

**“Taboo is something that the media
should not engage in”**

**Swedish journalists’ perceived freedom when
reporting on controversial topics**

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been talk of a declining confidence and growing mistrust of the news media. Swedish media have been accused of obscuring certain topics, of letting the newspapers' political orientation guide the selection of news and of having a news evaluation process that is influenced by the journalists' personal opinions. With this as a starting point, and the assumption that a high ranking in the press freedom index does not automatically translate to a media landscape unaffected by restraining factors, this thesis investigates the reality of the press freedom in Sweden. Through the method of triangulation, combining a quantitative survey with qualitative semi-structured interviews, the thesis explores how Swedish journalists perceive their journalistic freedom, as well as if all topics are represented in Swedish journalism. The conclusion shows that although Swedish journalists perceive their journalistic freedom to be high, there are signs of self-censorship resulting in a lacking reporting of certain news topics.

Keywords: Press freedom, Taboo topics, Self-censorship, Survey research, Semi-structured interviews, Swedish journalism, Sweden

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1. Introduction

It was the summer of 2020 and I was listening to *Summer in P1*, an hour-long radio-program broadcasted by the Swedish public service every summer. Each day, a new person is invited to speak. Today, the 20th of July, that person was Ola Wong. A Swedish journalist and writer, that for the past two decades had been covering China as a correspondent for Svenska Dagbladet. He reflected upon the year of 2015, commonly known as the “refugee crisis”, and said some things that really got me thinking. The following is a quote from the program, translated to English.

“I was at an after-work with some journalist colleagues in Stockholm. One of them said that ‘maybe we should write something about how many refugees Sweden can handle’. I said, ‘that sounds like a great story, that is obviously something that people are talking about around the dinner tables today’. They all looked at me and explained that it had been a joke. The same question had been asked in the tv-show Agenda three years prior, and the editorial staff had received ruthless criticism for propagating the ideologies of the Swedish Democrats.”

Ola Wong assures that during the years following this event, the media landscape changed. Today, he states that it is possible to both write and talk about immigration in a more critical way. However, he points out that the underlying problem remains.

“The topics and opinions change, but the mechanisms remain. Immigration, #metoo and the corona strategy are all examples of topics that became a matter of identity. Sweden wants to be perceived as a pioneering country, and criticism is perceived as a personal attack. Especially if the critique is coming from a Swedish citizen. That makes you a traitor, a shame for Sweden.”

When studying the Master’s programme in Journalism at Södertörn University, we discussed the issue of press freedom. Sweden was brought up as one of the better examples, with its high ranking in the press freedom index and the safe working conditions for its journalists. However, what Ola Wong had said kept ringing in my ear. Are journalists in Sweden in fact refraining from writing about certain topics? If so, what does that mean for the press freedom in Sweden?

1.1. Aim and research questions

This thesis aims to investigate the perception of the press freedom reality in Sweden by Swedish journalists. The basic assumption is that a high ranking in the press freedom index does not automatically translate to a media landscape unaffected by restraining factors. Through the

method of triangulation, where a quantitative survey has been combined with qualitative semi-structured interviews, two research questions will be answered.

RQ 1: How do journalists at Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter, Expressen and Svenska Dagbladet perceive their journalistic freedom?

RQ 2: How are different topics represented in Swedish media from Swedish journalists' perspective?

1.2. Outline of the study

The first chapter of the study will present the most relevant previous research, starting with the issue of *self-censorship* in democratic countries, such as Sweden. Then, the topic of *taboos* will be introduced, presenting the most common taboos in Sweden. Lastly, the chapter brings up research of how *immigration* has been covered in Swedish news the recent years.

The next chapter will present the theoretical framework of the study, starting with the theories of *news values* and *selection of news*, that provides valuable explanations of why some events make it to the news while others are left out. Next, today's *media routines* and *journalistic cultures* are explained, suggesting that journalists work according to unspoken and uncritically accepted norms, rules, and procedures. The media's role in society is discussed through the theory of *agenda setting*, stating that the media plays an important role in how the audience perceive the reality. Finally, the *spiral of silence* theory is explained, suggesting that individuals with unpopular views are less vocal and less willing to express their opinions than others.

Subsequently, the methodological design of the study is presented, explaining the combination of the survey and the semi-structured interviews. Here, the ethical considerations are discussed, as well as the reliability and validity of the study. Finally, the results of the study are presented, followed by a concluding discussion and suggestions for further research.

2. Background

Sweden is one of the highest ranked countries when it comes to freedom of the press. Since 2013, Sweden has been ranked among the top ten countries on the list – with number three as the most recent ranking (RSF, 2021).

The press freedom in Sweden is regulated in three out of the country's four constitutions. Firstly, the Instrument of Government (regeringsformen) states that everyone is free to express their thoughts, opinions, and feelings through speech, writing and images (SFS

1974:152). The printed media in Sweden is regulated through the Freedom of the Press Act (tryckfrihetsförordningen), while radio, tv and internet publications are regulated through the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression (yttrandefrihetsgrundlagen). The two latter constitutions build upon the same principles – namely the medias’ right to express what opinions they want, and to disseminate the information they find interesting (SFS 1949:105; SFS 1991:1469).

Furthermore, all Swedish media are regulated by the codes of ethics for press, radio, and television. The ethical codes are not trying to restrict what subjects the media is allowed to cover, they simply exist to protect individuals from “unwarranted suffering as a result of publicity” (Medieombudsmannen). However, the codes clearly states that media should not “emphasize ethnic origin, sex, nationality, occupation, political affiliation, religious persuasion or sexual disposition in the case of the persons concerned if this is not important in the specific context or is demeaning” (Medieombudsmannen), which may or may not be perceived as restricting.

In recent years, there has been talk of a declining confidence and growing mistrust of the news media – both in an international context, and in Sweden. Swedish media have been accused of obscuring certain topics, of letting the newspapers’ political orientation guide the selection of news and of having a news evaluation process that is influenced by the journalists’ personal opinions (Andersson, 2019, 325). For the media to function in their role of representing the public, as independent and critical examiners of society's powerholders and as defenders of human rights, a high level of trust is important. A lacking trust for the media might result in issues for the democracy (Ibid, 325, 332).

But what if the declining confidence and growing mistrust for the Swedish media is justified?

3. Previous research

3.1. Self-censorship

The issue of self-censorship is widely recognised as a threat to both journalism and to the freedom of expression. Nevertheless, it is a commonplace in journalism, performed by the journalists to avoid reprisals, censure and penalties. As the name implies, self-censorship stems from the individual journalist, and should not be confused with censorship imposed on journalists by external actors. However, that is not to say that the issue of self-censorship cannot

relate to outside factors (Clark & Grech, 2017, 23). The Cambridge English Dictionary defines self-censorship as “control of what you say or do in order to avoid annoying or offending others, but without being told officially that such control is necessary”. Most often, self-censorship relates to fear of physical harm or the feeling of social responsibility (Grøndahl Larsen, Fadnes & Krøvel, 2020, 3).

Most studies relating to the issue of self-censorship put their focus on non-democratic and authoritarian nations. However, it is evident that the issue of self-censorship also is present in democratic countries like Sweden (Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016, 880).

A web survey conducted in 2013, with a sample of 1 936 Swedish journalists, shows that one third of the journalists had received at least one threat in the past year. The same survey shows that 74 percent of the journalists had received abusive comments in the past year – of which 10 percent received such comments every week (Dino & Gustafsson, 2013; Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016, 883). As a result of the threats and abusive comments, a quarter of the journalists admitted that they had started avoiding covering specific issues, specific persons, and specific groups (Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016, 884).

This study clearly shows how today’s online environment is affecting journalists in their work. Today, audience interactivity is a core value in the media industry. Therefore, journalists are more present than ever, while the audience is given unprecedented opportunities to, anonymously and at any time, express their thoughts and feelings to the journalists (Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016, 881).

Another study on the subject, a survey conducted in the United States during the year of 2000, with a sample of 300 journalists and news executives, shows that 25 percent of the respondents had “purposely avoided newsworthy stories”. The same amount of respondents admitted that they had “softened the tone of stories to benefit the interest of their news organisations” (Pew Research Center, 2000; Clark & Grech, 2017, 23). In this study it was found that 35 percent of the journalists were censoring themselves to avoid damaging the economic interests of the media, while 29 percent claimed the same about stories that would damage the interests of advertisers (Ibid.).

3.2. Swedish taboos

The word “taboo” originates from the Polynesian word “tabu” and translates to “forbidden” or “to forbid”. The word has a history of almost 250 years, but the signification has remained the same (Radcliffe-Brown, 2014, 5). In the Cambridge English Dictionary, the word is defined as “a subject, word, or action that is avoided for religious or social reasons”. The Swedish

ethnologist Arnstberg, states that taboos are invisible limitations, that are oftentimes difficult to understand (2007, 8).

Taboos are usually connected to things that we believe in, or want to believe in, and therefore avoid questioning. In Arnstberg's book *Swedish taboos*, the author states that in the modern Swedish society, the taboos either relate to other cultures or to sex, sexuality, and sexually transmitted diseases (Arnstberg, 2007, 182; 238). Arnstberg mentions the words *immigration, racism, honour-related violence, prostitution, incest, grooming* and *pornography*, as some of the topics that should not be spoken about in Sweden (Ibid, 183-187; 238-250).

It should also be said that taboos can function as a reinforcement of the law, where the contempt we feel for a criminal act makes the statutory penalty insufficient. Most often, these taboos are connected to sexual or drug-related crimes, such as *rape, sex purchase* and *addiction*, where the taboo itself ensures that the sanction continues in the criminal's social life, in the form of disgust from the people he or she encounters (Arnstberg, 2007, 15).

3.3. Immigration in the news

In the dissertation "*The ethics of reporting on radical nationalist groups in Sweden*", Axelsson (2019, 4) claims that the growing radical nationalism in Sweden is an under-reported topic which seems to be avoided by the mainstream media. Through qualitative interviews with eight journalists, this claim is confirmed. The journalists all agree that the radical nationalist groups should not be given more space in the media than absolutely necessary. Furthermore, the journalists state that if, and in that case when, giving radical nationalist groups space in the media, it is of outmost importance to not let them propagate their ideologies without placing them in a context (Axelsson, 2019, 53-54). Axelsson explains that the ideologies of the radical nationalists are often connected to topics like sexuality, race, and culture, where the political projects of the radical nationalists often reproduce categories of "us" and "them" (Ibid, 8).

Even though the dissertation does not provide any generalizable conclusions, given the fact that only eight journalists were interviewed, the findings point in a consistent direction – journalists are cautious when reporting on radical nationalist groups, since they do not agree with their ideologies and do not want to draw more attention to the groups than necessary.

This goes in line with a study conducted by the political science professor Demker, where she sheds a light on people's experiences of how immigration-related issues are treated in the Swedish news. In her survey, more than half of the 1 322 respondents said that Swedish media does not tell the truth about societal problems associated with immigration (Demker et al., 2016). According to Andersson, this is a common opinion in the Swedish society. Among

other things, Swedish news media is being criticized for omitting information, distorting the truth, and deliberately lying when it comes to the reporting on immigration (Andersson et al., 2017, 29). However, it should be mentioned that the audiences' trust for the Swedish media is considerably higher when reporting on topics such as health and medical care (Ibid, 18).

