



# **Ideals, working conditions and the future for Swedish-speaking journalists in Finland**

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<p>Abstract:</p> <p>This thesis has studied the ideals, working conditions and future expectations among the Swedish-speaking journalists in Finland. The three research questions were: “What ideals do Swedish-speaking journalists in Finland consider in their work routines?”, “How do Swedish-speaking journalists in Finland experience job satisfaction and job performance?” and “What do Swedish-speaking journalists in Finland want for the future of journalism?” The method used was an online survey with multiple-choice and open-ended question sent to all journalists belonging to the group. 211 answers were received and analyzed. There was a large amount of informative answers to the two open-ended questions, which gave support and insight into the questions at hand and complemented the multiple-choice answers. The literature review defined journalism, its central movements and ideals and the role of journalists and this gave the study a theoretical context. Journalism is difficult to frame due to its lack of clear boundaries and as a profession it is defined by its ideology, which is constantly evolving. The respondents were generally aware of and emphasized the importance of the core ideals, such as being trustworthy, fact-based, neutral, independent, critical, a watchdog of democracy and to explain complicated things. They mostly depended on the Guidelines for Journalists in Finland and on their own judgement. The majority reported being satisfied with their jobs, but they also gave a lot of criticism and suggestions for improvements. Mainly they complained about a lack of focus on journalistic quality and they called for better leadership. For the future the journalists hoped for more colleagues and resources for investigative journalism. At present, many complained about stress and a lack of organizational plan and guidance, which is likely to contribute to the fact that a significant part of the participants had succumbed to pressure from superiors and/or from outside the editorial office – pressure that forced them to abandon their sense of journalistic ideals – and, as a consequence, presumably has affected their journalistic work.</p>	
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Today, everybody can publish anything through social media. Does that make them journalists, or does that fact change the significance of journalism as a profession? Some claim that journalism is needed more than ever (Matthews & Sheridan Burns 2018). But how do journalists today ensure that their work results in good journalism and distance themselves from others who are publishing stories? Do they rely on ethical guidelines and traditional journalistic ideals or on something else? As a profession journalism is largely built on an ideology and based on guidelines that serve as guarantees for a certain level of quality if they are followed. Some scholars even claim that there has been a de-professionalization of journalism (Nygren 2010 pp. 166–168), and there are concerned voices on different levels worrying about the effects on society of too much negativity in media (Gyldensted 2014; Pinker 2018). Apart from traditional ideals and personal ambitions, the work of journalists may also be affected by other factors such as stress, leadership and outside pressure, and that influences what we see in media today. This thesis will look at some of these influential factors and analyze their potential impact on media content.

## 1.1 Background

During the last 10–15 years the working environment has changed rapidly for journalists. Relationships between media suppliers and the audience have changed due to advancing technology and the Internet (Pöyhtäri 2016). The closer relationship between supplier and consumer provides opportunities to monitor an audience's preferences. At the same time, it is a threat to those organizations that fail to adapt (Doyle 2013). In the Nordic countries as well as in the rest of the world, the advertising market has changed so that newspapers no longer earn most of their revenues from traditional advertisements (Shahbazi 2016 p.6). These problems are also a reality for news organizations among the Swedish-speaking population in Finland. Firstly, there has been an overall concentration of the ownership of the newspapers in the sense that today two major actors together possess more than half of the products. Secondly, there have been mergers with fewer newspapers as a result. Most of them now have a lower publication frequency than 15 years ago and, due to financial difficulties, revenues and circulation have suffered as well. The two

dominant privately owned media companies within the Swedish-language minority, KSF Media and HSS Media, as well as the government financed public service organization Yle, have been forced to make severe cuts due to the general financial crisis as well as the development of the Internet (Journalisti-Journalisten 2015; Österbottens Tidning 2019). The media market in the Swedish-speaking parts of Finland has for many years been quite versatile in relation to the population of less than 300.000. 12 newspapers are geographically spread throughout the coastal regions, where a majority of the Swedish-speaking Finns live, and public service broadcasting in Swedish serve the actively news consuming minority. It has had, and still has, an ability to attract both Swedish-speaking Finns and a bilingual audience (Moring & Nordqvist 2002). Public service media has also undergone a financially difficult era, that has led to a transition from a financing system based on tv licenses to a more stable tax-based model.

In an era of fast technological development, overall change and a simultaneous crisis in the media business it may be easy to override the core values of journalism and what separates a journalist's work from other published stories. There has been a significant digitalization process since the 1990's that has also supported the marketization of Finnish broadcasting (Jääsaari 2007 p.114; Hellman 2010 p.199). In turn, scholars within the field of critical political economy of media claim that marketization disables media's abilities to inform citizens and thus to protect democracy (Hardy 2014 p. 58). Are journalists conscious of these of processes, can they define their ideals or are they too busy trying to keep their jobs and filling the spots of their laid off co-workers? Do ethical and idealistic values appear relevant to them today?

## **1.2 Aim and rationale**

The aims of this thesis are to explore the awareness and consideration of journalistic guidelines and ideals among Swedish-speaking journalists in Finland, and to reveal some of the background factors influencing today's journalistic work. Such factors are relevant to the working conditions for journalists and in this study, we focus primarily on job performance and job satisfaction as two crucial background factors. The journalists' wellbeing at their workplace may also have influence on their ability and willingness to

consider ethics and ideals. The last aim of this study is to glance into the future and explore what journalists wish for and expect.

The ideals are the building blocks of journalists' professional identity (Wiik 2015 p. 121), and thus it is relevant to ask what ideals the journalists claim to follow. An important question concerning influential factors is asking to what extent there is internal or external pressure that contradicts the journalistic values. If journalists are prone to succumb to pressure of this kind, the result of their work is likely to be affected. How they react to pressure may in turn be affected by their ideals.

The following research questions will be addressed and answered:

**RQ1.** What ideals do Swedish-speaking journalists in Finland consider in their work routines?

**RQ2.** How do Swedish-speaking journalists in Finland experience job satisfaction and job performance?

**RQ3:** What do Swedish-speaking journalists in Finland want for the future of journalism?

### **1.3 Method and limitations**

The research was conducted through an online survey consisting of multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions. The study was limited to the minority of Swedish-language journalists because they are intermediaries in both news production and culture preservation, as well as representatives of a special job market where owner interests go beyond pure profit maximizing. The research conducted earlier within this minority has mainly focused on language issues, and there is a void to fill when it comes to ideals and practices among this group of journalists. This thesis will not, however, focus explicitly on the economic situation, despite the fact that financial factors presumably has a significant impact on the journalistic work.



## **1.4 Structure**

This thesis will begin by giving a theoretical frame to the research being conducted, in chapter 2. This part starts from defining and reflecting upon journalism and journalists and continues to ethics and ideals in order to provide an understanding of elementary concepts. It will then go through earlier research and describe the findings in relevant studies. In chapter 3 the research design and methods are presented in greater detail. In chapter 4 the results from the survey are brought forward, followed by a discussion in chapter 5 and conclusions in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter.

