Between Personal and Professional

– Swedish journalists’ perception of professional ethics in the wake of the #MeToo movement

By: Linnea Åsfjäll

Supervisor: Liudmila Voronova
Södertörn University | School of Social Sciences
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Abstract
This thesis is a qualitative study that examines the correlation between the activist movement #MeToo and the possible effects it had on journalists’ professional conduct with regard to ethics, through the theoretical framework of journalism culture and patriotic journalism. The analysis is based on six semi-structured interviews with journalists that were involved in publications during the height of the #MeToo movement in Sweden. The study indicates that the movement influenced the informants, several found it difficult to differentiate the personal and work-related impact it had on them at the time. Their intense coverage of the movement was fueled by the engaged public, as well as the activist movement itself, which could be interpreted as market orientation or interventionism – or both. Their expressed solidarity with the movement’s values and goals, as well as the fact that their own industry had a specific #MeToo-campaign, positioned the journalists between their solidarity to the society and their professional identity.

Keywords: #MeToo, activism, journalism culture, professional ethics, professional identity, Sweden
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1. Introduction

A few years ago, me and my friends were regulars at a bar located in the south parts of central Stockholm. They had, what we thought were, reasonable prices and you would regularly run into other friends and students there. The interior of the space was mostly wooden, with wall-to-wall carpets and lighting that was anything but flattering. In other words, it looked like what you could expect from a place that cheap, located in the central parts of town. The bathroom walls lacked mirrors and were normally filled with graffiti and different stickers. By the bar there were screens showing different sports events, and you could get a low-priced burger that would probably make your stomach hurt, or just an order of fries, if you were playing it safe. This bar was not the place for flirting or meeting new people, unless they were already connected to other friends, at least that is how it was for me. No one bothered us, and we bothered no one.

Then came the first few weeks of October 2017, when a sexual and body rights movement called #MeToo quickly spread through social media platforms. This led to an intensification of news media coverage regarding women’s rights, sexual harassment and abuse in the U.S. (where the movement has its roots), as well as in Sweden and other countries. More simply put; the movement had a worldwide impact, it heightened the awareness of problems around equality and exposed patriarchal structures in society – something that most endure. I remember how it was almost impossible to keep a conversation without ending up in a discussion about the #MeToo movement at that time. Everyone I talked to knew someone who had experienced sexual harassment or violence, or they had firsthand experience themselves. Both positive and negative thoughts revolving the movement were frequently aired, as well as concern regarding how the movement would eventually play out – would there be a possible backlash and was the focus mainly on individual cases or societal structure? Did it focus on “ordinary people” as much as on powerful people in entertainment and other industries? Is it victims’ responsibility to raise this issue by exposing their personal experiences of sexual violence, that some of them had never told anyone about before? Will it shine a light on extraordinary circumstances or a structural abuse of power? Can they all fit within the same category, the same movement? Who is #MeToo for?

About a month after the movement had appeared through social media, I was out one night at the regular place. As I was drying my hands, I noticed something new on a door in the women’s bathroom. There was a new sticker with the text “outa din förövare”; in translation; “out your perpetrator” or “expose your perpetrator”. This was a call to action. In relation to the #MeToo movement, it was an encouragement to reveal the names of those who had wronged you, possibly growing from those who lost faith in the judicial system’s ability to solve issues around sexual violence. But this could also be seen as

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an expression of support for those who already had come forward and revealed names of their perpetrators in the initial hours of #MeToo.

In an article by Starkey et. al., that analyses media frames of four different silence’s breakers, i.e. women who publicly revealed their accusations; the authors’ state that “…although these four women were initially silenced, their stories were publicized through social media, and audience interest forced the media and ultimately the authorities, to pay attention and take action”.2 This raises questions around social media’s role in the #MeToo movement, as well as mass media’s. How was it picked up by, in comparison, “traditional media”? In what way was it portrayed and what role did journalists themselves demonstrate? According to previous research, most Swedish journalists share the same idea of what journalism should be, which could certainly be described as an idealistic view.3 Autonomous, interdependent and impartial; journalism should provide information and facts to citizens so they can partake in public debate and decision-making.4 The role of a professional journalist is that of a democratic watchdog, a notion that has steadily increased among Swedish journalists since the late 1980’s.5 In other words; the journalistic role is seen as to promote and maintain democracy. Scrutiny of people in power could be regarded as one of the cornerstones in doing so, wherein the ethical dilemma lies when discussing sensitive issues like #MeToo. During the movement, media exposed accusations regarding people who were public figures, but did they all have societal responsibility in the public sense or was writing about them rather gossip fueled by market-oriented newspapers?

The #MeToo movement was driven by activists, through social media platforms, worldwide. Activism is about the power, the ability to act and make or change the society you live in.6 Contemporary activism could definitely be said to be less violent than its predecessors such as the American, French, Russian and Cuban revolutions.7 These revolutions did radically change society, both locally and beyond their national borders, but transnational movements are taking greater place in society today – movements like #MeToo.8 For activists, media can be used as both a medium to communicate, propagate and interact, as well as an arena to discuss and contest meanings of movements, struggles and social responsibilities.9 Even though face-to-face contact is still of value, media is an important agent to activist movements in several ways – thus, an agent well worth researching, to determine media’s role in relation to activism.

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3 Jöran Hök “Swedish journalism – a long struggle for autonomy” in Journalism in Russia, Poland and Sweden, Gunnar Nygren et. al., Södertörn University, 2012: p. 53.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid: p. 64.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
Subjects surrounding sexual harassment and violence are getting less stigmatized through movements like #MeToo. How we talk and think around different topics are influenced by others, one of them being the news media. The discussions that followed the movement regarding what #MeToo meant, also contested whether Swedish journalists had been at fault in their reporting. Some parts of the Swedish news media coverage in relation to #MeToo have been blamed for breaking good journalistic practice; their coverage was considered to be ethically problematic. These publications did not focus on societal structures but was person-oriented and based on accusations, not judicial convictions. The reporting had caused the mediated individuals harm, and though they were to be considered public figures, the majority of them were not regarded to have an extensive societal responsibility, like one could expect from a politician or the like.\textsuperscript{10} In addition to this, two of the accused males filed defamation suits against their “silence breaker” and won – two accusers were convicted of gross slander in December 2019 and March 2020.\textsuperscript{11} At the time this thesis was written, another accused male was in the process of prosecuting a newspaper for defamation as well, and he planned to further try all the media outlets that had been blamed regarding their coverage of him.\textsuperscript{12} Besides these defamation lawsuits, one male theater manager committed suicide shortly after being extensively accused for misconduct in several newspapers. Whether this was in connection to the media coverage about him will not be further discussed here, but one study indicates that the media narrative of the man in shifted from accused perpetrator to acclaimed culture worker once he passed.\textsuperscript{13}

The movement could definitely be said to have created some commotion in Swedish society, perhaps in some ways that activists could not even think of in the initial hours, and it continues to do so. In a culture where the idealism is as high as it is amongst Swedish journalists, how did this come about?\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{10} Pollack, 2019: p. 189.
\textsuperscript{13} Handler & Jonsson, 2018.
\textsuperscript{14} Hök, 2012: p. 53
1.1 Research Aim and Question(s)

This thesis joins the efforts of other scholars that have attempted to understand the media’s role in the #MeToo movement with a focus on the producing end, i.e. journalists. Traditionally, most of Swedish mass media research has focused on content and perception, whereas working conditions and work processes for journalists have caught limited attention.15 This is true of the research of the #MeToo movement as well, at least so far. The majority of studies by Swedish scholars, within the field of media and communication studies, are focused on content analysis.16 Internationally, content is also a common focus in the research of news media coverage on rape and sexual violence outside of the #MeToo context, where narratives and frames have been researched, as well as “rape myths” and the perception of them.17 There are also Swedish studies of perception and trust in the media in relation to #MeToo, but none about the production of news media regarding the movement, or sexual violence, according to my findings. However, one study regarding Indian journalists analyzed the impact #MeToo had on their work environment, but not if it more distinctively affected their professional work or identity.18

Sexual harassment and violence are serious crimes that should be covered by news media, but when is it, for example, justified to reveal the identity of the parties involved and how is that ethically motivated? Is this the result of investigative reporting, scrutiny of people in power or market orientation? Or perhaps something else?