3.4. Contribution to the field

As presented above, there is a limited amount of relevant previous research that is specifically connected to Sweden and Swedish news media. When investigating the issue of self-censorship in the journalistic field, most studies focus on non-democratic and authoritarian nations. The one study that has explored the issue of self-censorship in Swedish media, applied the method of survey research. This means that the journalists participating in the study were not given any opportunity to elaborate on their answers, which in turn provides a limited understanding of the phenomenon. Similarly, when Axelsson investigated how Swedish news media cover the topic of immigration, the study was limited to a population of only eight journalists. In other words, there is an evident research gap in connection to journalists perceived freedom. Therefore, this study attempts to fill that gap, not least methodologically, when combining survey research with qualitative interviews. But this study also explores topics beyond the subject of immigration, which allows the participants to express their personal opinions without limiting them to a specific topic. This broadens the understanding of potential taboos, which is another field that is lacking previous research.

4. Theoretical framework

4.1. News values and selection of news

Every minute of every hour, countless events take place around the world, on both a local, regional, national, and international level. The events might relate to politics, economics, sports, culture, crime et cetera. However, an extremely small proportion of these events are published as news (Strömbäck, 2019, 171). In order to understand why certain events end up as front-page news, while others seem to pass unnoticed, one can turn to the theory of news values.

In 1965, the researchers Galtung and Ruge published one of the first studies on the subject, *The structure of foreign news* - an analysis of international conflicts in Norwegian newspapers. In this study the researchers listed twelve criteria of news values, stating that the more criteria an event meets, or the more an event meets a criterion, the higher the probability

that the event will be a novelty – the so called “additive hypothesis” (Galtung & Ruge, 1965, 71).

1. **Frequency** - the time span when the event develops and acquires meaning - and how well it fits the media's publishing rhythm.
2. **Threshold** - the significance of the event exceeds a certain threshold.
3. **Unambiguity** - the event is clear and lacks ambiguity.
4. **Meaningfulness** - the event is meaningful and relevant - mainly in terms of cultural proximity and relevance.
5. **Consonance** - the event is in line with the expectations that exist regarding future events.
6. **Unexpectedness** - unpredictable, deviant, and unusual events.
7. **Continuity** - the event is part of a process that has already attracted the attention of the media.
8. **Composition** - the event contributes to a better news mix.
9. **Reference to elite nations** - the event takes place in or involves particularly important nations.
10. **Reference to elite people** - the event involves particularly prominent celebrities or important people.
11. **Reference to persons** - the event can be interpreted as the result of human actions.
12. **Reference to something negative** - the event is negative (Galtung & Ruge, 1965, 66-67).

Ever since the publication of this study, successive scholars have attempted to pin down the concept of news values, resulting in many alternative lists. One of the most referenced is presented in the study *What is news? Galtung and Ruge revisited*, published in 2001 by the researchers Harcup and O’Neill. Through content analysis, Harcup and O’Neill applied Galtung and Ruges’ twelve criteria of news values to articles published in three national newspapers in the United Kingdom, resulting in a condensed list of ten criteria (Harcup & O’Neill, 2001, 267-268).

1. **The power elite** - events involving persons, organizations, or institutions in power (similar to *reference to elite persons*).
2. **Celebrity** - events involving already known people.
3. **Entertainment** - events that are considered entertaining in various ways.
4. **Surprise** - events that have a surprising or contrasting element (similar to *unexpectedness*).
5. **Bad news** - events that are mostly negative (*reference to something negative*).
6. **Good news** - events that are mostly positive.
7. **Magnitude** - extensive events, in which many people have been affected (similar to *threshold*).
8. **Relevance** - events that are considered relevant to the target group (similar to *meaningfulness*)
9. **Follow-up** - events regarding something that has already been published (similar to *continuity*)
10. **Newspaper agenda** - events that set or fit the news media's agenda (similar to *composition*) (Harcup & O’Neill, 2001, 279).

In 2017, Harcup and O’Neill decided to revisit their own study on the premise that news values are dynamic and constantly changing. This time, in the study *What is news? News values revisited (Again)*, the researchers explored how the emergence of social media has impacted the selection of news – adding five more news values to the previously presented list (Harcup & O’Neill, 2017).

11. **Exclusivity:** Stories that are generated by, or available first to, the news organization.
12. **Conflict:** Stories concerning conflict.
13. **Audio-visuals:** Stories with photos that can be illustrated through infographics.
14. **Shareability:** Stories that are likely to generate sharing and comments via Facebook, Twitter and other forms of social media.
15. **Drama:** Stories concerning an unfolding drama (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017).

While there are many similarities between the list presented by Galtung and Ruge in 1965, and the lists presented by Harcup and O'Neill, the latter is undoubtedly more applicable and of greater relevance in today's media landscape (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001, 279; Harcup & O'Neill, 2017). However, no list of news values should be perceived as the ultimate truth. While lists of news values might give us an insight into what events we should expect to see in the newspaper, as well as provide an explanation for why certain types of events are published as news, it is important to remember no list will show which possible news items were rejected in the process (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001, 269).

This is explained through the theory of news selection, where Strömbäck states that although there is a correlation between how an event is valued and what is published as news, there are several factors in addition to the news evaluation process that affect the selection of news (Strömbäck, 2019, 173). Central in this theory, is the fact that all news media are in a constant field of tension between democracy and the market. On the one hand, as part of a democracy, the news media are expected to provide truthful and comprehensive information to their audiences for the audience to freely and independently be able to take a stand on social issues. On the other hand, almost all news media are commercial companies that strive for financial gain, which means that all news media compete for audience attention and advertisers' money. As a result, news media must balance their content to provide both information that the audience *needs* and information that the audience *wants* (Strömbäck, 2015, 177).

Something else affecting which news are published, but is beyond the control of the news media, is the number of events happening in a day. Some days, there may be several events happening simultaneously, that are all considered to have a high news value. Depending on the media format, however, not all will be published as news. Other days, the opposite may be true, where the events happening are of lower news value. Consequently, events with lower news value will be published to fill the newspaper (Strömbäck, 2019, 173).

4.2. Media routines and the journalism culture

As previously mentioned, the media organizations are expected to, within time and space limitations, deliver what the audience needs. At the same time, they strive to make a profit, and

must simultaneously deliver what the audience wants. Given that there is an infinite amount of possible news items, while the organizational resources are limited, media routines have had to be developed as a response to the media organization's logistical needs (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013, 168).

For news media with daily reporting of news events, the media routines are centred around routinizing and standardizing the unforeseen (Andersson, 2019, 117). The journalists are often free to carry out their daily tasks, while it is up to the editors to decide on what to publish or not. According to Andersson, however, the management control has become tougher during the 20th century. As result, the journalists must present clearer arguments and justifications for why certain articles should be written (Andersson, 2019, 119-120).

According to the researchers Molotch and Lester, these media routines mean that the media cannot be seen as an objective reflection of reality. The news selection is based on underlying political and structural routines. The routines thus become a practice, which gives some people the power to decide over others' experiences (Molotch & Lester, 1974, 111). This is confirmed by Hanitzsch, who states that journalism all over the world is centred around an institutional framework, that is both limiting and enabling the journalistic practice. The framework looks different in different countries, but a typical framework includes both formal structures, such as press laws, and informal structures, such as codes of conduct and taboos (Hanitzsch, 2019, 29).

Journalists are constantly socialized into this framework, and the choices that the individual journalist makes every day are governed less by their personal values and more by their assumptions about appropriate modes of practice. Therefore, it can be argued that journalists work according to unspoken and uncritically accepted norms, rules, and procedures (Hanitzsch, 2019, 29).

4.3. Agenda setting

In the early 1970s, the researchers McCombs and Shaw suggested that the mass media plays an important role in how the audience perceive the reality. They stated that "in our day, more than ever before, candidates go before the people through the mass media rather than in person. The information in the mass media becomes the only contact many have with politics" (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, 176).

During the presidential election of 1968 in the United States, the researchers conducted a content analysis where they mapped out what issues the media reported on. They then conducted a poll, where they asked the citizens about the country's most pressing societal

problems. When combining the results, there was a striking correlation. The issues that had dominated the media content, were also considered the most important societal problems by the voters (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, 178-179).

Since the publication of this study, successive scholars have proven that the correlation is still true. However, none have been able to explain the cause. Is it the journalistic content that influences the public opinion, is it the public opinion that influences the journalistic content – or is there perhaps a third explanatory factor (Shehata, 2019, 338)?

Today, there are two main hypotheses. Firstly, the theory of *social learning*, stating that the news consumers *learn* how important certain topics are through the media. Secondly, the *socio-psychological* theory, stating that the more exposure a person gets of a certain topic, the more prominent and accessible the subject becomes in the person's memory (Shehata, 2019, 339).

4.4. Spiral of silence

One of the most prominent theoretical models of opinion formation and consensus building, is the spiral of silence theory, originally formulated by Noelle-Neuman in the early 1970s (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, 43; Scheufele, 2008, 175).

The theory is centred around the assumption that people are constantly aware of other people's opinions and adapt their own behaviours and opinions to suit the majority, or “winning side”, of the public debate. The key concept of the theory, and potential explanation for this behaviour, is fear of isolation. Individuals that have unpopular views, are less vocal and less willing to express their opinions, simply because they fear the consequences – namely exclusion from society. In time, the “minority groups” - people with opinions that differ from the rest - will appear weaker and weaker over time, since its members will become more and more reluctant to express their personal opinions (Scheufele, 2008, 175).

This does not mean that people are always correct in their perception of others' opinions, but the final outcome remains the same. Simply put, it is the *perception* of opinions, rather than the *real* opinion climate, that affects people's willingness to express their opinions. According to Noelle-Neumann, there are two main factors that influence people's beliefs about which opinions are acceptable or not. Firstly, the immediate social environment - where we find friends, family, and colleagues. Secondly, which goes in line with the previously mentioned theory of agenda setting, the news media is indirectly telling people what to think (Scheufele, 2008, 175-177).

The latter is problematic in many ways. The most obvious is that, if combining the spiral of silence theory with the theories of media routines and journalistic cultures, a small group of people have the power to affect the opinions of a whole society. Secondly, the issue that minority groups are unlikely to express their opinions to the media – making the media content monotonous and the spiral of silence an even larger societal issue.

5. Methodology

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the Swedish journalists' perception of the press freedom reality in Sweden. Are journalists able to write about all news events, problems, issues, and trends - or are they in fact avoiding certain topics? Given the research questions established in the previous section, the methodological design has been divided into two parts. Firstly, a survey was sent out to all journalists at the selected newspapers. Secondly, semi-structured interviews were carried out with three journalists from Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet.

The strategy of combining two methods is commonly known as “method triangulation”, and is frequently used in qualitative studies since it makes the researcher aware of perspectives that might otherwise have been overlooked (Carter et al., 2014, 545-546).

5.1. Survey

When acquiring quantitative data, survey research is a commonly used method in social sciences. This method has many advantages, according to the researchers Bryman and Bell (2019). Firstly, the questions asked in a survey are easily standardized, which in turn allows for easier categorization of the answers. Secondly, a survey allows the researcher to collect more responses in a shorter time span, in comparison to the qualitative interview method. Surveys also minimize the intra- and inter-interviewer variability, which increases the reliability of the responses (Bryman & Bell, 2019, 95-97).