## **2 JOURNALISM AND IDEALS**

This chapter of the thesis serves as a guide to some central concepts being referred to in the text as well as a literature review of earlier research into journalistic ideals, roles and working conditions.

### **2.1 What is journalism?**

Just taking a photo of an event and writing about it does not necessarily make it journalism. Neither is a person employed by a news organization automatically a journalist. But what makes someone a journalist? Is it their intent or their output? If it is intent, we need to address the question “what is journalism?” (Matthews & Sheridan Burns 2018). Defining journalism is not an easy task. Even if the field has been thoroughly researched and studied over many years, there is no general consensus about the theories behind it, or any common way of teaching and practicing journalism in the world (Strömbäck 2003 p. 9; Deuze 2005 pp. 442–443). There are many different opinions forming what is accepted as journalism. Journalists, teachers of journalism and scholars all have their own views on how it is to be seen, and even within these groups there are numerous ways of defining journalism (Deuze 2005; Zelizer 2015). Among scholars there seems to be a consensus that newswriters have a shared ideology that is constantly evolving and being discussed (Deuze 2005; Matthews & Sheridan Burns 2018).

Deuze mentions five values that are commonly referred to by scholars when discussing journalism. These values are public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy and ethics (2005 p. 447). Apart from that, but with a similar intent to offer guidelines, journalist organizations in different countries have codes of ethics. The purpose of these ground rules is self-regulation, and they apply to all journalistic work (Guidelines for Journalists 2014).

Scholars consider the professional identity of journalists to be mostly a discourse of professionalism, where the journalistic profession is a constantly changing process (Wiik 2010 p. 70; Carlson 2015 p. 2). The functions of the rules are mainly to protect the integrity of the journalists and to show accountability to sources and the public (Laitila 1995). We can also attempt to define journalism through its boundaries, by distinguishing it from other fields, like advertising, PR and information, entertainment and fiction and the private sphere – e.g. blogs and reader generated material. Media development has made it harder to see where the boundaries are (Nygren 2008b pp. 28–29; Wiik 2009 p. 363; Wiik 2015 p. 121). Wiik puts forward the following view concerning the professional identity of journalists:

The expertise and exclusivity of the journalist collective are not to be taken for granted anymore (if they ever were) which calls the autonomy and self-regulation of journalism increasingly into question. (Wiik 2010 p. 69)

Carlson (2015) has pondered the notions of “what is journalism” and “who is a journalist” by investigating the boundaries. A definition of what should rightly be called journalism is complicated by the continuous technological changes. Long before the Internet, there have been discussions about how to face radio and television as channels for journalism. The complexity of the boundary work is described as follows:

From the existing work on journalism’s boundaries reviewed in this section, it is clear that there cannot be a single, one-dimensional understanding of boundary work and journalism. Instead, what is needed is a broader framework capable of encompassing different types of boundaries while relating these types within a cohesive structure. (Carlson 2015 p.9)

Carlson also presents a matrix where three areas in journalism is examined for boundaries: *participants* (separating journalists from non-journalists), *practices* (acceptable newsgathering and distribution methods) and *professionalism* (journalists’ struggle to establish as a community with specialized knowledge) (2015 p. 10). There are changes in the boundaries of journalism, in the senses that occupational norms are being revised, key

attributes around digital media are normalized and increasing public participation, but the boundaries are not collapsing, and journalism is surprisingly durable (Lewis 2015 p. 220). Journalism's ideological commitment to control appears to give way to a new openness, to accept the audience as contributors and peers, and to find use for participation and transparency. Some indicators show that audiences appreciate these changes. In order to survive as a profession, it is worth tearing down the walls – or boundaries – surrounding journalism (Singer 2015 p. 32). However, regarding audience participation the opinion among professionals is largely that the public is often invited, and their contributions is appreciated, but it must be controlled and managed and the boundaries between journalists and non-journalists must prevail (Hujanen 2014 p. 52).

### **2.1.1 Journalism movements**

There have been several attempts in the history of journalism to improve society, going back to the turn of the last century. Among others Joseph Pulitzer was a proponent of so-called *action journalism* in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Journalists sought to activate the public in order to change society. *Public journalism* is another, widespread, movement aimed at closing the gap between journalists and the public. (Bro 2019 p. 510)

*Solutions journalism* has been defined like this:

The strongest solutions journalism stories use the rigor of investigative reporting to explore systemic, underlying reasons for social ills, and then critically examine efforts to address them. (Gerson et al. 2016)

*Peace journalism* theory also has similar features. It seeks to increase understanding, empathy and solution-oriented responses (Hyde-Clarke 2014 p. 2). *Constructive journalism* is a relatively new movement that started in Denmark in 2008, when Ulrik Haagerup wrote a column on how to change the thinking in media. It is now a growing concept among journalists in different countries. It incorporates ideas of positive psychology into journalism to create a solution-oriented form of journalism (Bro 2019 p. 507). Proponents of constructive journalism see it as a response to tabloidization and an overexposure of negativity in media. The concept has spread to different countries where journalists and news organizations have taken an interest in developing their journalism. For example, in Finland the public service broadcasting company Yle has incorporated

constructive journalism thinking into some parts of the organization (Haagerup 2014 pp. 84–85).

There has also been criticism towards different forms of involved, or participative, journalism, claiming that stories might not be taken seriously if they contain positive emotions. In the case of constructive journalism questions have been raised about the boundaries towards other movements within journalism (Coeseemans et al. 2018 p. 3). In her doctoral dissertation McIntyre (2015) claims that criticism concerning the risk of “happy news” does not hold true, and that journalists can write about negative topics and include positive emotions without the story losing its newsworthiness. Others have expressed concerns about what they call sunshine journalism watering down news and undercutting the accountability role of journalism as well as a danger of leaning towards uncritical journalism (Tullis 2014). One of the original proponents, Cathrine Gyldensted, wants to separate constructive journalism from so-called positive news that avoid following the journalistic principles (Cobben 2016). The concept is committed to the following ideals: critical, objective, balanced, tackling important issues facing society, unbiased, calm in its tone, bridging, forward-looking and future-oriented, nuanced and contextualized, fact-based, facilitates well-informed debate around solutions to problems (Constructive Institute 2018).