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15 Ibid: p. 60.
In order to get a wider understanding about the media’s role in the #MeToo movement, this study attempts to uncover journalists’ working conditions and processes during the #MeToo movement. The overarching research question is:

**RQ**: As perceived by themselves, how did the #MeToo movement influence Swedish journalists’ professional ethics?

Which is further broken down to two more specific questions:

– In regard to professional ethics, how did female journalists deal with being a part of the media industry-specific campaign #deadline, in relation to reporting about the movement?
– How did journalists cope with external and internal pressure; what did they perceive as the driving force in media’s intense coverage of the movement (at their workplace) and how did it affect their professional ethics?
2. From “Me Too” to #MeToo and Time’s Up

Me Too was launched in 2006. On the movement’s website, American activist Tarana Burke explains that the movement “started in the deepest, darkest place in my soul” – what follows is the personal story of how it came to be.¹⁹

Burke used to be a youth worker, working mainly with children of color, where she became no stranger to taking part of personal and sensitive stories.²⁰ During an all-girl bonding session at a youth camp, where most of the young girls shared intimate stories about their lives, Burke was there to listen as well as comfort when needed.²¹ Afterwards the young girls were encouraged to reach out to the camp counselors if they needed to talk more (or needed anything else), which made one girl reach out to Burke the following day.²² The girl tried to tell Burke about her experiences of sexual violence, but instead of being able to listen to her, Burke sent her to another female counselor that she thought could help her better.²³ The inability to comfort and listen came from Burke’s own experience, according to herself, she had not yet found the courage that the girl had.²⁴ That Burke couldn’t even bring herself “to whisper me too”, realizing that these words would be enough to make someone feel less alone in their experiences.²⁵

The “Me Too” platform that Tarana Burke created is for survivors of sexual violence, but since the phrase was turned into a social media hashtag, it has been used in a wider context.²⁶ The Me Too movement then grew from face-to-face contact of survivors supporting each other, to be a movement that took up considerable space in the media arena. The hashtag #MeToo, in this context, was first launched on the social media platform Twitter in October 2017. American actress Alyssa Milano used it in a post and encouraged others to reply to her post with “me too”, if they also had been victims of sexual harassment.²⁷ This came shortly after it had been revealed, in The New York Times, that movie producer Harvey Weinstein was accused by multiple women for having sexually harassed them.²⁸ In a day #MeToo had over 55,000 replies and it was the number one trending hashtag on Twitter.²⁹ After one and a half month, it had spread worldwide to 85 countries and it was posted 85 million times on another social media platform, Facebook, alone.³⁰

¹⁹ “The Inception”, me too.
²⁰ Ibid.
²¹ Ibid.
²² Ibid.
²³ Ibid.
²⁴ Ibid.
²⁵ Ibid.
²⁶ Jämställdhetsmyndigheten.
²⁷ Nadja Sayej, “Alyssa Milano on the #MeToo movement: ‘We’re not going to stand for it any more’”, 1 December 2017, The Guardian.
²⁹ Savej, 2017.
³⁰ Ibid.
Connected to the entertainment industry from the start, in the beginning of the following year, over 300 American women working in entertainment initiated a new movement against sexual harassment within the workplace called Time’s Up.\textsuperscript{31} They revealed this by signing an open letter that was published in \textit{The New York Times} on January 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2018.\textsuperscript{32}

\subsection*{2.1 #MeToo Sweden}

Sweden was one of the 85 countries whose population were early responders to the #MeToo movement. What made the Swedish #MeToo movement specifically different in relation to other countries, was the high number of industry-specific campaigns that were created during it.\textsuperscript{33} On International Women’s Day, March 8\textsuperscript{th} 2018, the minister for gender equality in Sweden met with a coordination committee that represented 65 different #MeToo initiatives.\textsuperscript{34} The campaigns represented women from different industries and occupations, such as actors, singers, journalists, school teachers, constructions workers, medical doctors and police officers – to name a few.\textsuperscript{35} During the meeting they presented a list of common demands regarding actions to decrease sexual harassment and abuse.\textsuperscript{36} The different initiatives focused on the issues that are tied to the work environment, similarly to the American initiative Time’s Up. Not too long after the #MeToo movement’s most intense period, in May 2018, a new law was passed in Sweden; the law of sexual consent.\textsuperscript{37} This meant that the boundary for what makes an act criminal was shifted; if the participation in a sexual activity is non-voluntary, even if a perpetrator has not used physical violence or explicity threatened the victim, there is a possibility for conviction.\textsuperscript{38} This had been in the works for quite some time before #MeToo, therefore passing of the law is not interpreted as in direct connection to the movement. It does however add to understanding the specifics of the Swedish context and the activist movement within it.

The #MeToo movement in Sweden was dominated by broad and collective actions, which aimed to shed light on societal structure rather than on individual cases.\textsuperscript{39} However, as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, there was an intensive person-oriented news media coverage where accusations functioned as grounds openly naming perpetrators.\textsuperscript{40} This resulted in 38 cases of complaints to the Swedish Media Ombudsman (MO), who handles complaints from the public, if they feel that they have

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{31} “The 300+ Original TIME’S Up Signatories”, Time’s Up.
\bibitem{33} Pollack, 2019: p. 186.
\bibitem{34} Ibid: p. 187.
\bibitem{35} Ibid.
\bibitem{36} Ibid.
\bibitem{37} Sveriges Riksdag
\bibitem{38} Ibid.
\bibitem{39} Pollack, 2019: p. 189.
\bibitem{40} Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
been treated unfairly by the news media.\textsuperscript{41} If the MO finds that a publication could be subject to criticism, they\textsuperscript{42} will then submit the case to the Media Council, who in turn will review and then make a decision if the publication is to be freed or blamed for breaking good journalistic practice. Of the 38 complaints that were received by the MO, nine were written off and 29 were submitted to the Media Council, where 24 publications were convicted of breaking good journalistic practice, five were cleared.\textsuperscript{43} During an interview with Ola Sigvardsson, the MO, he estimated that they receive around 600 complaints per year, and out of those around 35 or 40 are consequently blamed by the Media Council. This is one of the details specific to the #MeToo media context; the number of convictions in relation to complaints were much higher. It is also important to note that the individual filing a complaint has to be personally affected by the content, there is no possibility to file a complaint as a group.\textsuperscript{44} For example, a hypothetical scenario in relation to the movement could have been that a male person would have liked to file a complaint, because there was something in a publication that generalized men’s behavior in a way that he disliked. This is not possible since it is not about him specifically as a person, but males as a group. Consequently, this means that in the 24 cases where good journalistic practice was broken, someone was negatively affected by the content. Media scholar Esther Pollack highlights that only three of these cases regarded media coverage of accusations against politicians, noting that the majority of them involved journalists or media celebrities.\textsuperscript{45} The coverage of the latter two categories was criticized because it could not be regarded as public interest and the sources were not reliable enough to expose these kinds of accusations. In the interview I conducted with Ola Sigvardsson, he mentioned two other cases where the journalistic work had been more investigative and ongoing for a longer time, noting that those publications had not been criticized at all.\textsuperscript{46} The problem might then not be the naming of accused perpetrators by the established news media in itself, but how the work behind the publications was made and how thoroughly details were checked before leaving the newsroom. However, Sigvardsson also highlighted that there is a vast difference between public interest and what the public is interested in, which could just as well be in the likes of gossip.

\textsuperscript{41} Ola Sigvardsson, Swedish Media Ombudsman. Interview 16-04-2020.
\textsuperscript{42} They used here as a non-binary pronoun.
\textsuperscript{43} Sigvardsson. E-mail. 21-04-2020.
\textsuperscript{44} “About the Media Ombudsman”, Medieombudsmannen.
\textsuperscript{45} Pollack, 2019: p. 189.
\textsuperscript{46} Sigvardsson. Interview 16-04-2020.
3. Previous Research & Theoretical Framework

Media scholars Chindu Sreedharan et. al. conducted a study about Indian journalists’ perception of sexual violence and if the work environment changed after #MeTooIndia.\(^{47}\) Their work entails 257 semi-structured interviews with journalists working across India, and their findings show that most journalists felt that the movement was a good thing but did not think it influenced their work environment or news work in any meaningful manner.\(^{48}\) This study is the only one I found about journalists perception of the #MeToo movement at the moment this thesis was written. However, #MeTooIndia took place almost a year after the movement’s peak in Sweden and other “western” countries.\(^{49}\) Their study furthermore differentiates from this thesis in the sense that their main focus was on the movements impact on the journalism industry and its work environment, rather than if the journalists themselves were affected by the movement when reporting about it. Additionally, this thesis is a qualitative study, that implements a different theoretical framework.

3.1 Rape and Sexual Violence in News Media: Content and Perception

Philosopher Linda Martin Alcoff states that there is a heightened visibility of rape and sexual violence in contemporary society, much thanks to the numerous survivors that have come forward with their stories and forced the issue into the public domain, in correspondence with the #MeToo movement.\(^{50}\) However, she recognizes that there is still a problem with the treatment of accusers, whereas they are called “hysterical liars”, blamed for being violated, or bullied into silence as well as the idea that victims exaggerate their suffering (or make up the whole thing altogether), in order for them to get public attention.\(^{51}\) These narratives are repeated in news about rape and sexual violence. Some of the prevalent narratives used describe victims as either deserving or innocent, “…virgins attacked by monsters, or promiscuous women who brought the rape upon themselves and could therefore be blamed”.\(^{52}\) Alcoff works out of an American context, but similar narratives were found in a Swedish context as well. Ethnology scholar Gabriella Nilsson has studied narratives of rape in Swedish newspapers between 1990 and 2015, before the #MeToo movement.\(^{53}\) Nilsson divided articles according to different prominent genres; “the celebrity rape”, “the sex slavery rape” and the “lonely pervert rape”, these genres produced narratives that

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\(^{47}\) Sreedharan et. al. 2020.