However, there are certain limitations that the researcher should be aware of when choosing this method, especially concerning the survey questions. Firstly, the questions cannot be explained further when the survey has been sent out to the respondents. Hence, the questions need to be clear and unambiguous (Bryman & Bell, 2019, 117). It is also important to consider how the questions should be formulated. Long and openly formulated questions increase the risk of “respondent fatigue”, whereas shorter and closed questions generally are much easier to answer and might provide a more reliable result (2019, 116).

In line with this, the survey questions formulated in this in this thesis are short, closed and easy to understand. To avoid respondent fatigue and make the purpose of the survey as clear as possible, the survey is divided into three parts that in total take no longer than five minutes to respond to (Appendix A). It should be mentioned that since the questions asked in the survey are formulated in a closed way, the answers are mostly predetermined, which limits the respondents in their answers. Therefore, survey research fit best when measuring dominant or most popular properties, while the method works poorly with explanations and justifications. To counter this limitation, this thesis has combined the survey research with qualitative interviews.

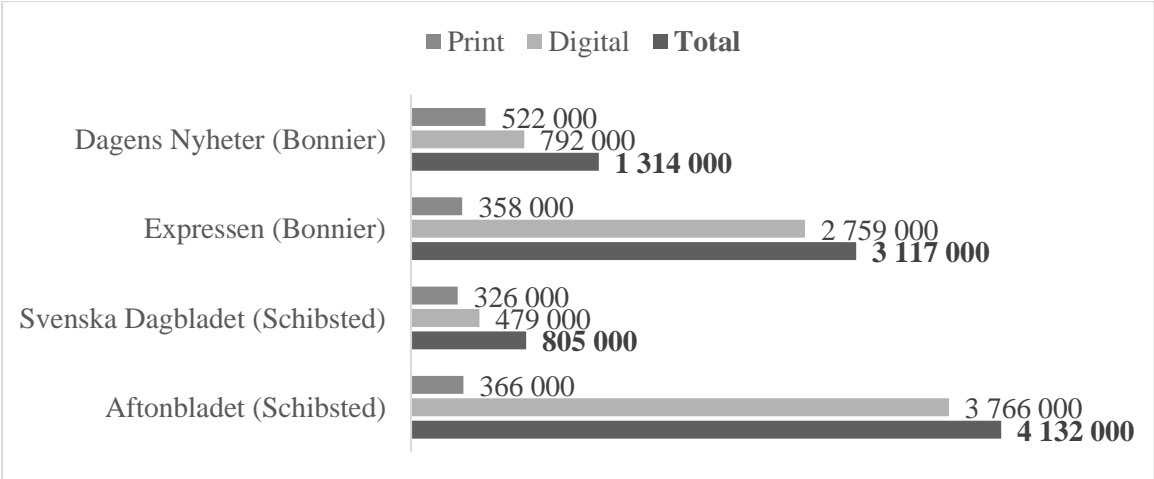
5.1.1. The population

This thesis focuses on four Swedish newspapers with national coverage. The newspapers have different political designations and are owned by two different media companies, which may or may not be reflected in the results of the study.

Aftonbladet is owned by the media company Schibsted and claims to be an “independent social democrat” evening newspaper (Aftonbladet, 2021), whereas Svenska Dagbladet, also owned by Schibsted, claims to be an “unbound moderate” daily newspaper (Svenska Dagbladet, 2021). Expressen is owned by the media company Bonnier and claims to be a “liberal” evening newspaper (Expressen, 2021), whereas Dagens Nyheter, also owned by Bonnier, claims to be an “independent liberal” daily newspaper (Dagens Nyheter, 2021).

In the latest report by Kantar Sifo (2020), the newspapers chosen for this thesis were four of the largest in Sweden. The reach for each individual newspaper is reported below, both in terms of the printed and digital product, as well as the total reach (Table 1).

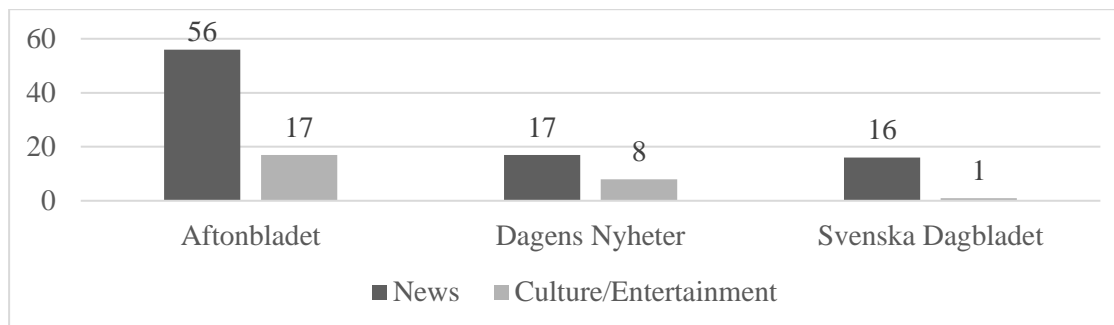
Table 1. The reach of the newspapers.



Note: The newspapers’ reach during the last tertial of 2020 (Kantar Sifo, 3-4).

All four newspapers cover news, culture, and entertainment. However, Svenska Dagbladet does not have a department covering sport-events, and Expressen does not cover economy. Therefore, in order to make the results of the thesis comparable, the survey will only be sent out to journalists covering news, culture, and entertainment. Below is an account of how many journalists are employed to report on these topics, according to the HR departments of each newspaper (Table 2).

Table 2. Number of journalists at each newspaper.



Note: Expressen is not included in this table, since they were unable to say how many journalists are currently employed at each department.

The total population of journalists writing about news, culture, and entertainment at Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet, is 115. Rather than using a sampling method, all members of the population will be asked to participate in the survey – a data collection method called census (Bryman & Bell, 2019, 148). All of the journalists' e-mail addresses were collected and compiled manually in an Excel-document. However, in the case of Expressen, this method proved to be problematic since there was no way of knowing the actual size of the population. Finally, the survey was sent to a total of 30 journalists at Expressen, thus, the survey was sent out to a total of 145 journalists.

5.1.2. Implementation

At the start of the study, the 145 journalists received an email asking them to participate in the survey. This email included all points listed by Bryman and Bell (2019), such as an introduction of the researcher and the study, reassurance that all respondents would remain anonymous and an explanation that all participation is voluntary (Bryman & Bell, 114-115). Lastly, there was a link to the survey, along with the researcher's contact information in case the respondents had any questions. The email was written in Swedish, assuming all participants would understand Swedish since they work at newspapers written in Swedish.

When it comes to survey research, as stated by Bryman and Bell, the importance of reminders cannot be stressed enough. At least one reminder should be sent out to all non-

respondents, preferably two (Bryman & Bell, 2019, 167). Therefore, three days after the first email had been sent to the journalists, a reminder was sent out. However, this reminder was sent to the whole population, since the respondents were anonymous and there was no way of knowing who had responded and who had not. Therefore, the email asked everyone who had already responded to the survey to ignore the reminder. Three days after that, a second reminder was sent out, using the same method.

Finally, the survey had a total of 29 responses – which translates to a response rate of 20 percent. This is not unusual when it comes to survey research, the average online survey has a response rate of 15 to 30 percent (Bryman & Bell, 2019, 157). However, when looking into the response rate at each individual newspaper, there are noticeable differences. Out of the 73 journalists at Aftonbladet that were asked to participate in the survey, 12 percent (9) of the journalists participated. At Dagens Nyheter, out of the 25 journalists asked to participate, a total of 40 percent (10) participated. At Expressen, out of the 30 journalists, 16 percent (5) participated. And finally, out of the 17 journalists at Svenska Dagbladet, 31 percent (5) participated.

5.2. Semi-structured interviews

Unlike quantitative interviews, which are often highly structured, qualitative interviews tends to be more flexible and often encourages the interviewee to go off on a tangent (Bryman & Bell, 2019, 240). There are two main types of qualitative interviews – the unstructured interview and the semi-structured interview (2019, 241). In this study, the latter will be used.

The purpose of a semi-structured interview is to bring out the interviewee's interpretations of certain issues, through rich and detailed answers (2019, 243-244). Before conducting a semi-structured interview, the researcher should prepare an interview guide with questions and topics to cover during the interview. However, the questions may be asked in a different order than they appear in the guide – and the researcher may ask follow-up questions that are not included in the guide (Bryman & Bell, 2019, 241-242).

A good interview is, according to Esaiasson, characterized by short questions and long answers. In order to achieve this, the questions should be easy to understand and therefore be formulated in a non-academic way (Esaiasson, 2017, 274).

In this thesis, the interviews will play an important part when understanding and analysing the findings of the survey. Therefore, many of the questions formulated in the interview guide, are similar to the questions asked in the survey (Appendix B). The main difference is that the interview questions are openly formulated. The interviewees might very

well have participated in the survey before the interview is conducted. Therefore, the interviewee may have already thought about the topic in advance, making the interview an outlet for those thoughts.

5.2.1. Selection of respondents and implementation

When selecting respondents for the interview, there were only two criteria that needed to be met – that the person is currently employed at either Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter, Expressen or Svenska Dagbladet, and that the person is covering either news, culture, or entertainment. Even though the purpose of the study is not to compare the four newspapers to each other, the journalists' place of work might influence their responses. Therefore, the researcher aimed at interviewing at least one journalist from each newspaper.

At first, five journalists from each newspaper were randomly selected from the Excel document with email-addresses. These journalists received a personal request via email, asking them to participate in the study through an interview. The email shortly explained the purpose of the thesis, keeping in mind that all journalists had already received this information when being asked to participate in the survey. The email then explained that the interview will be recorded, to facilitate the transcription of the interview, but that this recording will be deleted at the end of the study. Finally, the email emphasized that all participation is voluntary and that the interviewees will remain completely anonymous throughout the study.

Two journalists, one from Aftonbladet and one from Dagens Nyheter, responded that they were interested in participating. Four journalists, two from Aftonbladet and two from Expressen, replied that they were overwhelmed with work and that they unfortunately had to turn down the request.

After getting no more replies, ten more emails were sent out – five to Svenska Dagbladet and five to Expressen. One journalist from Svenska Dagbladet replied that she would be interested in participating. However, the journalists from Expressen did not reply to the request. Each following day, the request was sent out to five more journalists at Expressen, until all 30 journalists at Expressen had been asked to participate. Three of them declined; the rest did not respond. Since the focus of this study is not to compare the newspapers to each other, it was decided that three interviews would be sufficient. The journalists from Expressen are still a part of this study, and their thoughts will be represented in the survey.

5.2.2. The interviews

Due to the current situation, regarding Covid-19, all interviews had to be conducted via Zoom. On one hand this might have made it easier for the interviewee and the researcher to agree upon a time and date for the interview, since online interviews are not bound by external factors. However, as Salmons points out, online interviews might require more from the interviewee than a physical interview would. For example, it is crucial that the interviewee has a stable internet connection and a computer, tablet or smartphone with a functioning microphone and web camera (Salmons, 2014, 165). In the case of this study, this proved not to be a problem.

The interviews were carried out in April and May of 2021, each interview was around 45 minutes long. With written consent from the interviewees, the interviews were recorded. The recordings were then used to transcribe the interviews in Swedish, using the method of “content concentration”. This means that the interviewees’ answers were summarized into shorter formulations, where the main content of the answer remained (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014, 246). This method organized the transcription and facilitated the presentation of the interviewees' answers. The Swedish transcriptions were then translated to English.