## **2.2 Who is a journalist?**

Defining who is a journalist is as hard as drawing the line for what defines journalism. If we define journalists according to education, it would exclude a large number of people already working as journalists in editorial offices. Neither would it be right to call everyone working in the editorial office a journalist. It is rather a question of people working with a certain kind of editorial content (Strömbäck 2003 pp. 9–10). There used to be stability in the consensus around what journalism as a profession means. The most important tasks are to supervise authorities, explain complicated things in a simple way, inform people so they are able to act as citizens in a democracy, stimulate new ideas and to criticize injustices (Strömbäck 2003 p. 10; Nygren 2010 p. 163). But the job as a journalist has also gone through significant change; among the trends are an increase in different tasks for the journalist in the editorial process, more interactivity with the

audience, escalating pace and a blurring of boundaries between advertising and editorial interests due to falling revenues and increased competition (Nygren 2008b p. 15).

In most countries there has been a long and steady development in the field of journalism. But the situation has shifted towards much more diversity, from being an industry working from the inside out, to a network of collaborators, and from knowing what journalists do – and who they are – to chaos. However, journalists still tend to see themselves as fair, trustworthy, critical and objective among other things, in exercising their profession and justifying their position. In later years short contracts and temporary assignments are getting more common, jobs are put out on correspondents, a lot of journalists are being laid off and more work is done outside of the newsroom, which changes the role of the newsroom. Stress and job insecurity have made the profession less attractive and less accessible. Journalists do not see their profession as much as a calling as they used to. (Nygren 2010; Deuze & Witschge 2018)

The digital era has enhanced the possibility to spread good quality journalism, but it has also increased the risk of fact errors, mistakes and the intentional spreading of fake news through social media. The vast amount of information online can easily mislead people, and therefore journalism has an important role in helping readers sort through the material. It is a challenge for journalists today to balance professional, ethical and commercial interests in their work. Every journalist has the power to choose how they perform their work tasks – the result depends on the journalist's own experiences, the choice of interviewees, which point of view to take and what words to use (Matthews & Sheridan Burns 2018). The fast development during the last decades has perhaps affected political journalism the most. Technical changes have given us new media as well as combined old media with new. Market demands and the struggle to get audience attention reshapes political journalism and gives us for example a more personal approach to politicians (Nord 2013 p. 212).

In this era of so-called post-industrial journalism professionals collaborate with all kinds of organizations. Independent entrepreneurships are increasing, and these might be better positioned to survive than traditional media companies. Since the development of Facebook, algorithms, news apps and the possibility for everyone to self-publish, the

situation has changed fundamentally (Nygren 2010; Deuze & Witschge 2018; Matthews & Sheridan Burns 2018; Ring Olsen 2018). A large part of the job is concentrated around technology and production. Journalists have lost some of their roles as spokespersons for ordinary citizens, who have become more active in both news assessment and news production. It is seen as problematic that journalists are pressured to stay loyal to their ideals at same time as they need to help increase profit for their employers (Nygren 2010 pp. 162–163). As it seems widely recognized that the symbolic wall between journalism's public service role and commercial interests is slowly eroding, journalists must build its profession on more robust norms in order to preserve its integrity against commercial forces and among an increasingly skeptical audience (Coddington 2015 p. 79). According to Wiik (2015 p. 122) severe cutbacks have decreased the journalistic workforce and made working conditions more difficult for a large part of the journalists. We still have not seen the ideological consequences of this, but she predicts they will come as aging journalists are retiring and the online generation, with their own set of ideals, are taking over.

### **2.3 Ethics and ideology in journalism**

In the 1950s a professional ideology for journalists spread around the world. It involved creating rules and guidelines for the profession. For example, the codes of ethics contained rules against allowing advertisers to exert pressure on journalists. These rules are still prevalent. (Matthews & Sheridan Burns 2018). Journalism is sometimes defined as a semi-profession, since it occupies some, but not all, characteristics of a classic profession (Nygren 2008a; Carlson 2015). Such characteristics are knowledge monopoly (who gets access to the public space), common ethics and rules of conduct, professional organizations, altruism (has gradually been replaced by professional ideology), autonomy (journalists have a right to refuse jobs that contradict their ideals) (Nygren 2008a pp. 16–19). Even if there has never been a formal certification for journalists as for doctors or lawyers, Nygren (2010 pp. 166–168) has identified a steady professionalization during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He questions that this process is still continuing, since many of the profession's characteristics have been weakened. This de-professionalization does not mean that quality journalism will disappear, but he claims it is no longer possible to talk about journalists as a group and journalism as a special kind of media content. Examples

of how de-professionalization works is when a profession becomes too heterogeneous, when other professions invade, when boundaries towards other professions vanish or when unemployment and decrease in status makes it less attractive (Nygren 2008a p. 15). Wiik (2009 pp. 361–362) has studied these claims of de-professionalization and found them to be groundless, at least at an ideological level. She does not consider professionalism as a set of independent criteria, but as an ideological construction flexible within a changing context and an ongoing negotiation with the purpose of staying in power. There is no de-professionalization in Swedish journalism, she concludes, but a consolidating of some central values and the reforming of others. Another problem brought forward by Ferrucci (2018 p. 417) is that young journalists today get an education focused on technology, but to the detriment of traditional journalistic skills such as critical thinking, assessing newsworthiness and interviewing. The conclusion is that educators should reinforce their main focus on these timeless skills in order to allow students to become successful in their field.

Research among journalists shows that following journalistic ideals results in information regarded by themselves as reliable, high-quality and independent (Hujanen 2014 p. 51). The term quality is normative, i.e. it is substantiated by a set of journalistic ideals (Ring Olsen 2018). These ideals have been verbalized in many different codes of ethics. In Finland the Council for Massmedia has the following guidelines that serve as a kind of guarantee for a certain quality: the journalist must aim to be truthful, check information thoroughly, approach sources critically, follow news events to the end, protect their sources' identities, make sure that headlines are justified by the contents in the story and keep a clear boundary between advertising and editorial content (Guidelines for journalists 2014). Journalists and publishers founded the Council for Massmedia in Finland in 1968 in order to defend the freedom of speech and publication as well as to interpret good professional practice (Council for Massmedia in Finland 2019).

Further, quality journalism is expected to be democratically relevant, journalists must not turn into a powerful elite above the citizens, the information and worldview is to be as close to the truth as possible, those in power should be monitored and held accountable and it should provide good storytelling and analysis (Ring Olsen 2018 pp. 57–58). Then the question must be raised: are journalists seeking the truth? Modern journalism and a

so-called negativity bias were shaped by events in the 1970s, such as the Watergate scandal, which led to the rule that great journalism is always critical. Investigative reporting became the ideal form of journalism (Gyldensted & Hermans 2018). The concept of investigative journalism has developed and changed over many years and there are different interpretations of the phenomenon. After studying the different interpretations Strömbäck has summarized the practice with the words investigative, fact-based, independent, transparent when it comes to methods and sources and it is related to the use of power. In English it is also sometimes called “watchdog journalism” (Strömbäck 2003). One, well-known, example of investigative journalism is the so-called Panama Papers in which more than 11 million documents were leaked from the law firm Mossack Fonseca in 2015. The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) published and analyzed the documents and uncovered massive fraud, tax evasion etc. Over 400 journalists in 80 countries worked on these documents for a year before they started to publish their findings (Jaschensky et al. 2016). An example from Finland is the online initiative Long Play, funded by two journalists in 2013. Long Play has since then published 12 long articles a year and it is financed by selling single copies and subscriptions (Berger 2016 p. 39). Another domestic example – from the Swedish-language media in Finland – was Amos Arv, a mainly crowdfunded project where a small group of journalists investigated a rich and powerful foundation and published their findings in a magazine (Berger 2016; Grävgruppen 2016).