\(^{48}\) Ibid.

\(^{49}\) Ibid.


\(^{51}\) Ibid: p. 9.

\(^{52}\) Ibid.

undermined patriarchal structures in society by creating an image of a rapist equal to a monster.\textsuperscript{54} These types of narratives create a distance between a rapist and “ordinary men”, making the assumption that “good guys” are not believable as perpetrators; but they are victims too. Another study has shown similar results around “the celebrity rape” genre. Media scholars Maria João Silveirinha, et. al. analyzed Portuguese news coverage regarding the rape allegations made against football player Cristiano Ronaldo in 2018, after the #MeToo movement, and found that the majority of news items followed the same narrative and distanced the celebrity “good guy” from what would be expected of a sexual violator.\textsuperscript{55}

On what one could perhaps note as the other side of the narrative, is the framing of the “silence breaker”, the accuser. Media scholars Starkey, et. al. analyzed news coverage about #MeToo in four different national contexts; the United States, Japan, Australia and India; where they focused especially on media coverage of women who were associated with the movement in each country.\textsuperscript{56} Their research revolved around four prominent media frames: “brave silence breaker”, “stoic victim of an unjust system”, “recovered” or “reluctant hero”, and “hysterical slut”.\textsuperscript{57} The brave silence breaker frame’s focal point was on the woman’s courage coming forward; the stoic victim of an unjust system frame elaborated on the risk that the victims faced in their search for justice; the reluctant or recovered hero frame shed light on the different forms of heroism, one hesitant that happened to be put on the forefront of a global movement and the other an attacked victim that gets redemption and emerges as a hero.\textsuperscript{58} Whereas the hysterical slut frame was the most negative, the credibility of the victim was questioned in similar ways as Alcoff also have found.\textsuperscript{59} Furthermore, Starkey et. al. cross-cultural research found that #MeToo crossed national and cultural boundaries through social media, and in this way created a new collective identity.\textsuperscript{60} The tendency to shame or silence victims who speak out about sexual violence or harassment was temporarily disrupted; “…although these four women were initially silenced, their stories were publicized through social media, and audience interest forced the media, and ultimately the authorities, to pay attention and take action”.\textsuperscript{61} Continuously their research confirms that the #MeToo movement had a vast impact on traditional media. However, Starkey et. al. note as well that although the evolution of news media coverage revolving these issues is positive, it did come at a cost to the women who were pillars for the movement where they had to leave their work positions.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{56} Starkey et. al. 2019.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid: p. 443.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid; Alcoff, 2018.
\textsuperscript{60} Starkey et. al. 2019: p. 454.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
Other media scholars have analyzed content in the cases of “western” reporting about sexual violence in the music industry post #MeToo and how the movement grew within China through connective actions.63 Media and communication research at Swedish universities have produced numerous, both bachelor and master level, theses about the #MeToo movement. Several of them are content analyses on the person-oriented coverage of men that were accused of sexual harassment and rape.64 The others also circle around the same theme, questioning the trust in Swedish news media after #MeToo and analyzing how one of the accused perpetrators beneficially used rhetoric methods to excuse their behavior, as well as how the newspaper they worked at handled the accusations publicly.65 The majority of the theses are content analyses that confirm the notion that Swedish news media was affected by the #MeToo movement, this thesis will add to the knowledge of media’s role in it.

Before the movement, as mentioned above, studies revolving news media coverage of sexual violence show that “rape myths” were commonly used by journalists.66 Rape myths are “generalized and false beliefs about sexual assault that trivialize a sexual assault or suggest that a sexual assault did not occur”, as in the research mentioned above about different “rape genres” and how celebrities or “good guys” are not believable as perpetrators.67 However, psychology scholars Franiuk et. al. note that journalists unlikely carried on rape myths for malicious reasons; the strength of these myths lies in their function to “protect us from uncomfortable truths” regarding victims as well as perpetrators of sexual violence.68 In this way people are able to protect themselves from becoming both a victim and perpetrator; women believe they are able to control whether they become victims of sexual violence “by doing the normative ‘right’ and ‘good’ things”, whereas men are able to distance themselves from “bad men”.69 Their research found that exposure of rape myths has an effect on the reader, especially if the mediated case was not tried judicially. The male participants in their study were more likely to express supportive

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66 O’hara, 2012; Nilsson, 2019; Franiuk et. al., 2008.

67 Franiuk et. al., 2008: p. 790.


attitudes toward rape in relation to the female participants, after being exposed to headlines containing rape myths.\textsuperscript{70} This confirms that news media is one of the agents in shaping public opinion about sexual violence and can consequently affect attitudes, policies, and legal systems – therefore, this is an important field to continuously research.

3.2 Journalism Culture and Activism

Media scholar Thomas Hanitzsch suggests a conceptualization of journalism culture that consists of three essential components; institutional roles, epistemologies and ethical ideologies.\textsuperscript{71} These three components are further divided into seven dimensions; interventionism, power distance, market orientation, objectivism, empiricism, relativism and idealism.\textsuperscript{72}

When speaking of institutional roles, the level of interventionism can be used to illustrate which journalists pursue a particular mission and endorse certain values.\textsuperscript{73} The interventionist journalist is socially committed and motivated whereas the other is acting detached, and is dedicated to objectivity and independence.\textsuperscript{74} The latter is deeply rooted within the history of “western” journalism, and predominantly U.S. journalism, but it is also definitely coherent with research around Swedish journalism culture.\textsuperscript{75} An autonomous, interdependent and impartial press is within the Swedish ideal; journalists mainly endorse the ideology of professionalism and see themselves as information disseminators.\textsuperscript{76} Whereas the interventionist journalist would be more likely to see themselves as a participant in society, where they would give voice to those deemed less fortunate, a political party they agree with or other groups, like activists, whose interests are in the balance. This kind of journalist would get involved and promote change, in difference to the neutral and impartial observer as its opposite. The state of interventionism is probably the most relevant dimension in regard to this thesis research questions. The two other dimensions of institutional roles... firstly power distance refers to whereas journalists see their role as being watchdogs, where they scrutinize those in power, i.e. there is high power distance, or if they are rather loyal to those in power, i.e. low power distance.\textsuperscript{77} Market orientation reflects what guides news productions; a journalism culture that has high market orientation adjust their goals to the logic of the market whereas in a culture where the market orientation is low, news are mainly produced in line with the public

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid: p. 797.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid: p. 372.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75} Hanitzsch, 2007: p 372; Hök, 2012: p. 53.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} Hanitzsch, 2007: p. 373–374.
interest.\textsuperscript{78} Hanitzsch suggests this means that “the media can address the people in two seemingly antagonistic ways, in their role as citizens or consumers”.\textsuperscript{79}

The second component, \textit{epistemologies}, builds on the study of knowledge and justification of belief. When studying journalism, Hanitzsch means epistemology is essential since the authenticity of journalism is closely connected to claims of knowledge and truth.\textsuperscript{80} How journalism justifies truth claims and knowledge can be divided into the two dimensions of \textit{objectivism} and \textit{empiricism}. The first, is rather philosophical in nature and if there is a high level of objectivism, the journalist claims that there is an objective and ultimate truth that should be mirrored.\textsuperscript{81} But a more common definition; objectivism is to separate facts from values whereas subjectivism refers to the lack of an absolute truth and that “news are just a representation of the world, and all representations are inevitably selective and require interpretation”.\textsuperscript{82} However, both an objective and subjective journalist would agree that truth must be pursued, though the latter would think that truth is obtained from the combination of, or the struggle between, and endless amount of subjective interpretations.\textsuperscript{83} The second dimension, \textit{empiricism}, refers to how a journalist justifies truth claims, either \textit{empirically} – based on evidence and the like – or \textit{analytically}, a priori knowledge.\textsuperscript{84} Hanitzsch notes that the two extremes are uncommon practices and that most journalism are in the middle of the two. Additionally, journalists who inhibit a high level of objectivity can still engage in commentary journalism since “there are values that can be objectified in the sense that they are almost universally true (peace, human dignity, etc.)”, whereas they can be used as “facts”.\textsuperscript{85}

The third component, \textit{ethical ideologies}, refers to the contextual dimension of journalism culture since moral values are created within and specific to the cultural context which they are set in.\textsuperscript{86} Previous research has found that Swedish “…journalistic culture can be described as a strong belief system”; in other words, it could be said that most Swedish journalists share the same idea of what journalism should be.\textsuperscript{87} As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the shared notion is that journalism should promote and maintain democracy.\textsuperscript{88} With regard to \textit{ethical ideologies}, Swedish journalistic Codes of Ethics state that “ethics does not consist primarily of the application of a formal set of rules but in the maintenance of a responsible attitude in the exercise of journalistic duties”; an attitude that is deeply

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid: p. 374.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid: p. 375.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid: p. 376.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid: p. 377.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid: p. 378.
\textsuperscript{87} Hök, 2012: p. 53.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.
rooted within the Swedish journalistic ideal and culture. Swedish news media is self-regulated and not based on legislation. However, the news media works within the legal framework of the Freedom of the Press Act and the constitutional right of freedom of speech, self-regulation therefore protects journalists from being restricted in their work. This in order to be able to serve as scrutinizers of public affairs, as to provide the public with the information necessary to make informed choices – an ideal position for journalists’ serving and promoting democracy.