5.3. Ethical considerations and self-reflection

When conducting research on human subjects, as stated by Bryman and Bell, the ethical considerations must be evaluated at each stage of the research. There are three core principles, that provides valuable guidance: respect, concern, and justice (Bryman & Bell, 2019, 50).

Keeping this in mind, all participants received an informational text before agreeing to participate in the study, informing the participants that they will remain anonymous at all times, and that no information presented in the study will trace back to them. In addition to this, in line with the GDPR recommendations from Södertörn University, a consent form was sent to the interviewees before conducting the interviews (Appendix C). This form informed the interviewees that all participation in the study is voluntary and participation agreements are not binding, which means that all participants have the right to withdraw their participation at any time during the study. It was only after receiving the interviewees written consent, that the interview could begin. This consent was saved and stored according to the GDPR regulations. Seeing as the study did not collect any sensitive personal information pertaining to political views, crime, health, and sexual life, there was no need to employ any further ethical measures.

It is also important to reflect upon the researcher’s standing in this study. The researcher is a Swedish, white woman with a journalistic degree, that has worked as a journalist prior to conducting this study. Therefore, it cannot be guaranteed that the researcher maintains a neutral

and independent position. However, during the interviews, the researcher was careful not to value or in any way influence the respondents in their answers. In addition to this, all questions formulated in both the survey and the interview guide, was read and approved by the supervisor of the study.

5.4. Validity, reliability, and methodological discussion

As mentioned, two different methods have been applied to answer the research questions. This strategy is commonly known as “method triangulation”, and is frequently used in qualitative studies (Carter et al., 2014, 545). Triangulation is oftentimes considered to increase the validity and reliability of the study, since it makes the researcher aware of perspectives that might otherwise have been overlooked (Carter et al., 2014, 546).

However, it should be mentioned that it is a time-consuming methodological strategy. The survey proved to be a demanding method in itself, where every step of the process had to be carried out manually – such as the construction of the survey, the collection of email addresses, the formulation of the participation email, the two reminders and the compilation of data. As mentioned, the survey had a final response rate of 20 percent, which is arguably low. However, this is not unusual when it comes to survey research – the average online survey has a response rate of 15 to 30 percent. What matters is that the homogeneity of the sample. In this thesis, all respondents are members of the same occupation, meaning that the group will be adequately represented through a relatively small sample, since the amount of variation in the populations’ answers is likely to be low (Bryman & Bell, 2019, 157). It should also be mentioned that the population itself is quite small, it consists of a total of 145 journalists, which means that a small sample can be seen as representative for the purposes of this study.

Going back to the method of triangulation, the semi-structured interviews also proved to be quite a challenging and time-consuming method. Especially in the case of Expressen, where interview requests were sent out each day for almost a week – without response. It should also be brought up that not knowing how many journalists are working at Expressen, problematized the manual collection of email-addresses, since there was no way of knowing if all journalists had been included in the email-list or not. Therefore, it is impossible to know if all journalists actually received the email asking them to participate in the study or not, which flaws the reliability and validity when it comes to the intended census population. However, the general validity of the study should be considered high. All questions formulated in the study, both when it comes to the survey and the interviews, have been developed in close

relation to the research questions and the purpose of the study. Furthermore, all participants in the study are relevant to the sampling of the study.

All documents, such as the survey, the interview guide and the consent form are attached in the list of appendices. Therefore, the reliability of the study, in terms of replicability, should be considered high. However, a future replication of the study may not result in the same findings. Even if the questions asked in the interviews and the survey are not connected to a specific time-period, the journalists' answers might change due to external factors. Also, as suggested by Bryman and Bell, the interview guide should only provide a framework for the interview, while still allowing some flexibility in the way the questions are asked (Bryman and Bell, 2019, 267). This means that the reliability of the interviews, in terms of replicability, is compromised. However, that is often the case when using qualitative methods. Therefore, as mentioned by Smith, a qualitative study could be considered reliable if the observations made in the study are stable over time, or if different methods yield similar results (Smith, 2004, 957).

6. Result and analysis

The following chapter will be divided in three. Firstly, the most interesting findings of the survey will be presented through several tables. Then, the three interviews will be presented through four different sub-sections, where the three interviewees are quoted. Lastly, the results of the study will be discussed and analysed using the previous research and theoretical framework presented in chapter 3 and 4.

6.1. Survey results

Out of the 145 journalists asked to participate in the survey, a total of 29 journalists decided to participate. In total, this equals a response rate of 20 percent. However, when looking into the response rate at each newspaper, there are noticeable differences. This is made clear by the table below (Table 3).

Table 3. Response rate at each newspaper.

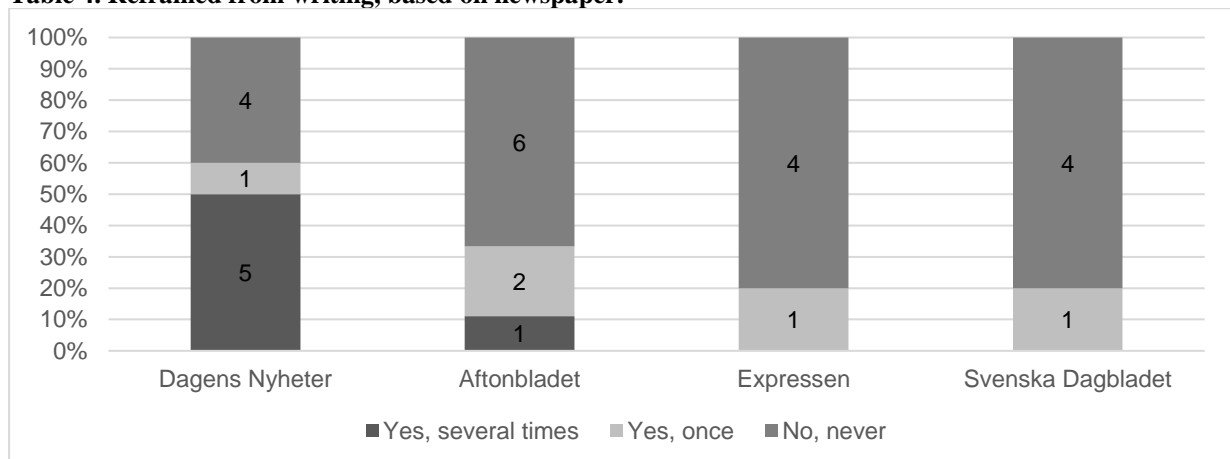
	Aftonbladet	Dagens Nyheter	Expressen	Svenska Dagbladet
Asked to participate	73	25	30	17
Final participation	9	10	5	5
Response rate	12%	40%	16%	31%

Note: N=29.

This table shows that out of the 73 journalists at Aftonbladet that were asked to participate in the survey, 12 percent of the journalists participated. At Dagens Nyheter, 40 percent of the journalists participated. At Expressen, 16 percent participated. And finally, out of the 17 journalists at Svenska Dagbladet, 31 percent participated. In terms of generalizability, considering the fact that all journalists covering news, culture and entertainment at each newspaper have been asked to participate, the results presented from Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet should be considered more accurate in representing the whole population, compared to the results presented from Expressen and Aftonbladet.

This information would not be of any particular interest to this study if all newspapers had been unequivocal in their responses. However, when it comes to the question “As a journalist, have you ever refrained from writing about a certain topic?”, Dagens Nyheter stands out. Their answers are presented in the table below, side by side with the answers from Aftonbladet, Expressen and Svenska Dagbladet (Table 4).

Table 4. Refrained from writing, based on newspaper.

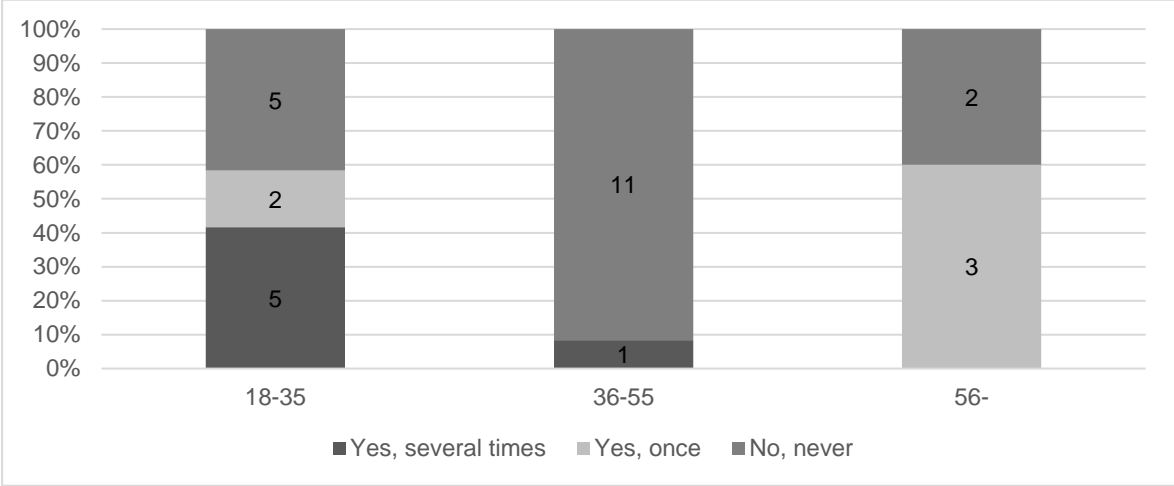


Note: N=29.

More than half of the respondents who work at Dagens Nyheter admit that they have at least once refrained from writing about a certain topic. When asked why, the result was consistent - they refrained due to their lack of knowledge about the topic. In addition to this, one respondent replied that she refrained out of respect for the persons concerned, while one respondent said that “some topics are harder to write about than others, sometimes you cannot cope with another sad story”. The journalists at Aftonbladet had a similar response, where their lack of knowledge in combination with respect for the persons concerned made them refrain from writing. However, the two journalists working at Expressen and Svenska Dagbladet, who both claims that they have refrained from writing about a certain topic only once, both states that they did so at the request of the employer.

Although the table above seems to indicate that journalists at Dagens Nyheter refrain from writing about certain topics to a larger extent than journalists at Aftonbladet, Expressen and Svenska Dagbladet, a different pattern emerges when analysing the same question based on the respondents' age (Table 5).

Table 5. Refrained from writing, based on age.

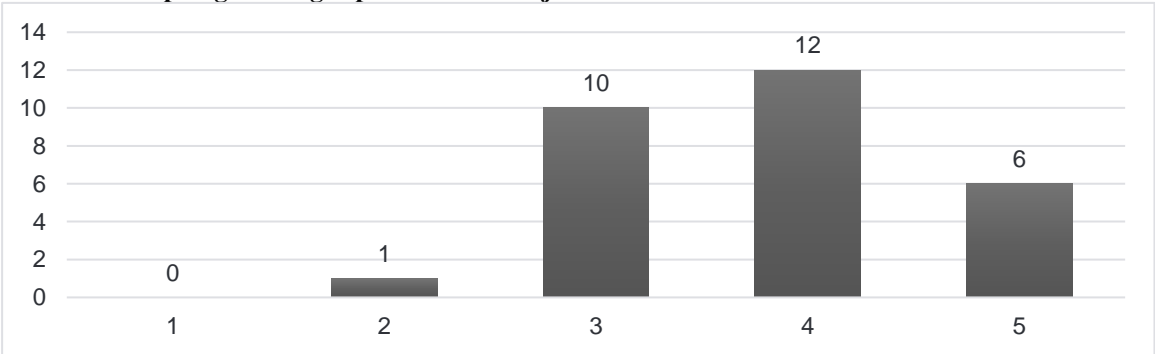


Note: N=29.