Carl Bernstein, one of the journalists to uncover the Watergate scandal, says that the primary function of journalists is not just to entertain or cause controversy, but to give their audience the best obtainable truth. He claims that the best obtainable truth is not a priority in journalism anymore, and that another problem is that the public is not interested in looking for the truth – people are only open to information that supports their existing opinions (Bernstein 2017). In 2002 Thölix wrote (in translation from Swedish):

The newspaper is an information medium, versatile, trustworthy, monitoring with transparency and with given stylistic qualities. In it consociate what researchers call quality factors. (Thölix 2002 p. 201)

The ground rules and ideals constitute the basis of what we can call a journalistic identity. Since we have concluded that these ideals are constructed by a discourse, an ongoing negotiation that is changing within its context, we can also assume that the identity is changing. In recent years the rapidly changing technology has provided a new situation



for journalists; they are no longer the only publishers with access to public channels and people in general have the same tools as journalists have to interpret events and changes in society. The technological tools offer the possibility to publish news in real time, which calls for fast decisions and, presumably, an increased risk of putting ethical guidelines aside.

### **2.3.1 Previous research on ideals**

In Finland there has been some research on the topics of journalistic ethics and ideals, and in Sweden as well. Juntunen (2009) has studied ethics connected to the reporting from two school shootings in Finland. By interviewing journalists, she found that a majority dismissed general moral principals in favor of individual interpretation. She also noted that the journalists in her study tended to claim that ethical judgements could not be made on an abstract level, but they need a concrete situation. Modern journalism seems to be based on individual ethics (Juntunen 2009 p. 44; Hujanen 2014 p. 52; Wiik 2015 p. 119). Market forces and technological changes are not directly influencing the daily work of journalists, but they are filtered through the organizations. Thus, the organizational culture is a considerable force (Juntunen 2009). In Hujanen's study, where 20 Finnish journalists were interviewed, and the discourse analyzed, it was also evident that the editorial offices aimed to stay independent of outside influence and pressure. The journalists themselves wanted to act as gatekeepers towards financial and political influences as well as in their relations with readers and the local community (Hujanen 2014 pp. 51–52).

According to some studies a change among journalists' perceptions of their ideals is taking place (Hujanen 2014; Koljonen 2013). In Koljonen's study, where journalistic ideals were studied over a period of decades, the change started around the turn of the millennium. The 1970s and 80s were the reign for journalistic ideals like objectivity, empiricism, public service, preservation of consensus, gatekeeping, professional community and regulation. In later years there has been a transition towards subjectivity, analysis, consumer service, predictions of the future, a challenge of authorities, individualism and relativism (Koljonen 2013 p. 23–24). It is a transformation from a rather coherent field into a highly varied range of practices, called the liquid modern era

(Koljonen 2013; Deuze & Witschge 2018 p. 166). However, ideals from the earlier days still prevail in talk and actions of journalists (Koljonen 2013 p. 24). This is supported by a study made by Pöyhtäri et al. (2016 pp. 18–19) that shows that journalists in Finland are a group tied together by their respect for core ideals such as autonomy, objectivity and public service. The journalists in that study said that economic and technological change has had the biggest effects on their work situation, like having less time to do the job and in practice having to bargain with the ethics. But in theory they do not see any reason to abandon the ethics.

Wiik (2015 pp. 124–125) has studied how Swedish journalists think they should regard themselves as professionals. She notices that some views are still quite uniform in all age groups. They regard ideals of scrutinizing authorities and explaining things to the audience as very important for the journalistic role. Apart from these two ideals, the younger, so-called online generation, differs. They emphasize objectivity and neutrality more than the older journalists.

From a Swedish point of view, it signifies a continued de-politicization of journalism – and a movement toward the commercial pole of the business. (Wiik 2015 p. 125)

The online generation in the study also thought journalists should mirror public opinion, while this ideal has been outdated for a while among the older generation. However, the Swedish journalists were still skeptical of the commercial aspects; only 17% thought entertainment and recreation were important jobs for journalists (Wiik 2015 p. 126).

In this chapter I have defined the central concepts within the field of journalism and described some of the crucial problems and issues surrounding these concepts. By exploring previous research into journalistic ideals and the role of journalists I have offered a useful backcloth to my own study. In the following chapter I will present the methodology for my research and the results from the empirical study. My study will contribute to the research conducted on journalistic ideals, and the knowledge of the working situation among the Swedish-speaking journalists in Finland.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

This chapter presents the design of the study, the research method used to gather information, the type of analysis applied and information about the units of study.

#### **3.1 Survey as method**

In this research an online survey was used as the method for obtaining information. One of the reasons for using survey is that it enables the involvement of respondents from a wide range of media and a geographically widespread area. It could be argued that using interviews as a research method gives more in-depth information about how the respondents think around the questions in this study, and that would give the interviewer a chance to ask follow-up questions. However, survey is one of the most common methods in conducting research, and it enables asking a larger group of people to give their view on the exact same questions (Esaiasson et al. 2012; Johansson 2012). Critics claim, among other things, that the method can lead to over-measuring and over-quantification (Johansson 2012 p. 87). Problems may occur with email addresses, a loss of respondents due to technical difficulties and risks concerning personal integrity. Among the advantages are that online surveys are cheap and fast, and there is not the risk of computer registration errors if the answers are received electronically (Dahmström 2005 pp. 80–83). There is also a reduced risk of an interviewer effect (Esaiasson et al. p. 235).

The hardest part of conducting a survey is constructing the questions. It is possible to include more questions in a written survey than in a telephone interview. An estimation is that it should not take more than about 10 minutes to fill out the form. Short questions that bring up one thing at a time are to be preferred. The number of alternatives to choose from should not be higher than 11 (Esaiasson et al. 2012 p. 234–241; Davidson & Patel 2003). The only way to motivate people to answer is in the letter accompanying the survey (Davidson & Patel p. 69–71). The introduction message for the survey in this study focused on being short and precise, explaining the purpose of the study and stating that every response is important as well as being clear that the respondents are anonymous. The letter and the questionnaire are attached to this thesis as an appendix. The

questionnaire contained 19 main questions, plus five voluntary additional follow-up questions offered to respondents who wished to motivate why they opted for the alternative “other” or similar. Of the 19 questions 17 were compulsory multiple-choice questions, and the last two were open-ended voluntary questions. The questionnaire was tested in a small pilot study in order to find out the estimated time for answering, and to eliminate possible faults and inconsistencies. The time estimated for answering all questions in this study was 6–10 minutes, after considering that the risk of respondents not returning the survey increases as it gets thicker. The questionnaire followed the rule of having neutral questions, like background information, in the beginning and a possibility to comment in your own words in the end (Davidson & Patel 2003 p.73).