This thesis positions itself amongst other media scholars that have researched the relation between professionalism and activism, such as Halyna Budivska and Dariya Orlova. Although working out of a different context, their research on the effect of the Euromaidan protests on Ukrainian journalists worked as inspiration for this thesis and adds to future comparative research. Their study found that interventionism was a prominent characteristic of the journalism culture that followed the Euromaidan protests in Ukraine. Similar to their research, the concepts of journalism culture and professionalism, with a focus on journalism ethics, as presented by Hanitzsch, have been used to analyze this thesis material. In addition to this, I found parallels between patriotic journalism theory and journalism culture, although activist movements cannot be equated to conflicts such as warfare, the #MeToo movement could be interpreted as a crisis. Furthermore, Avshalom Ginosar’s theoretical framework around patriotic journalism is built around Daniel C. Hallin & Paolo Mancini’s theory about comparing media systems and Hanitzsch’s of journalism culture. Ginosar states that in order to understand how journalists act, including possible patriotic behavior, one should cross-examine journalistic ideology with the specific context, or rather social environment, where journalists act. These two compositions might influence one another and together impact the journalists’ professional conduct. The social or cultural environment is made up by national considerations as well as type of media and journalistic system, and in addition to understanding patriotic journalism, a third factor would be the specific circumstance – routine or crisis? The journalistic ideology is made up by journalistic roles and values, which function in relation to each other, and the added third factor here are identities. National aspects and media systems are seen as constant variables, whereas circumstance is dynamic. The #MeToo movement was an unfamiliar circumstance, especially in a country that seldom has experienced crises in modern time. Furthermore, Ginosar suggests

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90 Ibid.
94 Ibid: p. 298.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
that the framework can be used as an analytical tool to understand journalists’ behavior in general as well, but perhaps patriotic behavior in particular.\textsuperscript{97}

3.3 Professional Ethics

Journalism consists of a great deal of discovering and publishing information that someone would rather keep secret, which makes professional ethics a rather complex subject.\textsuperscript{98} To be able to scrutinize and produce information that some or many would rather keep secret, is central to journalism; “investigative journalism … is exactly what a responsible press is supposed to do in a democracy in order to serve the public interest”.\textsuperscript{99} People that have a societal responsibility should be able to withstand more extensive investigations, in relation to their position and when it comes to personal matters as well, if these are morally or lawfully questionable – representatives of society should be held accountable for their actions. The journalists’ job is to inform the public on these matters, that are of public interest, so that the public can make informed choices and in the long run uphold democracy. However, public interest and what is interesting for the public are, or can be understood as, two different things. Public interest is aligned with serving the public, whereas what is interesting for the public might be anything that people are interested or curious about, like celebrity gossip.\textsuperscript{100} Several of the complaints that Swedish news media received on their #MeToo-related content, were blamed in part because it did not serve the public interest to reveal names of accused perpetrators, simply because they were public figures.\textsuperscript{101} Moreover, in some cases, the investigative work had failed to produce a believable product – the truth claims could not be justified, according to the Media Council. This displays a correlation between empiricism and objectivism.

Susanne Wigorts Yngvesson’s dissertation \textit{The Moral Journalist} carries out an analysis of professional ethics through theories of consequential neutrality and social responsibility.\textsuperscript{102} She continued research in \textit{Struck by Journalism}, where she discussed ethics in relation to the purpose of journalism, the possible risks with an exclusively good interpretation of high trust in news media and journalists, the concept of truth and whether tabloids are to be considered good or bad journalism.\textsuperscript{103} While high trust in news media is widely considered as a good thing, Wigorts Yngvesson indicates that it could mean that the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{97} Ibid: p. 299.
\item \textsuperscript{99} Ibid: p. 5.
\item \textsuperscript{100} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{101} Mediaombudsmannen.
\item \textsuperscript{103} Susanne Wigorts Yngvesson, \textit{Struck by Journalism – Morals and values behind the headlines} [original: \textit{Drabbad av Journalistik – Moral och värderingar bakom rubrikerna}], Juridisk reportagebyrå, 2008. Author’s own translation.
\end{itemize}
news media is mainly reporting about what the public wants to hear, framed in a way they like. She suggests that this kind of journalism only repeats an already agreed-upon view of our world and society; “...journalism that is not acting rowdy and unsettling, ...preserves the general calmness, and confirms who is considered the villain, who is weak and who is the victim”.

In Sweden, four out of ten have a general trust in news, with TV and online news being the most used, and the trust in news sources people regularly turn to are 48%. Of the news sources, the tabloid newspapers’ online news sites were the most used, followed by the public broadcaster’s news site. The two main tabloid newspapers were amongst them who received several complaints through the Swedish Media Council regarding their #MeToo related coverage.

As mentioned above in relation to journalism culture, Swedish news media is self-regulated and not based on legislation. The self-disciplinary system is voluntary, leaving the media lawfully unrestricted to act under the Freedom of the Press act and a constitutional right of freedom of speech, the notion is that; “it is the journalistic community itself that should decide on what to write and how”.

In an interview conducted by media scholar Liudmila Voronova in 2012, Ola Sigvardsson, the MO, states that; “according to the law, you can publish almost anything”. The self-regulatory system is financed by four press organizations and four broadcasting companies: The Swedish Media Publisher’s Association, The Magazine Publishers’ Association, The Swedish Union of Journalists, The National Press Club, Swedish Radio (SR), Swedish Television (SVT), Swedish Educational Broadcasting company (UR) and TV4. In addition to financial support, it is the four organizations and four broadcasting companies’ responsibility to outline the professional codes of ethics for press, radio and television. Regarding rules on publicity in the codes of ethics, the most relevant to mention for this study are “provide accurate news”, “respect individual integrity” and “be careful with naming”. If a publication is blamed for breaking good journalistic practice – breaking the ethical code – the media outlet must publish what they did wrong, but there is no additional judicial consequences. However, in an interview that I conducted for this study, Sigvardsson noted that to publish what the media outlet did wrong still gets a great impact through Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå (TT), which is the largest news agency in Scandinavia.

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105 Ibid. [Original: “En journalistik som inte är bråkig och oroar utan som bevarar det allmänna lugnet och bekräftar vem som är skurk, vem som är svag och vem som är drabbad.” Author’s own translation.]
107 Ibid.
108 Medieombudsmannen.
110 Ibid.
111 “How self-regulation works”, Medieombudsmannen.
to this, which has been mentioned earlier in this thesis, an accused male has of the time this is written, filed a defamation lawsuit against a newspaper in the wake of #MeToo.
4. Methodology

This is a qualitative study, therefore the material for analysis has been retrieved through ethnographic interviews, in order to gain knowledge about the journalists’ own experience of working during the height of the #MeToo movement.

4.1 Semi-structured, Open-Ended Interviews

The empirical material was retrieved through six semi-structured, open-ended interviews with journalists that worked for print media and had produced at least one article in relation to the #MeToo movement. All the interviews were recorded and then transcribed in the process for analysis, and for the sake of anonymity all the informants have been given pseudonyms. The majority of interviews were conducted by phone except for one, their duration was 30–60 minutes (see table below). The difference in duration is solely based on how much and what the journalist wanted to and could reveal, as well as how much they remembered, since the most intense period of the #MeToo movement was approximately between October – December 2017. Since quite some time has passed, the initial idea for the methodology of this study was to combine semi-structured and reconstruction interviews. To be able to ask questions about specific work and its “biography” might have helped them to recall their process and thoughts around it. However, this method was not carried out in its entirety due to several interview refusals, it did though inspire the sampling process.