More than half of the journalists in the age of 18 to 35, have refrained from writing about a certain topic at least once. This result contrasts with the group of journalists aged 36 to 55, where all journalists but one states that they have never refrained from writing about a certain topic. The last group, aged 56 or more, have not refrained from writing more than once.

The respondents were then asked to either agree or disagree to a number of statements. When asked to agree or disagree to the statement “All topics get enough space in Swedish journalism”, almost all respondents disagreed (Table 6).

Table 6. All topics get enough space in Swedish journalism.



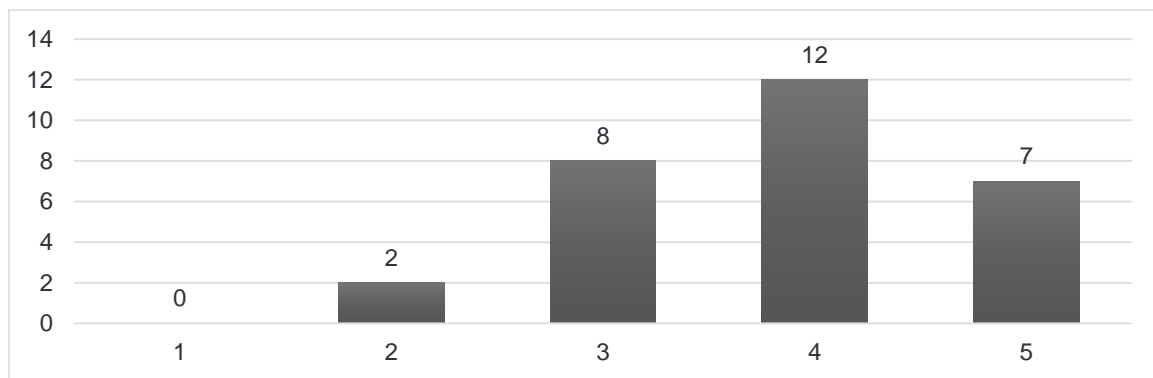
Note: N=29. The scale goes from 1 = agree, to 5 = disagree.

The table shows that ten respondents neither agree nor disagree, twelve respondents disagree more than they agree, and six respondents completely disagree to the statement. No respondents

agree to the statement. Thus, according to Swedish journalists, it seems like all topics are not fully represented in Swedish journalism. At the end of the survey, when given the opportunity to comment freely, two respondents circled back to this statement. The first one, a male journalist working at Expressen, wrote that “mental illness and violence in close relationships are two topics that are not given enough space in Swedish journalism”. The second one, a female journalist working at Aftonbladet, wrote that “violence against women is a constantly current topic that is given far too little space in Swedish journalism”.

The respondents were also asked to agree or disagree to the statement “All topics are fully explored in Swedish journalism”. Just like before, most respondents disagreed (Table 7).

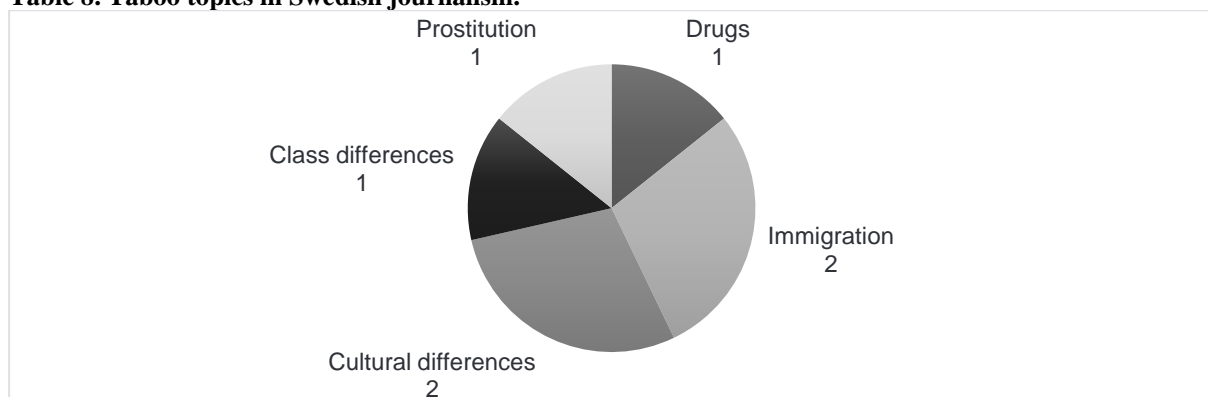
Table 7. All topics are fully explored in Swedish journalism.



Note: N=29. The scale goes from 1 = agree, to 5 = disagree.

Eight respondents neither agree nor disagree, twelve respondents disagree more than they agree, and seven respondents completely disagree. This implies that, from the perspective of journalists, the subjects represented in Swedish journalism are not always fully explored. However, when the respondents were asked if they would consider any topics to be taboo in Swedish journalism, 90 percent (26) of the respondents said “no”. The 10 percent (3) that said “yes”, pointed out the following topics (Table 8).

Table 8. Taboo topics in Swedish journalism.

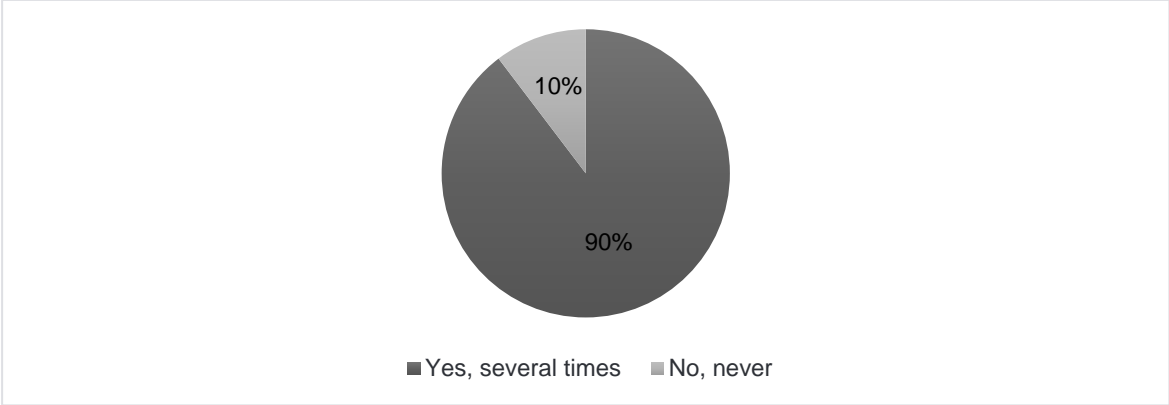


Note: N=3. Each respondent was able to choose several topics.

Even though three journalists consider the topics of immigration, cultural differences, class differences, prostitution, and drugs to be taboo, the majority of the journalists in the survey states that no topics are taboo in Swedish journalism. One of the respondents commented that “In my opinion there are no taboo topics in Swedish journalism. However, I definitely think that we miss certain topics and perspectives, since us journalists to a large extent is a homogeneous group. And most importantly, our editors are a homogenous group. In addition to this, there is the economic factor. Some topics demands more resources than others”.

So, in order to understand why some topics are not represented in Swedish journalism, and why the subjects that are represented are not fully explored, other factors need to be considered. Therefore, the respondents were asked if they had ever received hate or threats online, after writing about a certain topic. The journalists were given the options “yes, several times”, “yes, once” and “no, never” (Table 9).

Table 9. Received hate or threats online after writing about a certain topic.

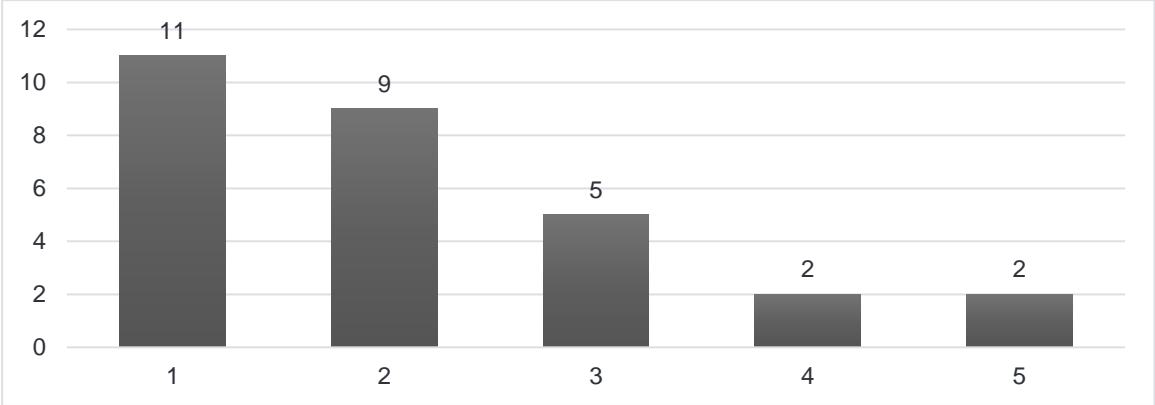


Note: N=29.

The table shows that 90 percent (26) of the journalists have received hate or threats online after writing about a certain topic, not just once but several times. Only 10 percent (3) of the journalists said that they have never received hate or threats online. When asked how this has affected the journalists in their professional practice, the majority states that they have not been affected. However, out of the 26 journalists that have experienced hate or threats, three journalists stated that they have started writing about the topic in a different way.

Finally, the journalists were asked to agree or disagree to two statements concerning their perceived journalistic freedom. Firstly, they responded to the statement “I am free to write about what I want at my place of work”. The result is presented in the table below (Table 10).

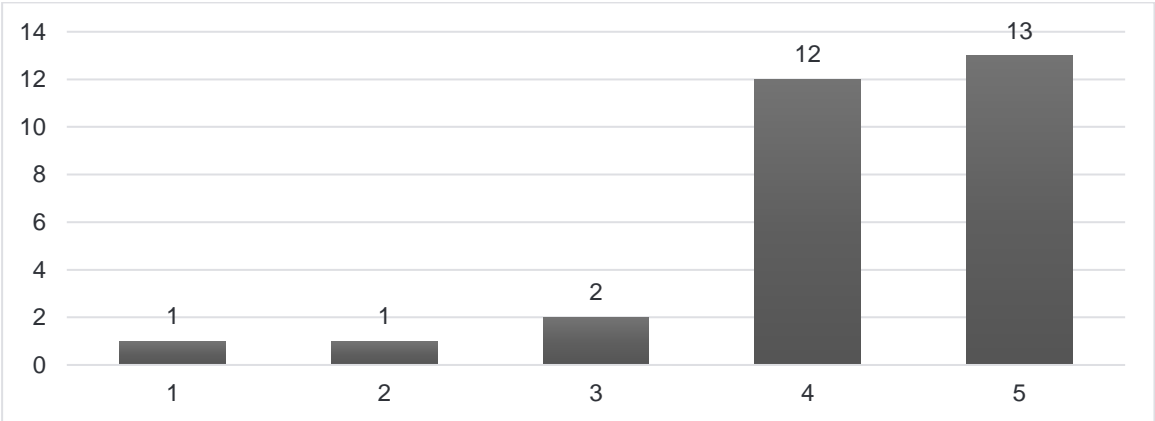
Table 10. Free to write about all topics.