The platform used to make the online survey was Office 365 Forms, since its design options were the most suitable. The survey was open for responses for three weeks during March 2019. In order to increase the return frequency, the survey was distributed in Swedish, which also decreases the risk for journalists from other language groups to accidentally participate. The work of journalists today is conducted on computers with online connections, and they can thus be expected to have at least a basic knowledge of technology. This decreases the risk of losing respondents due to technological difficulties or a lack of computer access.

### **3.2 Units of analysis**

The units of analysis in the survey were the Swedish-speaking journalists in Finland. The study group was demarcated this way because these journalists are not just a part of the language group, they also represent a minority culture in Finland. Newspapers and other media are not just sources of information – together they constitute a significant linchpin in preserving the culture, society and traditions belonging to the Swedish-speaking Finns. It is also a specific job market, consisting of several different channels and ownership models, tied together primarily by its common language. This research therefore shows what kind of ideals that shape the journalism in Swedish minority media in Finland as a whole without being tied to any single workplace.

The survey was sent directly to as many of these journalists as possible, through different channels. There are two public service broadcasting companies in Finland: Yle, which is national, and Ålands Radio och TV, which is owned by the autonomous province of Åland. It is financed through a television fee paid by every household with a tv set. The tax financed broadcasting company Yle is owned by the Finnish state and it offers tv and radio channels. 2 of the 7 radio channels are entirely in Swedish, and one of the 5 television channels the Swedish language Yle Fem shares one channel with Yle Teema.

In order to find the journalists that are active today I went through the websites of the different news media (newspapers, magazines, Yle, Ålands Radio) and collected all the names and email addresses available. Yle offers names and email addresses of the employees on their website, but it is not always clear if they do journalistic work or not. As a result, some may have received the survey without being journalists, and it may have affected the response rate. About 90 emails bounced back as the addresses were no longer up to date, but about 600 of the emails having been sent out appeared to reach their targets. 211 responses arrived, which makes up 35% of the target group. Some journalists were contacted through Facebook Messenger if their email addresses could not be found, and a week after the first emails had been sent out a link to the survey was posted on a Facebook page for Swedish-speaking journalists in Finland, "*Finlandssvenska journalister och andra debattglada personer.*" The Facebook page has over 1.600 members, many of whom are not journalists, but the information accompanying the questionnaire stated that the survey was aimed specifically at journalists. During the second week, information about the survey was included in a news letter to the members of the Union of Journalists in Finland. In that case, the news letter was sent to both Swedish and Finnish speaking union members, but the information was written in Swedish and it stated that the survey was aimed at the Swedish-speaking population.

### **3.3 Data analysis**

When analyzing the results from the survey, the platform Office 365 Forms offered a lucid overview of the answers in the form of bar charts and pie charts. In order to highlight specific information in the analysis process the material was extracted to Excel sheets. The last two questions, 18 and 19, offered the respondents a chance to voluntarily give

their view on the future of journalism and possible improvements on their workplace. These open-ended questions received a large amount of answers, which contributed greatly to this thesis. Question 18 received 143 answers and question 19 received 130 answers. A qualitative approach was used in the content analysis of these answers; by categorizing the material according to themes, it was possible to extract the information necessary to answer the research questions. A content analysis usually means counting how many times certain terms or elements occur in a selection of sources (Bell 2006 p. 129). In some cases, the open-ended answers were quantified in the sense that certain categories of terms were formed, and the occurrences of these terms counted and inserted into bar charts.

### **3.4 Reliability, limitations and ethics**

Reliability means to evaluate if the research method used would give the same results at any time and under similar circumstances (Bell 2006 p. 117). In this study, there were some steps taken in order to increase reliability; for example, when the respondents were prompted to rate the importance of different ideals the same theme was approached in different ways through different questions. According to Esaiasson et al. the respondents often answer in different ways depending on how the question is asked. It can dramatically change the outcome. One way to decrease this risk is not to make too much use of level estimations. It is more useful to consider levels of change and comparison over time. But, since it is often the levels of estimation that are the most interesting and thus will be used, the following rules should be followed: ask more than one question about the same thing, beware of people's estimations concerning their feelings and consider answers to questions that have been discussed for a long time to be more trustworthy than those that are new (Esaiasson et al. 2012 p. 242–243). In the survey, many terms and expressions were left undefined or unexplained to the participants, and that increases the risk of misinterpretations. The fact that different concepts have different meanings for the respondents is relevant. In that case, the open-ended answers have been of great use in order to affirm and understand what the respondents refer to in the multiple-choice questions. I am a journalist myself, which can be both an advantage and a risk and needs to be taken into account when conducting this research. There is a theoretical risk that my bias could influence the analysis, but I find it mainly an asset when I am looking

for interesting findings, and the results are not based on my experience but on the data. In the discussion chapter I clearly state when I directly use my own experience in interpreting results.

Since having a financial crisis and dealing with it is a general problem for media companies in Finland and internationally, it should be possible to generalize certain results of this study to a larger population. However, the return frequency for this survey was only 35%, and that is generally not enough for a generalization to a larger population and therefore we must be cautious. Another factor concerning external generalization is, that the market for Swedish-language media in Finland is different from the Finnish market in general due to its partly altruistic foundations, and therefore makes generalizing more difficult.

In conducting the research normal ethical rules concerning academic research were regarded, meaning that the respondents were anonymous throughout the whole process, and they were informed accordingly in the introduction message accompanying the survey. It is not possible to find out the identity of the respondents by studying the published material, and not even the researcher knows the identities of individuals. The letter also contained information about where and when the information would be used and in which context results would be published. The recipients of the survey were told that answering the questions would take approximately 6–10 minutes. In reality it took on average 10:01 minutes for the respondents to finish the questionnaire.

## **4 RESULTS**

This chapter will present the research results from the online survey in accordance with the three research questions stated in the introduction chapter. There were 211 journalists responding to this survey. First the background of the respondents is presented by introducing results from the first six questions of the survey. Then the research questions are approached in three separate sections.

## 4.1 Background of the respondents

Through the compulsory questions 1–6, the respondents were asked to provide basic information about themselves, such as age, gender, education, workplace, position and employment form. The respondents represented all five age groups defined in the questionnaire, but the three in the middle had the most representatives (see Figure 1).