Reconstruction interviews are a method to study the journalistic work process in a systematic way, where journalists themselves describe their production process and preferably reflects upon aspects that cannot be found or observed in the finished product, (neither in simply observing them in their work). This method makes it easier to uncover journalists’ work logic behind their news items, what priorities they make, considerations, judgments, norms, what resources they have as well as constraints. The method of reconstruction interviews follows four basic steps: sampling of producers, sampling of their product, carrying out the reconstruction interviews and analyzing the collected data. As mentioned above, the method was not successfully carried out, but it was used during the sampling process. Since the focus of this thesis is regarding a certain topic, sampling of the product was conducted first, i.e. articles about the #MeToo movement, and then its producers. Written articles were chosen because they had been

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116 Ibid.
117 Ibid.
118 Reich & Barnoy, 2016: p. 481.
criticized the most, some of them blamed by the Media Council. However, given the circumstances of the current covid-19 pandemic and perhaps also because of the sensitivity of the topic; out of the 23 journalists that I contacted for interviews, 17 declined to participate in the study. Therefore, the strategy was changed to contact journalists that had been involved in producing content about #MeToo in general, which had been published in a newspaper (and/or on the newspapers website). Because of this, semi-structured interviews should be considered as the only method used for this thesis. Although reconstruction interviews might have added another analytical layer to the production process of specific articles, semi-structured interviews were still more suitable to answer this thesis’ research questions. A less structured interview deemed more beneficial in order to get closer to the journalists’ own perception of how they conducted their work and in what way they themselves experienced that the movement affected them, instead of my possible presupposed assumptions based on the relation to their sampled product.\textsuperscript{119} The interviews followed a loose structure based on an interview guide to make sure that certain topics were discussed during the interview.\textsuperscript{120}

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4.2 Interview Refusals

Inspired by Ethnology scholar Tuija Koivunen, who conducted a study where she then analyzed gender and power relations from interview refusals as starting point for her study, the participation declines themselves have been analyzed.\textsuperscript{121}

For the duration of approximately three weeks I contacted 23 journalists, where seven of them declined after being reminded about the initial contact and ten where there was no reply at all, or where they eventually stopped replying altogether. Since this is a qualitative study on advanced student level, as many as 23 interviewees would have been too vast of a sample for the scope of this thesis,

\textsuperscript{120} See Interview Guide in Appendix.
however, the numerous declines are analytically relevant.\textsuperscript{122} Given that the initial method was reconstruction interviews and the theme for this thesis is ethics, I firstly contacted journalists who had written person-oriented articles during the #MeToo movement, where they openly named accused perpetrators. The initial contact was through e-mail where I had formulated a short description of my thesis and what I was interested in researching, especially why it was relevant for me to reach out to them. One of the first journalists I contacted declined due to the reason of not having that much to contribute with, which I questioned since I had researched this journalist’s work and described further why this journalist was important for my study, stating also that the interview would not have to revolve around the article at all if they did not want to. Even so, the last reply was to let me know that they understood that was why I was interested in interviewing them, but they declined regardless, which I interpret as an unwillingness to speak about this issue which could be due to its sensitivity. The majority of the others that declined, did so due to the special circumstances around the current pandemic (covid-19). However, these were also either investigative reporters or had written person-oriented articles during the #MeToo movement. Of the journalists’ that participated, about half wanted me to send questions beforehand so they could prepare. Perhaps this is due to their own work praxis, but it could also be interpreted as acting cautious around the theme, in reference to the many complaints and public debate that followed around the media coverage of the movement. Another one, where they stopped replying, asked why they were supposed to be anonymous since it is usually the other way around. This rather indicates the unfamiliarity of ethnographic interviews as method, but it might also point to cautiousness and expectations of being scrutinized, again due to the aftermath of #MeToo as well as common work praxis.

4.3 Methodological Problems and Self-reflection

One of the first contacts, Karl, explicitly expressed that the theme for this thesis was “exciting” when accepting, that he happily talked about it and “this is a topic that I have had a lot of time to think about”. He is also the one who voiced the most concerns surrounding the professional conduct of journalists during #MeToo, himself included. During the interview with Karl, the role as student was a difficult position to keep, in so forth that his statements were at times rather confessions of professional misconduct than reflections.\textsuperscript{123} It was noticeable that he had given the work environment during the movement some thought and rather expressed his opinions as if to an audience, whereas he explicitly stated that he did not have anything to conceal.\textsuperscript{124} Furthermore, this interview was the only one conducted face-to-face, we met in a café, where we also at one point was interrupted by an acquaintance to him who were interested in

\textsuperscript{122} Koivunen, 2010.
\textsuperscript{123} Hoffman, 2007: p. 324.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid; Bryman 2012: p. 468–500.
our topic of discussion. This was by the end of the interview and even though I did not notice the quiet bystander, it is possible that Karl did and therefore acted in this particular way. Still, we discussed the location of our interview before entering the café and it was then he proclaimed to have nothing to conceal, this could though have been a reassuring statement that it was possible for me as interviewer in the role as student to get all the information I looked for.\footnote{Hoffman, 2007: p. 324.}

The other interviews were conducted by phone, which was a new experience for me in research. During previous studies I have conducted semi-structured interviews face-to-face only, but due to the current pandemic this was the second-best option. In retrospect, it is not prominent whether this made a significant difference for the results. In comparison to previous studies I have conducted, I felt that these interviews were slightly more difficult, perhaps due to the informants’ familiarity with another, more structured form of interviews as well as my own limited experience with their work praxis. Furthermore, for the sake of transparency; I was never a part of any industry-specific campaigns, I was however included in another closed Facebook group surrounding the #MeToo movement where personal testimonies were frequently posted. This gave me a preexisting understanding regarding how it is to be exposed to these personal accounts, similar to some of the journalists that have been interviewed for this study. I consider myself a feminist and I have previous experience of gender studies, ethnography and qualitative methods. In conclusion, I was not particularly active during the #MeToo movement, except for being a part of the above-mentioned Facebook group and that I reposted the hashtag on social media platforms.
5. Results and Analysis

The majority of journalists participating in this study were part of an editorial staff on a nationwide newspaper during the peak of the #MeToo movement in Sweden, approximately between October – December 2017. Many have since then been promoted or moved on to other workplaces. Only one of them, Susanne, had not received a “traditional” journalism education. She learned the craft and professional ethics through working on a student paper during her university years and later, through different positions within news media. She remembers that even though they worked out of a small local context on the student paper, they talked about the importance of being an investigative reporter, which confirms the notion of a Swedish journalism culture that highly regards the watchdog role.126

The informants were all in some way affected by the #MeToo movement, several expressed that it was hard to differentiate between the personal and work-related impact it had on them at the time. Another prominent pattern surfaced when they spoke about their individual experiences. They did not only reflect upon those against the backdrop of what their close colleagues had lived through, but also compared their experiences to those of employees in other newsrooms as well, noting that they had all been in this together in similar ways. This could be interpreted as both something to comfortably take cover behind as well as solidarity amongst the journalistic corps. From this viewpoint, there are possible parallels to patriotic journalism in the way that; journalists were influenced by the crisis while they were part of the story.127 However, those who worked at daily newspapers expressed (and assumed) that it was possibly different, in a negative way, in the newsrooms of the evening newspapers. From the interviews no clear assumptions can be drawn as to why this was the case, although there is a common notion of evening newspapers, or rather tabloid press, to have a slightly worse reputation when it comes to professional ethics.128 In relation to this, one female informant also stated that “evening papers in the 1990’s seems to have been awful places to work at”, when she reflected upon posts she had read in the Facebook group of the #MeToo media industry-specific campaign; #deadline. Another possibility for their assumptions regarding tabloid press, could be owed to the fact that one of their employees was publicly accused of sexual harassment and rape during the beginning of the movement. This could either be interpreted as creating a distance towards a place of crisis and certain values they expect from there, or as concern and solidarity; that their experience was probably not as bad as it was for those working for tabloid press, thus not comparable. I would argue that the work situation during the #MeToo movement was anything but ordinary, due to the numerous interview refusals, as well as how the informants spoke about it during the interviews.

126 Hök, 2012: p. 64.
5.1 Between Personal and Professional

During the interviews the journalists’ kept coming back to discussing the #MeToo movement in general; it became apparent that they were personally affected by the movement, and some explicitly expressed these thoughts. It was noticeable that some had continuously reflected upon the meaning of the movement, outside of their journalistic work. In the words of the female informant Susanne;

In October, when #MeToo came and people started to write on their social medias… it was not about naming, it was mainly about women who wanted to speak out, many who told anyone for the first time at all, about their experiences. […] It was a personal, private experience, but of course, also a very big thing that happened in society that you could not ignore.

The topic of naming accused perpetrators was also a recurring theme that the interviewees themselves initially brought up and discussed in relation to the meaning of the movement or ethics. Even some that explicitly said they were not involved in articles where names were exposed reflected upon naming, both in social and news media. This could possibly be due to the fact that several articles were blamed because of openly naming accused perpetrators, as well as the defamation lawsuits that has been filed in the wake of the movement. Susanne thought that naming happened due to the fact that the Swedish judicial system has not been successful in handling rape and sexual harassment, concluding that “…when there are so many victims, then that is a way to get redemption”.

Media is not supposed to act as a court, but, when I look back, it has definitely had a more positive than negative impact, and I’m very happy that #MeToo happened and brought good things. But the fundamental problem revolving sex crimes still remains.