Note: N=29. The scale goes from 1 = agree, to 5 = disagree.

The majority of the respondents replied that they perceive their journalistic freedom to be high. More than two thirds (20) of the respondents agreed to the statement, whereas one third (9) of the respondents are indecisive or perceive their journalistic freedom to be low. The respondents were then asked to respond to the statement “I feel limited in my professional practice”. The result is presented in the table below (Table 11).

Table 11. Limited in professional practice.



Note: N=29. The scale goes from 1 = agree, to 5 = disagree.

This time, the respondents are more or less unanimous in their response. A total of 86 percent (25) states that they do not feel limited in their professional practice. The remaining 14 percent (4) of the respondents are either indecisive or admit to feeling limited in their work. In connection to this question, one respondent wrote that “I find that it is often difficult to write articles where journalists at the newspaper, or the newspaper itself, are criticized or negatively affected”.

6.2. Interview results

Three journalists have been interviewed in this study, one from Aftonbladet, one from Svenska Dagbladet and one from Dagens Nyheter. The reporter from Aftonbladet has worked as a journalist for 20 years, of which the last 16 at Aftonbladet. The reporter from Dagens Nyheter has worked as a journalist for 42 years, of which the last 37 at Dagens Nyheter. Lastly, the reporter from Svenska Dagbladet has worked as a journalist for 14 years, of which the last 6 at Svenska Dagbladet.

As previously mentioned, all interviewees will be kept anonymous. Therefore, the journalists will be mentioned by their place of work. In the four following sub-sections, the journalists' thoughts will be presented through quotes from the interview-transcriptions.

6.2.1. Perceived journalistic freedom and media responsibility

At the beginning of each interview, the interviewees were asked about their perceived journalistic freedom. Do they feel like they are able to present their own ideas about what to write – and if so, how are these ideas received by their editors?

Aftonbladet

I have quite a lot of freedom, and I would say that is common for reporters at Aftonbladet. It has been my experience all along. If I have a good idea, that I know that our readers will be interested in and that is possible to carry out, then I am free to do so, rather than being assigned something else.

Dagens Nyheter

I would say that I influence what I write about to a large extent. That has a lot to do with the fact that I have worked as a journalist in Stockholm for more than 25 years, so I have gathered a lot of contacts and sources. I have a large influx of tips and ideas, both from the public but above all from politicians. A large part of my work is about opting out of news.

Svenska Dagbladet

About 80 or 90 percent of everything that I write about is stuff that I pitch myself, so I would say that I am able to influence what I write about to a large extent.

Evidently, all interviewees feel like they have a great journalistic freedom, and that they are able to influence what they write about. However, the reporter from Dagens Nyheter states that a large part of the journalistic work is about opting out of news. This is confirmed by the reporter working at Aftonbladet.

Aftonbladet

Today, we are maybe a third as many journalists compared to when I started working here 16 years ago. I know that this is the case for many newsrooms today. This means that a large part of today's journalistic mission is about deselecting news, because we do not have enough resources to write about everything that happens.

This suggests that it is up to each individual journalist to decide what topics and news items should make it to the news. Therefore, the interviewees were asked to explain what determines if a news item is newsworthy or not.

Aftonbladet

Aftonbladet wants a lot of reading, of course, but we also want to be agenda-setting. So, when deciding what to write I usually make a trade-off – I either write a fast story that gets an incredible amount of reading or write a more time-consuming story that may not get as much reading but is important in terms of setting the agenda in Sweden.

Dagens Nyheter

Dagens Nyheter has been accused of being a newspaper controlled by its reporters. I would not say that is the case today, but the interest of the reporter is certainly an important factor when explaining what makes it to the news. However, everything published in Dagens Nyheter must have some form of national interest and should be considered a fundamentally important issue.

Svenska Dagbladet

What determines what I write about is usually the major events in the area that I cover. However, to have the power to write texts that have concrete consequences in people's lives, for better or for worse, is something that I find a bit scary. That is not for me.

When determining what news events should make it to the news, judging by the interviewee's answers, the event should either interest a lot of people or be considered a fundamentally important issue that sets the agenda in Sweden. Following this question, the journalists were asked how they perceive the media's responsibility in society.

Aftonbladet

The role of the media in society is to examine powerholders. It is an incredibly important part of journalism. You can define power in many ways, where I within my area of coverage define famous people as powerful people, while ordinary people probably think of authorities and politicians. But anyway, I think that scrutiny of power is the *raison d'être* of all journalism, otherwise journalism is not journalism.

Dagens Nyheter

I believe that the media has a big responsibility in society.

Svenska Dagbladet

I believe that the media is the third state power, they should monitor and examine those in power and people in positions of power, highlight and draw attention to problems and give a voice to those who do not have a voice.

Given that all three journalists believe that the media plays such an important role in society, they were asked to reflect on how they personally, in their journalistic profession, affect their audience. While all three journalists acknowledged the fact that they do affect their audience, they proved to have different views on the subject.

Aftonbladet

Actually, I think it is important to be able to ignore how the audience is affected, because some articles are crucial to publish regardless. For example, we discussed whether to report about those who died after getting vaccinated against corona. They were so few, what if we would make our readers scared of the vaccine? But we concluded that we had no choice, we had to report about it. It is important to give our readers the opportunity to make their own choices in life.

Dagens Nyheter

I definitely think that we, as journalists, affect our audience. I think that the media sets the agenda for what is being talked about in society.

Svenska Dagbladet

Journalism lives in symbiosis with its audience, we influence each other. What the journalists prioritises are often the articles that the most readers click on and the audience expects the media to stay within the framework of their brand. The big challenge is that today's journalism is driven by what people click on online. How can one write about something that is important if no one is interested in reading about it?

6.2.2. Online hatred and threats

As presented in the survey results, most journalists have been exposed to online hatred or threats at least once in their career. This is confirmed by all three interviewees, stating that the hatred is just part of being a journalist.

Aftonbladet

“I receive nasty comments daily, where people tell me how stupid, disgusting and ugly I am. This is directly connected to the fact that our email addresses are so accessible, which makes it easy for our readers to get in direct contact with us. After a while you just get used to it.”

Dagens Nyheter

“That is just the way it is. I have been around for so long, and in a way, it is more comfortable now when they just send you an email. Before the internet, they called.”

Svenska Dagbladet

“Unfortunately, most of the response I receive is negative. Usually, the readers only take the time to email me when they are angry, upset or disagree.”

The interviewees were asked to reflect upon whether the threats and hatred had any common denominators – would they say that there are any topics in particular that seems to generate more threats and hatred than others? Two topics were brought up, namely immigration and Covid-19.

Dagens Nyheter

“There are some topics where you know that ‘this will trigger the crazy tail’. Quite often I write about immigrants or immigrant issues with a positive overtone. Every time those articles are published, a whole pile of emails comes in from the, you know, the racists. Never threats, more like ‘you are a complete idiot, you do not understand what immigration costs for Sweden, this Negro bitch should go back home and not waste our resources’. I also know that one of my colleagues have received a lot of threats and hatred when reporting about the corona virus. The topics of medicine and medical issues have never triggered the crazy tail before, but it seems that now it does.”

Svenska Dagbladet

“Recently, I received an indirect threat in connection with an article about covid. A reader emailed me saying that covid is made up, that journalists who spread the lies will be sentenced to death”.

The interviewees were then asked how they handle the offensive comments, and if they feel like the comments in any way affect how they carry out their work. Their answers pointed in the same direction; they are used to the comments and are therefore not affected by them.

Aftonbladet

“I found it very difficult to handle at first, since many comments are so personal. But today I would say that I am used to the comments, I just brush them off. I decided very early on in my career that I would not let such things affect how I do my job.”

Dagens Nyheter

“The hatred does not affect me or my way of writing, since Dagens Nyheter is a large and strong organization with a management that cares. I imagine that if I had worked for a small newspaper with small resources, my answer would be different. But no, I dare to write.”

Svenska Dagbladet

“At this point, I would say that I am pretty hardened. Besides that, I have found that most readers become less angry when you reply to their messages, which makes it

possible to have an interesting and constructive conversation with them. But that is very time consuming. As far as I can remember, I have never avoided writing about a certain topic. But if I dig a little deeper, there are certain topics where I do not feel that I am on ‘safe ground’, where I do not know enough and would like to read more before daring to write about them. Mainly when it comes to today's most upsetting issues - such as the trans debate and black lives matter. There are so many strong opinions. It is a fine line between writing objectively in a way that informs and illuminates and writing in a way that just ignites the debate.”

6.2.3. Over- and underreported topics

As pointed out by the results of the survey, most journalists seem to agree that not all topics are given enough space in Swedish journalism - and the topics that are given space may not be fully explored. To provide a deeper understanding of this finding, the interviewees were asked if they could point out any over- or underreported topics in Swedish journalism.

News about crime, punishment and Covid-19 was brought up as overly reported topics, while the immigration issue and news about suffering or poverty were brought up as possibly underreported topics.

Aftonbladet

“I think that some people who are of a certain opinion, think that their opinion is given too little space. That does not mean that the subject is underreported. It is very common, in the immigration issue for example, to say that no one dares to talk about it. But the fact is that everyone is talking about it, all the time! And the media often highlight a lot of different perspectives. Those who say that it is not being covered in the media, do so because we are not emphasizing their opinion. Or no, sorry. They think that all articles should only cover their opinion.”

Dagens Nyheter

“News about crime and punishment are definitely overrepresented. And obviously corona right now, but this is a special situation. I think that news about infrastructure is given too little space, given that it is so fundamentally important for all people. But it is not as ‘sexy’ as, let us say, a serial rapist.”

Svenska Dagbladet

“There are topics that people simply do not want to read about. Suffering, for example. Especially when it is linked to poverty and certain groups in society. It is not something we reject, but rather something we prefer not to see. Therefore, I would say that suffering as a topic is underrepresented.”

6.2.4. Thoughts about taboos

When the respondents in the survey were asked if they would consider any topics to be taboo in Swedish journalism, everyone but three said “no”. When the interviewees were asked the same question, their first instinct was to say “no”. As the reporter from Dagens Nyheter said; “Taboo is something that the media should not engage in”. However, the perception of what the media *should* do, might not translate to what the media actually *does*. Therefore, to dedramatize the word “taboo”, the interviewees were asked to define the word and explain what they associate it with.

Aftonbladet

“I think that if a large group of people see something as negative, it becomes taboo - at least in that specific group. I recently talked to a person about drug use. In a group of people who do not think it is problematic, it is not taboo. But in my circle, I would probably say that it is since we generally have a negative attitude towards drugs. So even if one of my friends would use drugs, they might not talk about it since it is perceived as taboo in our group.”