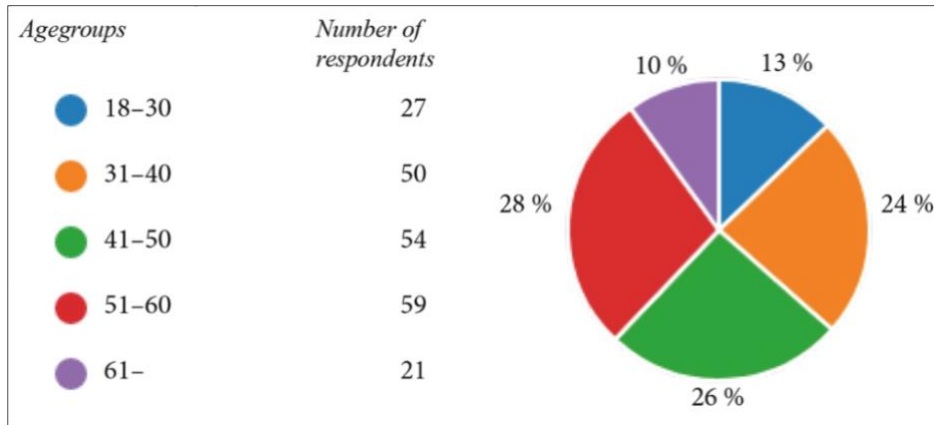


Figure 1. The age of the respondents.

The respondents were then asked to define their gender, which showed that 55% (115) identified themselves as women, 45% (95) as men and one respondent as other. Their education background varied; the largest group, 40% (95 respondents), had a university degree in journalism. The respondents could choose multiple answers. More than half (57%) had studied journalism.

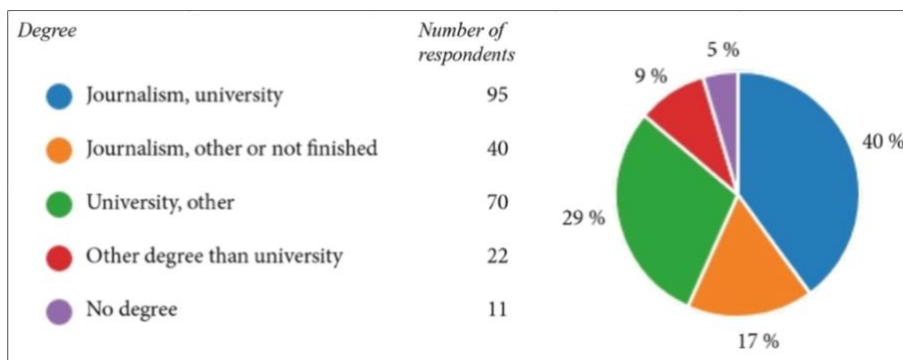


Figure 2. The educational level of the respondents.



When asked where they work almost half of the respondents named the Finnish broadcasting company Yle, while almost as many worked for a newspaper (see Figure 3). Those who chose “other” were given an option to explain, and four respondents did so; of them two worked for radio and/or television other than Yle, one respondent worked for an online news site and one for magazines.

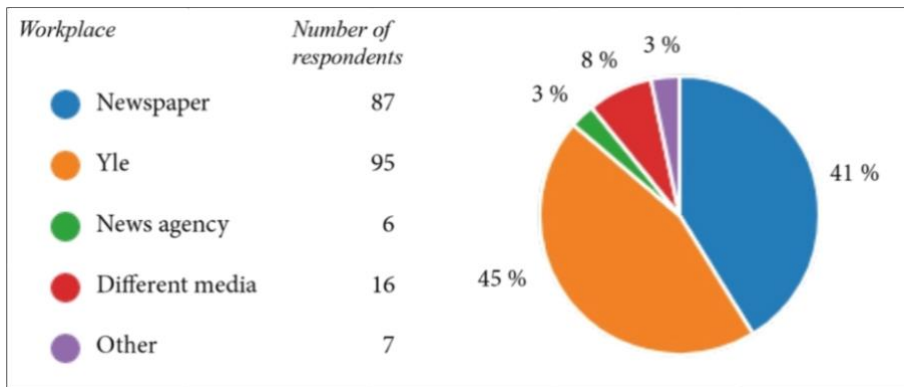


Figure 3. The respondents' current workplaces.

The respondents were also asked to define their position at their workplaces (see Figure 4). The largest group consisted of reporters with steady employment. 17 journalists chose “other”. 13 of these explained further. They mentioned for example that they worked as content producer, project leader, critic, web editor, mentor or producer.

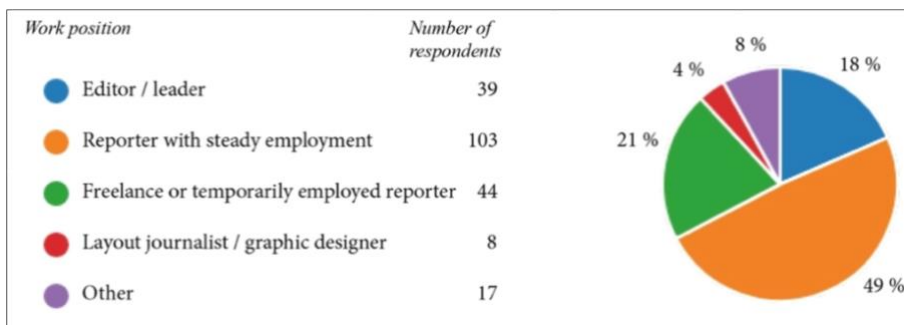


Figure 4. The respondents' positions.

The respondents were then prompted to tell what their main work task is, as shown in Figure 5. Of the respondents that chose “other” nine gave an explanation – for example education policy and job market, life style programs, culture, entertainment, crime or computer journalism.

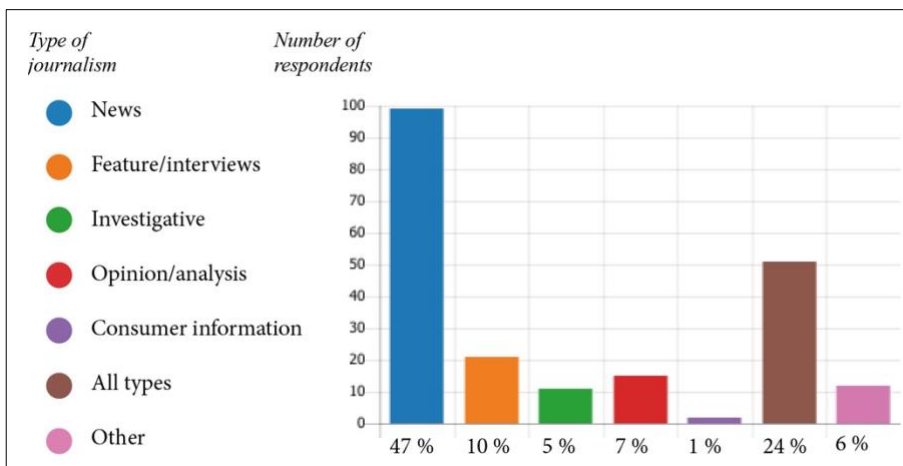


Figure 5. The respondents gave information about the main type of journalism they work with.