In addition to this, she further positively mentioned the law of consent that passed shortly after the movement as well. This portrays an interventionistic point of view; the ability to change public opinion, and even judicial systems, through journalism.129

Others reflected even more personally; one male reporter expressed that it became painfully apparent for him, as a man, when the patriarchal structure was exposed through the movement. Thomas told me that every woman he knew had been subject to sexual harassment or violence, with few exceptions. He expressed that the number of industry-specific campaigns was a real eye-opener for him; although he initially referred to men who protects men, authority protects authority, as something traditional. It became apparent that he was personally affected by the movement and deeply moved by the number of testimonies he received during the time he worked on #MeToo-specific coverage, where all of

these testimonies were not journalistic articles but something he consequently had to face. During the movement it was also revealed that his then-place of work had problems within their own staff. This points to that the circumstance was not routine, but rather a crisis situation.\textsuperscript{130} Similar to the experiences of another journalist, Gabriella, who also worked in a newsroom that had inhouse problems. She noted that it was difficult to separate the personal from the professional experience of the movement. What she remembers the most is that it “shook up a lot” in many, if not all, newsrooms which made the period feel “pretty chaotic”. There was an abundance of pressure, both internally and externally.

5.2. Under Pressure

The journalists that experienced exposure close to them in the workplace due to the #MeToo movement, expressed that it was something they had to act a certain way about in relation to their work. When it was exposed that their newsroom contained males that had abused their powerful positions within the workplace, and that some were accused of sexual violations, it caused a strenuous work situation. The pressure was in these cases coming from their readers, one informant told me that they were called out in e-mails, saying that they were “the pot calling the kettle black”. In other words, that they should not cover these kinds of cases if they cannot own up to their own problems that were still hidden amongst their staff. Another informant experienced similarly that there was excruciating pressure towards all of the editorial staff, she felt that the outside view on them were that they were all supposed to be held responsible, for what one or two of their co-workers were accused of. In this sense it did not matter that she was a female reporter or that she was not one of the reporters that worked the most with covering the movement, instead she was asked by readers and others on social media how she could still work where that person worked. The movement portrayed by these two informants as a crisis, an extraordinary circumstance, where parallels can be drawn to \textit{patriotic journalism}.\textsuperscript{131} The public opinion, the social media hashtag that connected people from all over the world, was the pressure in which they were under. In addition to this, they had colleagues that were accused of sexual misconduct during the movement, which possibly puts the news media in question as if there was a conflict of interest. They received several messages through different channels which questioned why they did not openly name “their” journalist, when they had named other accused public figures in their newspaper. A divide was created between those who complied with the movement, and those who were against it, there was little middle ground during this time.

The female informant mentioned above, further described it as a stressful and hard time, while she never felt it impacted her well-being personally, some of her colleagues were noticeably affected

\textsuperscript{130} Ginosar, 2015.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
and even cried during work hours. She noted that it was a strange feeling to work with something where you put other people on the spot and hold them responsible, while still being under scrutiny. When I asked if it was the scrutiny itself that was the problem, she quickly declined because news media in itself should be able to withstand scrutiny – it was the external pressure in itself that was unlike anything she had experienced prior to the #MeToo movement. She explained that they usually receive comments from readers, but during this time it was more than usual which created a stressful situation. However, these comments were not exclusively negative, but also something she remembers in a positive way:

it was an exciting time because it was such a big movement that engaged so many people, and so many were so very, very interested in reading about it too. So, there was really an engagement from the readers and then […] then it feels very good when you’re able to make great journalism out of it, when you know that it engages.

This kind of statement instead reverberates back to journalistic interventionism, being able to make change in society or, in this sense, be a part of the change.\textsuperscript{132} Interpreted here also as an expression of professional pride, to make “great journalism” out of a subject that engages readers, while the objectivity ideal might have been put aside in benefit for this engagement. We get the journalism we deserve, ethics does not only apply to publishers and journalists’ morals, but also to the consumer of news.\textsuperscript{133}

Another informant, Karl, expressed that the pressure he experienced during the movement rather came internally, from “higher ranks”, within his workplace. He felt that there were stories and details that he wanted to hold on to in some cases, that were “pushed out”. Although he further described the work environment as not particularly hierarchic, he still felt that he could not do much about it since he had a junior position within the workplace at the time; “in the end it’s up to the editor in chief and publisher to make those decisions”. He thought that the pressure was initially generated from some kind of ambition, that the paper wanted to make an impact on a national level, with numerous re-writes and mentions in national news coverage. According to Karl, they had an immense focus on numbers in the newsroom at the time, which is understood here as rather number of re-writes than in an economic sense. They could though be understood as two sides of the same coin, since additional exposure will in all probability lead to positive effects for the newspaper’s economy – thus making this approach rather market oriented.\textsuperscript{134} In relation to this ambition, an article that Karl wrote did get essential impact in nationwide media, but was also blamed by the Media Council for breaking good journalistic practice. One of the details for conviction was the fact that the article appeared to be one-sided, that they left one of the

\textsuperscript{132} Hanitzsch, 2007: p. 372–373.
\textsuperscript{133} Wigorts Yngvesson, 2008: p. 8.
\textsuperscript{134} Hanitzsch, 2007: p. 374.
involved parties out from the article; “we never called them\textsuperscript{135} and none of us thought that was necessary, which is very strange”. The article was read by several of their staff members and none pointed out this missing piece, which indicates that not only market orientation was the driving force in the news coverage, but also subjectivism and interventionism.\textsuperscript{136} They sided with one party over another, the one being highly involved in the #MeToo movement, from this viewpoint the newsroom sided with the activists. Karl repeatedly described the working conditions as fast-paced and therefore ethically problematic, that there was no time for reflection and discussion in the day-to-day work. Thus, describing both a possible leaning towards market orientation or interventionism, that the newsroom acted as activists and wanted to push through certain values to their readers.\textsuperscript{137}

Karl still works at the same place as he did during the #MeToo movement, where he never before or after (at the time this is written) experienced that their paper had a similar impact as at that time, if this is to be measured by the number of re-writes done by nationwide news media. The ambition and impact he spoke of could also be interpreted as possible ways to be famous as a journalist and paper, something that he expressively had no interest in. He did not remember if they had morning meetings during this time, the work “carried on by itself” and he mentioned numerous times that there was no time for reflection or to question how the work was conducted. In comparison to the statement by the female reporter above, Karl did not express that he felt proud of his journalistic work at the time. When I asked him what he would do differently today, he simply said “everything” followed by stating that he would be very careful about ever writing about something similar again. The urge to write about these matters has faded and he questions if he will ever do it again, but if he does it will “above all, never be done in this way again”, referring to that there has to be strong evidence to back up a case, that you would have to be able to show “black on white that it was in a certain way, not just testimonies”. This statement rather points to a high level of empiricism, to get to the truth it needs to be backed up by clear evidence.\textsuperscript{138} Furthermore, he refers to a “black and white” reality that you can report as a journalist, which indicates that objectivism is also to be considered of high value for this journalist.\textsuperscript{139} However, during the interview he also referred to personal biases as inevitable, i.e. objectivity is then but simply an ideal, an unattainable goal, though well worth trying to attain. This rather points to a higher level of subjectivism, which does not leave out the pursuit of truth, although there is a different path to achieve it. A subjectivist journalist “believes that truth ultimately emerges from the combination of – or competition between – a potentially

\textsuperscript{135} They/them used here as a non-binary pronoun, for the sake of anonymity. Not used by the informant.
\textsuperscript{136} Hanitzsch, 2007: p. 372–376.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid: p. 377.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid: p. 376.
infinite number of subjective accounts”. Truth is therefore only attained through collecting an infinite number of subjective experiences, which makes it impossible to attain. Then again, in relation to the #MeToo movements person-oriented coverage, when it is a question of guilty or not guilty for those whose names were exposed, this journalist could then have relied on the judicial system for “truth”. However this raises another issue, as another female informant stated, that “it’s in the nature of the crime” with such few convictions when it comes to sexual violence, since you are usually alone with the perpetrator – making it difficult to prove that a crime has been committed.

Another male informant, Nataniel, viewed the impact of #MeToo in a more positive light. Even though he noted that some articles have been blamed by the Media Council, he thought that #MeToo had a positive effect on journalism;

It created an awareness around this, that there are people in Sweden, on prominent positions that is behaving very poorly … that it is still important for media to scrutinize in some cases. Perhaps, before #MeToo it was assumed to be more difficult to scrutinize and look at it then afterwards. From a journalistic perspective, #MeToo showed that it’s still possible to be very serious, talk to many, verify information, let people counter it, and when you have enough material – write about it.

This indicates that the informant’s professional ideology lies within that of a watchdog, where the power distance is high, as well as empiricism and objectivism. The role also entails being able to promote change in society, which was prominent as well, the informant continuing to express that the impact of #MeToo on journalism was positive;

I think it has led to a bit of… at least from my perspective, somewhat increased understanding for how important it is to shed light on, supportive spirits… sexual assault or even worse things or more like… high-handedness. It is still important to dig if we get sufficiently serious information directed at us.

