsroom) determines what should be prioritised?
    b. What stories are you encouraged to write (by other people)?
    c. Are there topics/stories that should not be covered?
    d. Have any of your news stories been stopped/rewritten?
    e. In your opinion, how much can you decide on the product yourself?
    f. Is it possible to be critical (of persons or institutions in power)?

5. The use of sources
    a. How are sources selected?
    b. Are some sources used more frequently than others? Do you trust this information?
    c. Are there groups that are little used as sources?
    d. Are there other people in the newsroom or outsiders who have opinions about the use of sources in your journalistic product?

Internet and social networks

6. Have you noticed any change in Cuban journalism over the last 5 years?
    a. Competition from other (private) media?
    b. Blogs or social media?
    c. Opinions from the public? (in Granma on Fridays, for example)
    d. Are other countries influencing or pressuring for change in Cuban journalism? (USA, Europe, Latin America)

e. Do digital media challenge traditional media?

7. Can you describe what it was like to be a journalist before? (in the 90s, 2000)
    a. How has the arrival of online media changed journalism? (those who do another form of journalism)

Professional values

8. What do you consider to be the main functions / responsibilities of the press (towards its public)?
    a. What responsibility do journalists have towards their public?

9. What does these words mean to as a journalist:
    a. Being objective / subjective?
    b. Being committed / impartial?
    c. Autonomy?

10. What do you consider to be the characteristics of the state media in Cuba?
    a. Are there other types of media? (in opposition)
    b. What characterises them?
    c. Is it possible to criticise within the state media?
    d. Are there ways to work to deviate rules that exist?
    e. The state media - is it a system that works?

11. Do you consider your journalistic freedom to be adequate? Do you want more?
    a. If you were a journalist from another country, which would it be?
    b. Do you have any thoughts on how your work could change to allow you to do the type of work you want to do?

12. Is there anything else I haven't asked you that you think is relevant?

B. Interview guide students (Spanish/English)

Cuestionario para estudiantes

13. Cuéntame un poco sobre la enseñanza del periodismo:
    a. ¿Qué tipos de lecturas hay? (contenido)
    b. ¿Cómo se organiza el trabajo periodístico práctica?
    c. ¿En qué tipo de medios se pueden especializar?
    d. ¿En qué modos se utiliza Internet/medios sociales como herramientas periodísticas?

14. ¿Por qué quiere ser periodista?

15. ¿Cómo ve su futuro como periodista en Cuba?
    a. ¿Cuáles son las ventajas de trabajar como periodista?
    b. ¿Cuáles son las desventajas o desafíos?
    c. ¿Ha habido cambios en los últimos años que influyen en su opinión?
    d. ¿Qué tipos de medios usas tú mismo?

16. ¿En qué tipo de medio de comunicación quiere trabajar? ¿Por qué?
    a. ¿Muchos intelectuales en la facultad son muy críticos de la prensa cubana, que piensen ustedes?

17. ¿Desde el punto de vista de estudiante, que piensas tu caracteriza a los medios estatales?
    a. ¿Usted consideraría trabajar allí?

18. ¿Hay otros medios de comunicación (en oposición)?
    a. ¿Qué los caracteriza?
    b. ¿Usted consideraría trabajar allí?

19. ¿Qué considera usted son las principales funciones/responsabilidades de la prensa (frente a los receptores)?
    a. ¿Esta función se puede practicar en los medios dónde ha estado de practica?
    b. ¿Qué responsabilidad tiene las periodistas frente a los receptores?

20. ¿Si vas a escribir sobre estos temas, cómo se lo hace?
    a. Una historia política
    b. Informes sobre problemas sociales
    c. (¿Qué se puede escribir? ¿Con quién se puede hablar? ¿Cuáles consideraciones son importantes? ¿Y porque consideras eso?)

21. ¿Cuál es su opinión sobre estos conceptos?
    a. ¿Ser objetico/subjetivo?
    b. ¿Ser comprometido/imparcial?

c. ¿Autonomía?

22. ¿En qué modos está internet/medios sociales afectando el periodismo actual? (positivo/negativo)
    a. ¿Cómo se usa el internet en el estudio de periodismo?
    b. ¿Desafían los medios digitales a los medios tradicionales?

Student questionnaire

23. Tell me a little about the journalism education:
    a. What types of classes are there? (content)
    b. How are internship periods organised?
    c. What type of media can you specialise in?
    d. In what ways is the Internet / social media used as journalistic tools?

24. Why do you want to be a journalist?

25. How do you see your future as a journalist in Cuba?
    a. What are the advantages of working as a journalist?
    b. What are the disadvantages or challenges?
    c. Have there been changes in recent years that influence your opinion?
    d. What types of media do you use yourself?