## 4.2 Journalistic ideals in practice

The first research question was: “How are journalistic ideals considered in the work routines of Swedish-speaking journalists in Finland?” When approaching it, the answers to several of the questions in the survey were analyzed. In four subsections the respondents’ views on ideals are presented from different perspectives.

### 4.2.1 The use of guidelines

In question 11 the respondents were asked to reveal what rules or guidelines they follow in their work (see Figure 6). A pre-eminently large number (164) of respondents claim to follow the guidelines for journalists while none of the respondents admits to follow the principle, ”never check a good story” which represents the opposite of the journalistic rule of always checking the facts thoroughly.

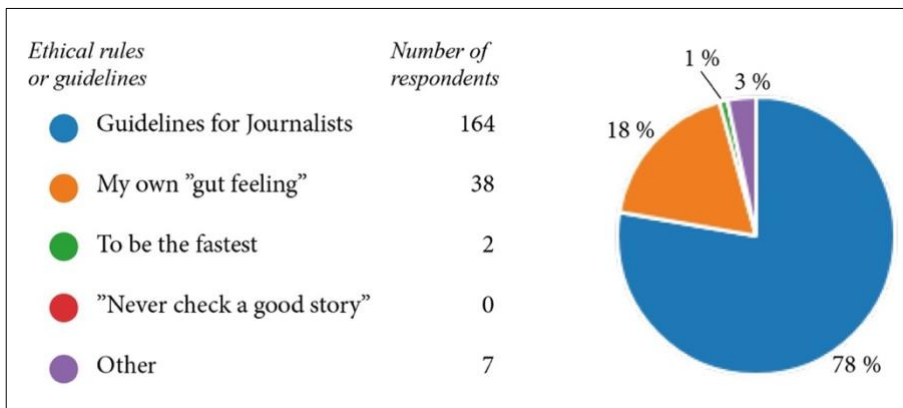


Figure 6. What ethical rules or guidelines do the respondents use (multiple answer question).

The respondents also gave their opinion about whether journalistic ideals and ethics are considered more or less today than ten years ago. The question appealed to the respondents' senses rather than to measurable facts, and therefore it may have been difficult to answer promptly. But since answering the question was compulsory, nearly half of them opted to claim ignorance rather than to speculate (see Figure 7).

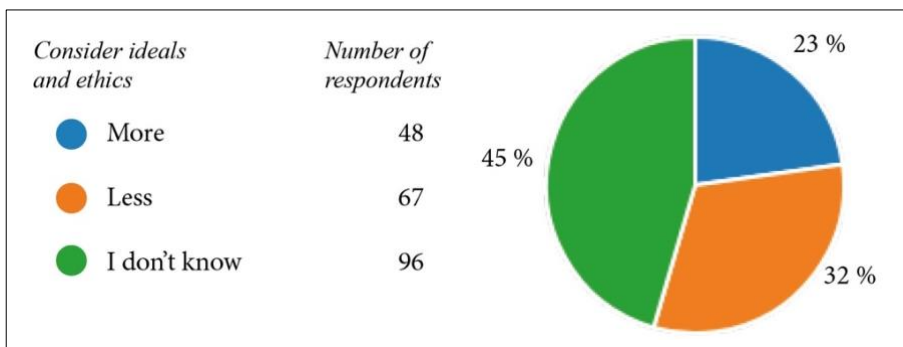


Figure 7. Changes in the use of journalistic ideals and ethics.

#### 4.2.2 Pressured to go against ideals

The second question in this category was if the respondents have ever been pressured to act in a way that contradicts their sense of journalistic ideals or ethics. A total of 63% of the respondents reported that they had been under pressure from someone, either a superior or someone from outside, while 36% said no or that they did not remember (see Figure 8). Of all the respondents in the survey ( $N=211$ ) 31% admitted to having succumbed to pressure from either a superior or an outsider or both.

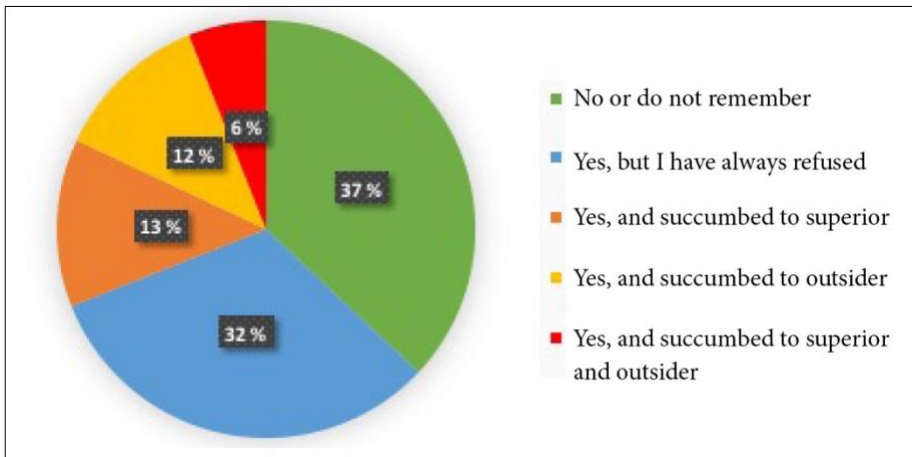


Figure 8. Have you been pressured to go against your sense of journalistic ideals or ethics?

Among the respondents who experienced pressure, about half (68) claimed they had refused to give in while the other half (66) admitted to having succumbed (see Figure 9).

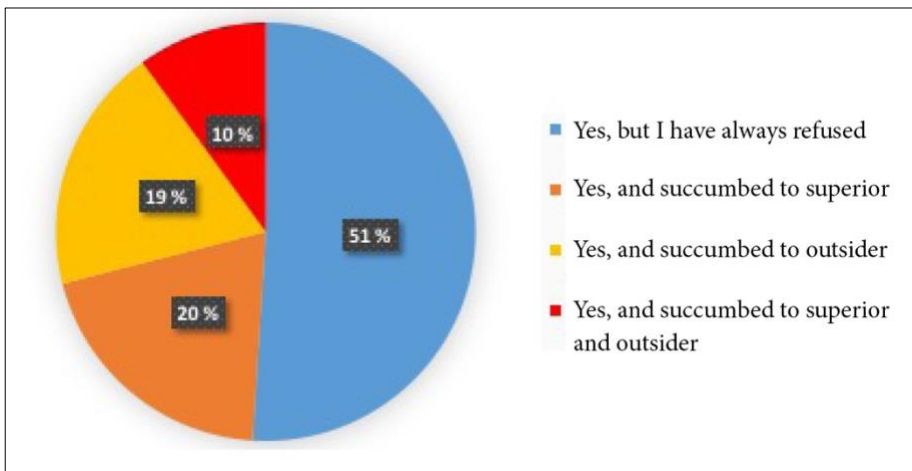


Figure 9. Respondents who had experienced pressure to go against their ideals.