The statements above are also in agreement with the professional ideology of investigative journalism, where the dimensions power distance, objectivism, empiricism and relativism are highly regarded. The importance of being able to “dig” when it comes to abuse of power might then overshadow ethical conduct. This also indicates some level of interventionism, whereas Nataniel partly viewed his professional role as somewhat equal to others that have a societal responsibility. He summarized his thoughts on professional ethics, outside of the #MeToo-specific context, as being aware of the responsibility you have as a journalist, your possibility to influence public opinion and make an impact.

Ibid.
Ibid: p. 381.
on both society and individuals. This could also be interpreted as interventionism. Similar thoughts were expressed by the female informant Gabriella who related professional ethics to assume responsibility, on the accounts of both journalists and publishers. Several informants referred to the work they did during #MeToo as important, as well as historic, since it brought along societal change. During these moments in the interviews, it was somewhat difficult to decipher if they were essentially referring to their own experience in a personal or professional way – or both. From a professional viewpoint, it could be interpreted as interventionism as well. Another male informant, Thomas, expressed that he hoped “this will change the way that we speak about sexual harassment and violence” – we, interpreted here as society as a whole. This indicates that some journalists possibly were caught between their professional and personal role, in similar ways that patriotic journalism suggests that journalist can get caught between their national and professional role during a conflict.143 Further adding to the complexity of the professional conduct during the #MeToo movement, Susanne expressed:

There was a feeling that this is something huge, something important that is happening, as a woman, as a feminist… it felt exciting! …that this whole movement existed.

But I did not feel that it jeopardized the journalistic work in any way.

She refers to her roles as a woman and feminist, while at the same time indicating that this did not affect her (or others) journalistic work. The intention here is not to question the truthfulness of her statement, but rather to point at the complexity of professionalism in relation to the #MeToo movement and how ethics are understood on an individual level. This will be further discussed below.

5.3 Where the ethical #deadline is drawn

As mentioned earlier, there were numerous industry-specific campaigns in connection to the #MeToo movement and the media industry-specific campaign was called #deadline. The group was created on the social media platform Facebook and similar to others like it, personal testimonies about sexual harassment and assault in the workplace was shared within the closed group. Two female informants expressed similar thoughts regarding their activity in the group and whether to sign the group’s petition. During the interview, Susanne reflected upon if she learned anything particularly from the group. She remembered that she caught a feeling of uneasiness while she read about other female journalists’ personal experiences, noting that it is very important to be able to get these incidents “aired out”, “but that is one thing, and then there is another thing when you are reporting about it”. Thus, noting the difference between private, in a closed Facebook group or a sticker in a bathroom stall calling to action, and the limiting effect it might

have on her professional life. Also interpreted here as a difficulty to distance oneself from the effect these stories might inflict, without neglecting the importance of individuals well-being. However, when there was a discussion within the group that everyone who was a part of it would automatically sign a written appeal that would be turned over to media managers and the like, Susanne expressed herself in a way that I could only interpret as creating a stressful situation for her at the time. This since she did not want to be, more or less, forced to sign. Eventually this was changed, and from what she remembers she did not sign it after all when it was explicitly optional.

There was a lot of thoughts like, are you supposed to be in it because of your own experiences of sexual harassment or to show solidarity? So, I felt like I wanted some distance to it in some way, also because I was still new, I didn’t feel like I had that much history of working here.

Another female informant, Margit, expressed similar reasons for not signing the appeal or being active in the group; “it’s like you’re supposed to scrutinize or report about a movement that you’re also a part of”, and recalled that she knew of a discussion at another newspaper where the part of the staff who signed the appeal did not work with #MeToo coverage or related topics. These two female informants self-regulated their involvement and found a perimeter where they could both show solidarity to their peers while maintaining what they thought was the most professional in a sense of ethics. Margit equated signing the appeal from #deadline to being politically active or scrutinize someone that is close to herself and repeatedly said that it was important to “be in the clear” and see your own role in connection to what you are reporting on – to keep power distance, whether it be politics or activists.

Margit further expressed that she would “even less so joined the group if it happened today” because it is even more important to her today to “be in the clear” and that she would not want anything to be of disservice to her later on. This as well indicates that the #MeToo movement could be considered as a kind of state of emergency or crisis, whereas journalists might have acted in a “patriotic” way during the special circumstance, but when the moment now has passed, return to their professional behavior.144

As Margit further stated;

It’s even more important for me today to be neutral to it, but it was hard to be that in that situation. Of course, you want to contribute to change in your own industry, but it’s difficult when these things are happening in parallel. It would never… in any other situation you would have tried to be in the clear and have nothing to do with it and just view it objectively, but it was difficult to do in that situation.

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Continuously indicating that the situation then was extraordinary, and since the movement was connected to exposure of patriarchal structure and women’s rights, difficulty to distance oneself – instead exhibiting solidarity. In other words, Susanne and Margit might have experienced that they were caught between their “national”, or rather “sisterly” and professional role during the movement.\textsuperscript{145} At the same time, their statements point to a rather low level of interventionism, or at least an ambivalence to it, where not signing the appeal worked as an ethical barrier which they could work around in their professional life. If someone questioned their neutrality to the movement, their names would at least not be found in the appeal document. However, they both expressed an awareness of the difficulty to act as a neutral bystander while still being, at least remotely, involved in their industry-specific campaign and appreciating its possible effects;

It was very difficult to draw the line because of what was happening where I worked. You wanted to contribute to change… that’s how I have thought about it. […] I don’t think anyone acted unprofessional. I think many had the same thoughts that I had, yeah, you want to be… raise… narrate this in the best way possible and make the best product around it. At the same time, you must… you can’t be quiet regarding what’s happening in your own industry, but you have to… I think many weighed the pros and cons. There was many who were more active in the #deadline-campaign than I was, I was not active in it. You have to balance it which is not always easy.

Similarly to what the professional codes of conducts explicitly says; “ethics does not consist primarily of the application of a formal set of rules but in the maintenance of a responsible attitude in the exercise of journalistic duties”, these informants expressed how they acted responsible during this extraordinary time and circumstance that #MeToo was\textsuperscript{146} In order to cope with their journalistic duties in a professional, ethic way, they created a framework with a set of specific barriers and in this way maintained a responsible attitude – thus displaying a form of ethical relativism.\textsuperscript{147} The informants’ interpretations of their journalistic role, put against the backdrop of their professional behavior during the #MeToo movement, are filled with complexity. Statements similar to the above are repeatedly found within the material; the importance of neutrality and distance in the journalistic work, in combination with the exciting, extraordinary circumstance that #MeToo meant. The majority of the informants repeatedly expressed excitement of working with something engaging that had a possibility to improve society.

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{146} “Code of Ethics for Press, Radio and Television in Sweden”, Medieombudsmannen.
\textsuperscript{147} Hanitzsch, 2007: p. 378.
5.3 Media Intensity

Nataniel tried to describe what he thought differentiated #MeToo from other media intense periods, which was difficult in reference to what he called “the media logic” which is followed during any media intense event – you have to be the first media outlet to break a story, or the work hours will feel more or less wasted. This could lead to media acting “eagerly and impatient”, where professional conduct might be somewhat neglected due to the stressful situation. The media logic he refers to indicates that they follow a market orientation as well. However, the fact that the driving force did not come from the media itself, but the public, engaged individuals and “so-called activists” who highlighted these issues through social media was different in relation to other work experiences he had. He therefore found it difficult to see parallels between these different periods, since #MeToo came from public engagement and developed into discussing “deep questions” as well as media ethics. Again, the movement was described as an extraordinary circumstance and points to a positive attitude towards engagement. Thus, indicating a higher level of interventionism, rather than taking the role of a detached observer during this time. Karl described the period as intense as well, and as mentioned previously, he felt that his professional conduct was negatively affected by it at the time.

It was a type of ambition, you wanted to make an impact. It was an incredible circulation of news, you picked up other’s news where you didn’t have your own records. It was a very special time and you have learned because of it. There are some people I have written about that… I couldn’t look in the eye today and that is only in the context of #MeToo. I have never experienced anything like it… I think it’s important to be able to look people in the eye. But in this, there are actually people that make me feel ashamed because of the coverage we did then and the articles that I wrote. I think that probably has characterized how you look at ethics afterwards.

This statement indicates a market orientation, but also something else, with the numerous re-writes of other newspapers’ articles they made sure that the movement got exposure – thus enforcing it goals and values. On a personal level, Karl equals professional ethics to “be able to look people in the eye”, ethics is from this viewpoint related to personal feelings. As previously mentioned, he shies away from covering related topics today due to this. The overall impression was that their editorial staff experienced pressure due to market orientation, however in the beginning “we said that we were going to keep calm and take it very easy, and then… the more time passed, the more you lost those types of discussions all together”. Furthermore, Karl stated that they eventually talked about accused perpetrators as if they were already convicted, from this viewpoint they were a part of the “outing” that was a central part to the #MeToo movement. Other informants experienced it differently, they expressed that there were several public

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figures they received information about which they could not publish due to cautiousness and inability to verify details. They all expressed that in times of news intense events, to work efficiently is expected but that does not mean that professional ethics should be put aside in any way, #MeToo was not (supposed to be) different in that sense.