Dagens Nyheter

“If a topic is sensitive and hurts people, even if that is not the intention, I would say that it is taboo. Although I do not think that any topics should be taboo in journalism, there are topics where we must be more careful when reporting on. What I find difficult, is when "ordinary" people call us and wants to tell a story about how they have been treated badly. I do not think that they understand what impact it has, to appear in one of Sweden's largest newspapers. However, I would not say that it is taboo to publish sensitive stories, because we can publish with anonymized pictures and names, but in such situations, one must be very careful as a journalist.”

Svenska Dagbladet

“I would define taboos as that which is unpleasant and repulsive in our society. The first thing I think of are topics like paedophilia and incest. Topics we actively push away and preferably do not discuss. For example, writing an article that is sympathetic to a paedophile would definitely be taboo... even if such an article would certainly be shared extensively online and attract reading. So, there is an interesting contradiction there.”

The journalists were then asked if they would say that there are any taboo topics in the Swedish society. If so, are those topics also taboo in Swedish journalism?

Aftonbladet

“If you have been speeding or have parked incorrectly, you can talk to your friends about it. But if you were convicted of buying sex, you would probably keep it to yourself. Even though the penalties are equivalent in Sweden. Legally, the penalty is a fine. Do not get me wrong, I do not mean that buying sex should be as natural as speeding. I would rather say that the law's value of buying sex is much lower than what society considers the crime reprehensible. So, in that way it is taboo. And in a way, that taboo is transferred to the Swedish journalism. We could publish the name of a celebrity who have been speeding, but the publicity damage would be much larger if we were to publish the name of a celebrity who have bought sex.”

Svenska Dagbladet

“The topics that are taboo in our society do not have to be taboo in the media, on the contrary. But I also believe that different topics are taboo for different media, based on how they have positioned themselves. It has a lot to do with their image. In other words, a topic might be taboo because it is outside the medias’ filter bubble.”

6.3. Analysis

6.3.1. The freedom to influence

When the journalists participating in the survey were asked about their perceived journalistic freedom, two thirds stated that they have a high journalistic freedom. The rest remained indecisive or perceived their journalistic freedom to be low. Only two journalists participating in the survey stated that they feel limited in their work. This was confirmed by the interviewees,

who all three perceive their journalistic freedom to be high. They stated that they can influence what they write about to a large extent, and that their ideas are mostly received in a positive way by their editors.

However, they also pointed out that a large part of their job consists of opting out of news, since they do not have the resources to write about everything that happens. The deselection of news is something that they do themselves, which is interesting when seeing that the journalists differ in their views on what makes a news item newsworthy.

The reporter from Aftonbladet states that he either focuses on getting a lot of reading, or on setting the agenda in Sweden – which translates to the news values *magnitude*, *exclusivity*, and *shareability* (Harcup & O’Neill, 2017, 279). The reporter from Dagens Nyheter bases the decisions on her own interests and prioritizes news that fulfils the newspapers’ vision of publishing fundamentally important news that are of national interest – in other words *magnitude*, *relevance*, and *newspaper agenda* (Harcup & O’Neill, 2017, 279). The reporter from Svenska Dagbladet focuses on writing about major events, but refrains from writing articles that will have concrete consequences in people’s lives – namely *magnitude* and *good news* (Ibid). She then said that “The big challenge is that today's journalism is driven by what people click on online. How can one write about something that is important if no one is interested in reading about it?”. This confirms the statement made by Strömbäck, that the news media is in a constant field of tension between the market and the democracy – balancing the audiences’ wants and needs (Strömbäck, 2019, 173).

All interviewees agree that the media has a big responsibility in society and are aware that they themselves have the power to influence their audience, as suggested by the theory of agenda setting (McCombs & Shaw, 176). This, in combination with the fact that the individual journalist can decide on what to present to the public, proves the point stated by researchers Molotch and Lester (1974, 111), that some people have the power to decide on others’ experiences – therefore the media cannot be seen as an objective reflection of reality.

6.3.2. Respectfully censoring

As made clear in the survey, more than half of the respondents working at Dagens Nyheter admits that they have refrained from writing about certain topics at least once. However, this pattern could also be connected to the respondents’ age, where the journalists aged 18 to 35 refrains from writing about certain topics to a larger extent than their older colleagues. When asked why, most journalists stated that they refrain from writing due to their lack of knowledge

about the topic. Some respondents replied that they refrained out of respect for the persons concerned, as well as at the request of the employer.

The reporter from Svenska Dagbladet said that “there are certain topics where I do not feel that I am on ‘safe ground’, where I do not know enough and would like to read more before daring to write about them. Mainly when it comes to today's most upsetting issues - such as the trans debate and black lives matter. There are so many strong opinions. It is a fine line between writing objectively in a way that informs and illuminates and writing in a way that just ignites the debate”.

One of the journalists participating in the survey wrote that “I find that it is often difficult to write articles where journalists at the newspaper, or the newspaper itself, is criticized or negatively affected”. Another journalist wrote that “I definitely think that we miss certain topics and perspectives, since us journalists to a large extent is a homogeneous group. And most importantly, our editors are a homogenous group. In addition to this, there is the economic factor. Some topics demands more resources than others”.

All the above, goes in line with the previous research presented on self-censorship. The journalists either censor themselves due to the feeling of social responsibility (Grøndahl Larsen, Fadnes & Krøvel, 2020, 3), or to avoid damaging the economic interests of the media (Clark & Grech, 2017, 23).

6.3.3. Controversial topics

Out of the 29 respondents in the survey, all journalists but three stated that they have, several times, received hate or threats after writing about certain topics. This is confirmed by the interviewees, stating that in today's digital climate where their email-addresses are so easily accessible, the hatred is just a part of being a journalist. This goes in line with the study conducted in 2013 (Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016, 880). However, most journalists participating in this study stated that the hatred and threats have not affected them in their professional practice. All three interviewees states that they are used to the comments, and that they are no longer affected by them – neither personally nor professionally. Out of the participants in the survey, only three journalists stated that they have started writing about certain topics in a different way.

There are two topics in particular that seem to trigger the hatred and threats, according to the interviewees. Namely immigration, especially when written about in a positive way, and Covid-19. The topic of immigration has previously been found to be a controversial news-topic in Sweden, where audience has been convinced that the media is omitting

information, lying, and distorting the truth (Axelsson, 2019, 4; Demker et al, 2016; Andersson et al, 2017, 29). However, the topic of healthcare has never been considered a controversial topic – in fact, healthcare has been the one topic where the audiences’ confidence has still been considered high (Andersson et al, 2017, 17). This was something that the reporter from Dagens Nyheter pointed out, when reflecting on her colleague’s negative response when reporting on Covid-19 “The topics of medicine and medical issues have never triggered the crazy tail before, but it seems that now it does”. Likewise, the reporter from Svenska Dagbladet said that “Recently, I received an indirect threat in connection with an article about covid. A reader emailed me saying that covid is made up, that journalists who spread the lies will be sentenced to death”.

When the participants in the survey were asked if they would consider any topics to be taboo in Swedish journalism, all journalists but three said “no”. The three who said “yes”, pointed out five topics. Prostitution, drugs, class differences, cultural differences and immigration. This goes in line with the previous research conducted on Swedish taboos (Arnstberg, 2007).

The topic of taboos seemed to arouse many thoughts, not least when bringing it up with the interviewees. They all seemed to agree that a topic could be considered taboo if it is seen as negative, unpleasant, and repulsive in society, or if it is sensitive and unintentionally hurts people. The reporter from Aftonbladet brought up the example of drug use, which could be considered taboo in certain groups. He also stated that “We could publish the name of a celebrity who have been speeding, but the publicity damage would be much larger if we were to publish the name of a celebrity who have bought sex”.

In line with this, the reporter from Svenska Dagbladet stated that “The first thing I think of are topics like paedophilia and incest. Topics we actively push away and preferably do not discuss. For example, writing an article that is sympathetic to a paedophile would definitely be taboo”. She also mentioned that “There are topics that people simply do not want to read about. Suffering, for example”. The reporter from Dagens Nyheter mentioned that sensitive stories are often difficult to report on, considering the impact it could have on the people involved when publishing such a story in one of Sweden’s largest newspapers.

When the journalists in the survey were asked if all topics get enough space in Swedish journalism, most leaned towards saying “no”. When asked if all topics represented in Swedish journalism are fully explored, the result was the same. Two journalists stated that mental illness, violence in close relationships and violence against women are topics that are underrepresented in Swedish journalism. The interviewees stated that news about suffering and poverty are

underrepresented, while news about crime, punishment and Covid-19 are overrepresented. The reporter from Aftonbladet stated that immigration is a topic that is often brought up as underrepresented, however he does not agree.

7. Conclusion

7.1. How do the journalists perceive their journalistic freedom?

When the journalists at Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter, Expressen and Svenska Dagbladet are asked directly about how they perceive their journalistic freedom, they all seem to agree that they are free in their professional practice. They have the freedom to influence their work, and their opinions and ideas are received in a positive way by their editors.

However, when the journalists answer the question of whether they have ever refrained from writing about a certain topic, a significant number of journalists admits that they have – especially among the journalists aged 18 to 35. When asked why, most of the journalists states that they refrained from writing because of their lack of knowledge about the subject, or out of respect for the persons concerned. It is worth wondering why the journalists do not make effort to acquire this knowledge. Perhaps the lack of knowledge is connected to specific topics. If that is the case, what topics are these? Should this be perceived as a form of self-censorship in disguise (Grøndahl Larsen, Fadnes & Krøvel, 2020, 3; Clark & Grech, 2017, 23)?

It seems like in order to answer the first research question “How do journalists at Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter, Expressen and Svenska Dagbladet perceive their journalistic freedom?”, the expression “journalistic freedom”, must be divided in two. Firstly, there is the journalistic freedom directly connected to the journalists’ place of work – in this case Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter, Expressen and Svenska Dagbladet. Secondly, there is the journalistic freedom connected to the audience, the Swedish society and the Swedish laws and ethical codes regulating the press.

All journalists seem to agree that they are not restricted by neither their editors nor their places of work. However, many journalists appear to be restricted by the audiences’ expectations, the norms in society and the laws and codes regulating the press. This could be explained by the fact that the journalists and the newspapers are directly depending on their audiences’ attention to survive economically, therefore they are forced to adapt to the audiences’ expectations. The journalists are all part of the societal norms and are most probably shaped by them, in one way or the other. Finally, the laws and codes regulating the press exists as a protection both for the

journalists and for the citizens. This finding goes in line with what Hanitzsch states, that journalism all over the world is centred around an institutional framework, consisting of both formal structures, such as press laws, and informal structures, such as codes of conduct and taboos, that are both limiting and enabling the journalistic practice (Hanitzsch, 2019, 29).

Given the fact that all individual journalists are able to influence, or even decide, what gets published in the newspaper, one must also reflect upon the journalists' professional versus personal identities. According to the spiral of silence theory, people adapt their behaviours and opinions to suit the majority, in fear of isolation and exclusion (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, 43; Scheufele, 2008, 175). If journalists are affected by the spiral of silence in their personal lives, they are most likely continuing the same path in their professional roles. Therefore, the journalists might be restricted in their professional practice without ever realizing that this is the case. If so, that would most probably appear in the form of a media climate unable to represent certain issues and opinions – which is a topic further investigated in the following chapter. Perhaps the spiral of silence theory might also provide an explanation for why younger journalists do not aim to acquire knowledge when realizing that they are lacking – because they are simply indoctrinated with the “correct” opinions, and do not talk about topics that are perceived as “unpopular”.