26. What type of media outlet do you want to work in? Why?
    a. Many intellectuals at the faculty are very critical of the Cuban media, what do you think?

27. From a student's point of view, what do you think characterises the state media?
    a. Would you consider working there?

28. Are there other types of media outlets? (opposition)
    a. What characterises them?
    b. Would you consider working there?

29. What do you consider to be the most important roles / responsibilities of the media (towards the public)?
    a. Can this function be practiced in the media where you have had internship periods?
    b. What responsibility do journalists have towards their public?

30. If you are going to write about these topics, how do you do it?
    a. A political story
    b. A report on social problems
    c. (What can you write? Who can you talk to? What considerations are important? And why do you consider that?)

31. What is your opinion on these concepts?
    a. Being objective / subjective?
    b. Being committed / impartial?
    c. Autonomy?

32. In what ways are the internet / social media affecting journalism today? (positive negative)
    a. How is the internet used in the study of journalism?
    b. Do digital media challenge traditional media?

C. Informed consent (Spanish/English)

Para participantes en el Proyecto: Periodismo en Cuba Sobre el proyecto:

Dentro un contexto de mayor acceso a internet en Cuba, los medios digitales han aumentado significativamente y representan un desafío para las agendas de los medios tradicionales. El objetivo de este proyecto es diagnosticar cómo los periodistas y estudiantes de periodismo cubanos es enfrentarán a estos cambios. Al mismo tiempo, se pretende examinar la percepción de la función periodística entre los periodistas de la prensa pública en un momento de cambio.

Este proyecto será realizado en colaboración con la Universidad de Oslo y la Universidad de Volda, teniendo como contraparte la Universidad de La Habana. Es parte de un doctorado de periodismo en las instituciones noruegas mencionadas.

Contenido del proyecto:

El proyecto tiene como objetivo entrevistar a periodistas en la prensa estatal y a estudiantes de periodismo. Las preguntas buscan las opiniones de los periodistas sobre su trabajo y la función periodística en Cuba hoy. Se podrá grabar las respuestas de los enstrevistados, si estos dan su consentimiento.

Anonimato de la información

Toda la información que revelan las entrevistas será tratada confidencialmente. La investigación tiene fines académicos y sus resultados podrían ser socializados en artículos científicos y en medios de comunicación, sin que en ningún caso interese identificar las fuentes de información o los periodistas específicos entrevistados.

Participación voluntariamente

La participación en el estudio de periodismo en Cuba es voluntaria. Usted tiene el derecho de retirar su consentimiento si lo desea.

Si tienes algunas preguntas o deseas más información, se puede contactar con:

Anne Natvig / +47 99618704 / annenatvig@gmail.com

El defensor del pueblo relacionado a investigaciones, *Servicios de información de ciencias sociales noruegas (Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste),* es informado sobre el estudio.

For participants in the Project: Journalism in Cuba About the project:

In a context of greater internet access in Cuba, digital media has increased significantly and represents a challenge for traditional media agendas. The objective of this project is to examine how Cuban journalists and journalism students face these changes. At the same time, the aim is to examine perceptions of journalistic functions among journalists in the public media in a time of change.

This project will be carried out in collaboration with the University of Oslo and Volda University College, with the University of Havana as a counterpart. The study is part of a journalism doctorate at the Norwegian institutions mentioned.

Project content:

The project aims to interview journalists in the state media and journalism students. The questions seek the opinions of journalists about their work and the journalistic role in Cuba today. The responses of the interviewees may be recorded, if they give their consent.

Information anonymity

All information revealed by the interviews will be treated confidentially. The research is for academic purposes and its results may be socialized in scientific articles and in the media, without there in any instance being any interest in identifying the sources of information or the specific journalists interviewed.

Voluntary participation

Participation in the study of journalism in Cuba is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw your consent if you wish.

If you have any questions or want more information, you can contact:

Anne Natvig

+47 99618704

annenatvig@gmail.com

The research-related ombudsman, Norwegian Social Sciences Information Services (Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste), has been notified about the project.

D. Preliminary investigation certificate

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UNIVERSIDAD DE LA HABANA

La Habana, 8 de noviembre de 2016

Por medio de la presente, CERTIFICO que la estudiante de postgrado Anne Natvig se encuentra realizando su investigación sobre el entorno actual de la prensa cubana respaldada por la Facultad de Comunicación de la Universidad de La Habana.

Para que así conste, firma la presente

VNIVERSIDAD
DE LA HABANA

[redacted]

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