In addition to the movement being a unique media intense event, whereas the driving force came from (the public), it was also longer in duration and closer to journalists since their industry was a part of the specific campaigns under the #MeToo umbrella. There was a pressure to scrutinize “their own” as well as to be able to act as a neutral bystander to the movement itself. As Thomas stated; “in the workplace, this was a subject that has always been difficult. […] But this was something else, it permeated the mood of the entire editorial staff”. This surfaced as both external and internal pressure, exposure of abuse close to their workplace, while at the same time having to keep up with the movement’s intensity, to be able to report around this big societal change. Yet again, this indicates that #MeToo was a kind of crisis, a state of emergency. However, Susanne experienced it differently;

> Breaking news are something like terror attacks or natural disasters, something very awful and dangerous that is happening, but with #MeToo… although awful things were revealed, they were things that had been hidden. So, there was a joy in that, that it was exposed. Because of this it was also a calmer news event than during a terror attack, there was definitely more time for reflection than during terror.

This also illustrates in what way #MeToo was different from other media intense events, and points to an impact on the personal rather than the professional. However, it is quite an extreme comparison when referring to the working conditions for journalists during a terror attack as the frame of reference. Still, I would argue that this points to #MeToo as an extraordinary circumstance, like a state of conflict or other national crisis especially in a country where conflict is not a part of its modern history.
6. Discussion and Conclusions

Although several journalists expressed that the #MeToo movement was not inflicting upon their work, they still exhibited certain values that can be objectified; for example that there is a patriarchal structure could be commonly understood as a “universal truth” and therefore be used as “fact”, however this relates to the cultural context in which these journalists function. Another example is Susanne, who referred to herself as feminist without acknowledging that could be interpreted as a political standpoint that could influence her professional conduct, while at the same time refrain from signing the #deadline appeal because that equates political involvement. Margit, who also declined to sign the appeal, did however not refer to herself as a feminist and underlined that she would never be politically active.

I would argue that there are possible parallels between patriotic journalism and how the #MeToo movement affected journalists, where there was a national crisis that they had to act in relation to.149 Were they supposed to act as neutral bystanders or an involved party and express solidarity with a movement that involved approximately half of the population? I would argue that they chose neither. Instead they were caught in between, where they had to create their own ethical barriers to work around and when the movement’s most intense period ended, they had opportunity to reflect on their behavior.150 Statements in the likes of “media is not supposed to act as a court”, while at the same time viewing the aftermath as positive, creates a contradictory relationship towards ethics. It does however strengthen the view of interventionism, and there are several examples that complies to this; the societal responsibility, the impact journalism has on society and individuals, the hope of changing the way we speak about sexual misconduct.151 My interpretation is that the majority of journalists that participated in this study expressed that the #MeToo movement was something almost exclusively positive that happened in society and that their, or others, possible misconduct would not alter their thoughts around that. The past and current defamation lawsuits were not something anyone of them mentioned either, however, neither did I. In addition, the different changes the informants could think of during the interviews, from the beginning of #MeToo until now; whether it be how they view ethics, that ethics are discussed more openly or the changed attitude toward possibilities to scrutinize and expose sexual predators; they were all described as positive outcomes. However, the one informant that had an article blamed by the Media Council did not highlight the positive side effects of the movement to the same extent as the other journalists in this study, but he did express that it had a positive effect on his professional conduct today. Then again, he is not working with similar content as then.

149 Ginosar, 2015.
150 Ibid.
The sense of unity brought patriotic journalism to mind, although the #MeToo movement could not be considered a conflict, it was definitely a type of crisis, one that got really close to the journalists’ own work environments – if not in their newsroom, then in someone else’s. They were affected as much as other parts of society. I would therefore argue that they were acting as part of society as much as observing it, rather than solely acting as a part of the movement. This was most noticeable in the female informants, probably due to their actions surrounding the media industry-specific campaign #deadline, under the #MeToo umbrella. The numerous re-writes that they conducted during the time also indicates that they were more focused on exposing the movements goals and values, than solely obliging to the rules of market orientation. The number of stories is in part what proves a structure – structural abuse of power, sexual violence and harassment was what the movement wanted to expose. Regardless of where the pressure came from, there was pressure that was grounded in the public. The motivation to cover these events were coming from an engaged public that were part of the movement, thus also pointing to journalists acting as part of society as much as observers when obliging to the public opinion.

In relation to previous research on Swedish journalism culture, interventionism fits well within the frame of the watchdog role. However, complex realities do not neatly fit into theoretical frameworks but makes it easier to understand and reflect upon media’s role in society and activist movements. As perceived by themselves, the #MeToo movement barely affected journalists professional conduct in a prominent way. However, there are not any severe consequences for journalists who break the ethical code. Journalists work under the freedom of press act and the constitutional right of freedom of speech, which rather opens up possibilities than limits them. Thus, enhancing the watchdog role of journalists. Even though there are no legal consequences, the trust in the media is also what reinforces their possible impact on the public and where the public seeks information, therefore could have an impact on newspapers’ (and other media outlets’) economy. As Starkey et. al. noted in their research on the framing of four silence breakers, audience interest forced the media to publicize stories of prominent #MeToo figures, which points to a market orientation as well.152 The research conducted by Swedish scholars also point to a prominent impact on the finished product.153 However, the results of this research points towards a pattern which combines market orientation and interventionism. Still, this could not be made into a general assumption of how Swedish journalists’ act given the scope of this thesis and being a qualitative study. It does however open up for further comparative studies and adds to the knowledge of media’s role in activism. Similar to the findings of Budivska and Orlova, interventionism was a distinctive feature of journalism culture both during and for some informants even after the #MeToo movement.154

Although the Ukrainian context is different and the Euromaidan was not based on social media, journalists responded to the different activist movements in similar ways since it permeated their societies. Furthermore, based on the statements of the informants in this study, as well as the numerous interview refusals, the Swedish journalistic identity might be in the process of polarization in comparison to previous research about Swedish journalism culture and ideology. However these assumptions cannot be wholly made without additional research in this field, possibly a more extensive, qualitative study surrounding attitudes towards professional ethics in a post-#MeToo era.

Research on perception of the news media coverage of #MeToo or other activist movements would be beneficial for contextualizing these findings further and find out how the media made an impact on the public, whereas in this case it now points to rather being the other way around. The driving force for the intensity of the #MeToo coverage was in part market oriented, but also a response to the public outcry against sexual violence and harassment. In addition to this, several journalists expressed what can be interpreted as interventionistic behavior, but also that they were personally affected by the movement through their friends, colleagues and themselves. In comparison to other media intense events however, in regard to ethics, none expressed that #MeToo was noticeably different. Comparison in general seemed difficult for the informants, but there were things that clearly differentiated to other work situations; the public outcry that served as hope and (or) fueled the continuous coverage, the personal impact showed itself as solidarity during the movement and positive reflections of the movement’s impact on society in retrospect. For the one informant that did not express that the movement had positive effects in relation to his professional life, he did however express a changed attitude towards ethics in so forth that he was more critical now than before.

155 Hök, 2012.
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Appendix

Interview Guide: Original Language

Biografi
Antal år verksam som journalist
Journalistisk utbildning
Könsidentitet

Ur ett professionellt perspektiv, vad betyder #MeToo rörelsen för dig?
– Hur kommer du ihåg den hösten?

Hur var det att arbeta under den mest intensiva perioden av #MeToo?
– Diskuterades det hur en skulle skildra rörelsen på redaktionen?
  Med kollegor? Hur gick dina egna tankar?

Finns det någon särskild episod som du vill berätta om?
– Arbete med en särskild artikel? Hur gick det till? Skulle du skriva om detta på ett annat sätt idag?
– Vad skulle du göra annorlunda och hur?

Hur ser du tillbaka på (den mest intensiva perioden av) #MeToo idag?
– (Hur) påverkade den ditt arbete då och nu?
– Finns det några tydliga skillnader? Något som istället stärkts i din syn på din yrkesroll?

Vad betyder journalistisk etik för dig?

Något mer du skulle vilja tillägga?
Biography
Years of work experience
Journalism education
Gender identity

What does the #MeToo movement mean to you, in a professional perspective?
– How do you remember that fall?
How was it to work during the most intense period of the #MeToo movement?
– Did you discuss amongst other editorial staff how to cover the movement?
  What did you think about it yourself?

Is there any episode you remember especially and would like to share?
– Work with a certain article? What was the work process like?
  Would you write about this differently today? What would you do different and why?

What do you think about when looking back to (the most intense time of) #MeToo movement today?
– (How) did it affect your work then and now?
– Are there any prominent differences or something that has been strengthened in your professional role?

What does journalism ethics mean to you?

Anything else you would like to add?