7.2. How are different topics represented, according to the journalists?

Most journalists participating in the survey stated that not all topics are given enough space in Swedish journalism, and that the topics represented in the media are not fully explored. So, according to the journalists, it is evident that not all topics are represented in Swedish journalism.

Topics such as mental illness, violence in close relationships, violence against women, suffering, poverty, and immigration were brought up as underrepresented, while topics such as crime, punishment, and Covid-19 were brought up as overrepresented.

Interestingly enough, according to the interviewees, a large part of their journalistic work consists of opting out of news. This means that the journalists stating that some topics are less represented in Swedish journalism than others, are the same journalists that are deciding what is published as news. Therefore, it would seem that the journalists at some point are removing certain topics from the news process, making them underrepresented.

In an attempt to explain the mechanisms behind this, the journalists were asked whether they had ever experienced hatred or threats online, speculating that the journalists would avoid writing about topics that trigger abusive comments. All journalists but three stated that they

had, several times. Again, the topics of immigration and Covid-19 were brought up, but this time as topics that triggers most of the abusive comments. However, only three journalists stated that they had been affected by the comments – most of the journalists simply perceive them as part of the profession.

The journalists were then asked if they would consider any topics to be taboo in Swedish journalism. All but three said no, whereas those who said yes brought up the topics of prostitution, drugs, class differences, cultural differences, and immigration. However, when discussing the subject of taboos with the interviewees, it seemed like the formulation of the question was the reason they said no. Because they were no strangers to the idea that taboos exist – just not in the journalistic profession. Rather, the interviewees perceived the taboos to be manifested in society, where they said that the Swedish society perceives topics such as paedophilia, incest, drug use and sex purchase to be repulsive. Reporting on such topics would lead to a much larger publicity damage, than reporting on other topics. So, perhaps societal taboos are the reason certain topics are underrepresented in Swedish journalism. This would connect to the finding of the first research question, namely that the journalists limit their professional practice and journalistic freedom due to outside factors. If so, that would have major consequences in society.

As stated by the spiral of silence theory as well as the theory of agenda setting, the media plays a huge part in deciding what is talked about in society. If certain topics are lacking from the news media, they will most probably be lacking in the public debate. And if this goes on for long enough, the topics will soon be perceived as “unacceptable” to talk about, leading to minority groups unwilling to express their opinions to the media – making the media content monotonous and the spiral of silence an even larger societal issue (Scheufele, 2008, 175-177; McCombs & Shaw, 1972, 178-179).

7.3. Further research

This study focuses on a limited number of journalists covering culture, entertainment, and news at the four largest newspapers in Sweden. If other areas would have been included, such as sport, economy, and op-eds, the study might have resulted in a different outcome. Perhaps a qualitative content analysis could be conducted, investigating which topics are overrepresented respectively underrepresented in Swedish news. It would also be interesting to compare the result of this study, to a similar study focusing on local newspapers or public service media. Another suggestion would be to bring in the thoughts of the editors, who may or may not bring up other aspects of the subject.

The contradictory finding that Swedish journalists perceive their journalistic freedom to be high, while there are several factors limiting them in their work, would be interesting to further investigate. How do journalists define the expression “journalistic freedom” and “freedom of expression” – and how does that translate to their reality?

The fact that nearly all journalists participating in this study have received hate and threats online, to the extent that they perceive it to be part of the job, is also an interesting finding which could be further investigated. The journalists participating in this study state that they are not affected by the abusive comments, but that might be connected to the fact that they work for the largest newspapers in Sweden. How are the journalists at local newspapers affected – do they still dare to write about all topics? Is the digitalisation and the climate on social media a threat to press freedom?

Lastly, two topics brought up several times in this study, both in connection to the abusive comments, the taboos, and the under- and overrepresented subjects, is immigration and Covid-19. The immigration topic has received a great deal of attention in Sweden the past few years and might not be considered a controversial topic any longer. Maybe the complete opposite applies to Covid-19 and the “Swedish strategy”? Is the Swedish media’s reporting on healthcare on its way of losing the audiences’ trust?

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Appendices

Appendix A. Survey (translated to English)

TITLE: Study of taboo-subjects in Swedish journalism.

The questionnaire consists of three parts and is estimated to take 3 minutes to respond to.

Participation is voluntary. All survey responses are completely anonymous.

Click "Next" to begin the survey.

PART 1.

You will first be asked to answer four questions of personal character. These questions are asked for research purposes only. You will remain anonymous.

* Mandatory questions

Are you a woman, man or do you have a different gender identity? *

By other gender identity we mean people who do not identify themselves as male or female.

- Woman
- Man
- Other gender identity

Age *

- 18 – 25
- 26 – 35
- 36 – 45
- 46 – 55
- 56 –

Place of work *

- Aftonbladet
- Dagens Nyheter
- Expressen
- Svenska Dagbladet

Field of reporting *

- News
- Culture / Entertainment

PART 2.

This part of the survey is about taboo subjects. By “taboo subjects” we mean subjects that you, personally, perceive as unacceptable or forbidden to talk or write about.

* Mandatory questions

Do you think that there are topics that are taboo in Swedish journalism? *

- Yes
- No

If yes, tick the topic(s) you find to be taboo.

If you do not find the option you are looking for, you can add it under “other”.

- Abortion
- Active euthanasia
- Unemployment
- Drugs
- Handling of Covid-19
- Immigration
- Diet
- Criminality
- Cultural differences
- Class differences
- Gender identity
- Addiction
- Private economy
- Prostitution
- Mental illness
- Religion
- Sexuality
- Vaccination
- Other: _____

As a journalist, have you ever refrained from writing about a certain topic? *

- Yes, several times
- Yes, once
- No, never

If yes, why? Tick all possible explanations.

If you do not find the option you are looking for, you can add it under “other”.

- My own lack of knowledge on the subject
- Others’ lack of knowledge on the subject
- At the request of the employer
- For fear of consequences for the society
- For fear of personal consequences
- Out of respect for the person / persons concerned
- Other: _____

As a journalist, have you ever received hate or threats online after writing about a certain topic? *

- Yes, several times
- Yes, once
- No, never

If yes, how has this affected your professional practice?

- I have stopped writing about the subject
- I avoid writing about the subject
- I write about the subject in another way
- It has not affected my professional practice

PART 3.

This is the last part of the survey. Here you will answer different statements. Always answer based on your own thoughts and experiences.

* Mandatory questions

I am free to write about what I want at my place of work. *

1 2 3 4 5
Agree () () () () () Disagree

My place of work encourages me to write about topics that are new to me. *

1 2 3 4 5
Agree () () () () () Disagree

All topics gets enough space in Swedish journalism. *

1 2 3 4 5
Agree () () () () () Disagree

I feel limited in my professional practice. *

1 2 3 4 5
Agree () () () () () Disagree

All topics are fully explored in Swedish journalism. *

1 2 3 4 5
Agree () () () () () Disagree

I dare to express my personal opinions in conversations with colleagues. *

1 2 3 4 5
Agree () () () () () Disagree

Other comments:

Here you can, for example, write which topics do not get space in Swedish journalism, what limits you in your professional practice or which opinions you do not dare to talk about with your colleagues.

Appendix B. Interview-guide (translated to English)

1. For how long have you been working as a journalist?
2. Tell me about your professional role – what does a normal working day look like?

3. What determines what topics you write about in a day?
4. To what extent do you can influence what you write about?
 - Do you think your colleagues feel the same way?
 - How does it affect the news selection?
5. How often do you come up with your own suggestions and ideas?
 - How are they usually received?
 - What do you think is the explanation for that?
6. How often do you get the feeling that what you write about can result in negative consequences?
 - Negative consequences for yourself, or for your audience?
 - In what way?
 - How often do you think your colleagues feel that way?
 - Does this lead to journalists avoiding certain topics?
 - How many times have you yourself been exposed to negative consequences?
7. How often do you receive threats or hatred online?
 - Do you remember what you wrote about in connection to the threats / hatred?
 - How did it feel?
 - How has it affected how you perform your work?
8. How often do you refrain from writing about certain topics? //

How often do you think your colleagues refrain from writing about certain topics?

 - What do you think is the reason for that?
 - What topics are you refraining from writing?
 - Why those particular topics?
9. To what extent is it true that some topics are given more space than others in Swedish journalism?
 - Can you give some examples of topics that get more space?
 - Can you give some examples of topics that are given less space?
 - What do you think is the reason for that?
10. How do you perceive the media's responsibility in society?
 - How do you think journalism affects its audience?
11. When you hear the word **taboo**, what is the first thought that comes to mind?
12. Which topics are taboo in the Swedish society?
 - What do you think is the reason for that?
 - How do you know that a topic is taboo?

- Are those topics also taboo in Swedish journalism?
- Is an underrepresented topic equal to taboo?
- What do you think makes a topic taboo?

Appendix C. Consent form (translated to English)

I agree that Södertörn University processes the following personal data in a master's thesis in accordance with the description below.

What personal data will be processed?

- name
- e-mail address
- interview recording

What is the purpose of the processing of personal data?

The purpose of the study is to investigate whether journalists in Swedish newspapers perceive that they are free in their professional practice, or whether there are "taboo subjects" that in some way limit their work.

The interview will be recorded, to facilitate transcription.

On what legal ground will the personal data be processed?

The personal data is processed with **your expressed consent**. Participation in the study is completely voluntary. You can revoke your consent at any time without giving a reason. If you do not consent to the processing of personal data, you can do so without suffering negative consequences.

Storage form and protection measures: All personal data is stored electronically. As a respondent, you are guaranteed anonymity, both in transcription and in the final study.

Storage time: Name, e-mail address and interview recording will be retained until the study is completed and graded, after which the data will be deleted.

What are my rights?

According to the EU Data Protection Regulation, you have the right to access all personal data about you that is handled (register extract). You also have the right to have your data corrected in the event of errors. You also have the right to request deletion, restriction, or objection to the processing of personal data. You are still entitled to data portability, i.e., the right to transfer personal data from one personal data controller to another "without being hindered". You can revoke your consent at any time without having to state the reason.

Who should I contact if information is incorrect or if I want to withdraw my consent?

If you need to get incorrect information corrected, supplement with missing information (correction) or if you regret your consent (revocation), you can in the first instance contact the responsible student and / or his / her supervisor (see contact information below). You can also contact Södertörn University's data protection officer at dataskydd@sh.se.

Person responsible for personal data: Södertörn University is legally responsible for the student's personal data processing in student work. You can always reach Södertörn University via e-mail registrator@sh.se or telephone 08 608 40 00.

Data protection officer: If you have any thoughts or complaints about how your personal data is processed, you can always contact Södertörn University's data protection representative at dataskydd@sh.se.

Complaints: If you are not satisfied with the university's handling of your personal data, you always have the right to submit a complaint to the Data Inspectorate. You can reach them via e-mail: datainspektionen@datainspektionen.se or telephone 08-657 61 00.

If agreeing to participate, reply to the email with the following quote: “I confirm that I have read the consent form that was sent to me in an e-mail on xx/x-2021. I understand how my personal data may be processed. I am aware that my participation is completely voluntary and that I can cancel my participation in the study without giving any reason. I confirm with this e-mail that I give my consent for my personal data to be processed within the framework of the study”.