### 4.2.3 The purpose of journalism

In three questions that concentrate around the same theme, the respondents were asked to grade how important they find different features or purposes in the field of journalism or in their own professional role. The scale was from 1=least important to 5=most important. In the cases where the respondents rated a category with the grades 4 or 5, this analysis regards it as "important".

The first question was how important they find features in journalism (see Figure 10). “Fact-based” and “trustworthy” were the most important features for journalism, according to the respondents, followed by critical.

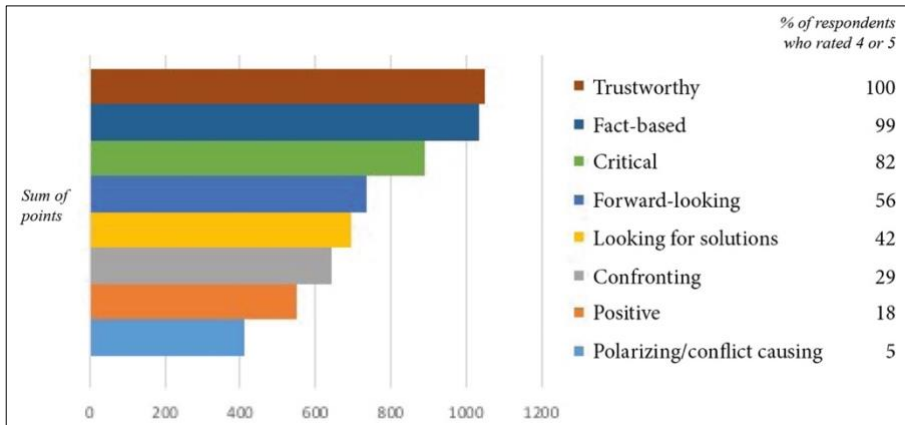


Figure 10. The importance of different features in journalism.

The second question in this category was what the most important roles are for them as journalists. The respondents gave the most points “watchdog of democracy”, quite closely followed by four other roles (see Figure 11). The last two, to “express the journalist's opinion” and to “entertain” were perceived as the least important. The low support for the journalist’s role as entertainers corresponds to a study in Sweden where only 17% of the Swedish journalists thought it was an important task (Wiik 2015 p. 126).

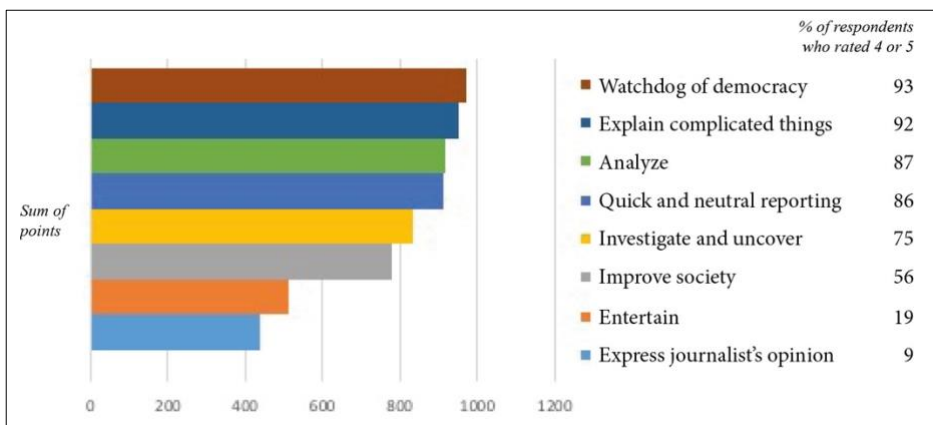


Figure 11. The most important role of the journalist.

The third question in this category inquired about the respondents’ view on the purpose of a news story. The total amount of points given show that the respondents thought “good storytelling” was the most important, and to “initiate discussion” the second most

important. To “change society” followed. Judging from these choices the respondents did not prioritize the evoking of strong feelings through their work (see Figure 12). These results also correspond to Wiik’s studies among Swedish journalists:

The professional identity of Swedish journalists is built on the notions of guarding democracy, explaining complicated events to the audience and letting different opinions be heard. Previous research shows this identity to be increasingly homogeneous over time and that the ideals of scrutiny and explanation are being accentuated in that process: as many as 99 percent of the journalists today consider these functions to be the most important elements of their professional role. (Wiik 2015 p. 119)

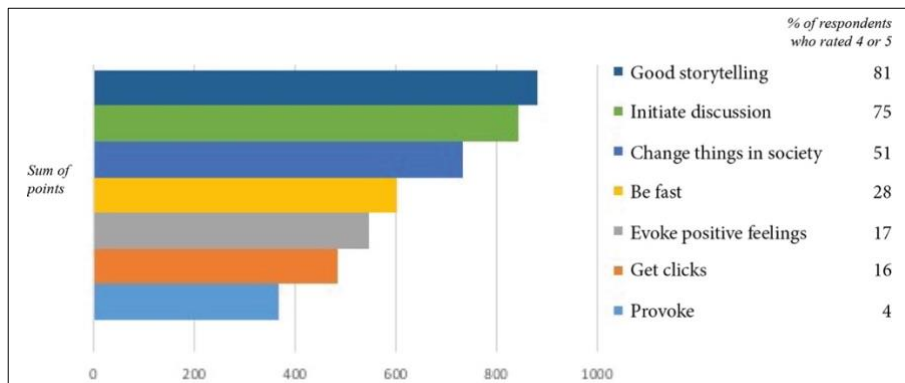


Figure 12. The most important purposes of a news story.

In Wiik’s study (2015 pp. 124–125), several similarities in how different age groups regarded ideals were found, but also differences. The objectivity ideal caused the most significant division among the Swedish journalists, since 75% of young journalists thought it was important while only 50–60% of the older journalists thought it was important. In the survey made for this thesis the most similar question was about “quick and neutral reporting” and thus the wording was not the exact same as in Wiik’s. However, there was no tendency towards a division between generations in this case, since all age groups rated it as important and an even higher percentage (97%) of the oldest journalists thought it was important than the youngest (89%).

The age groups had the same opinions about many of the ideals mentioned. The most significant difference between the age groups was in the attitudes towards an active form of journalism that aims to improve society (see Figures 11 & 13). Here, within the oldest category, only 38% thought it was important, while 59% of the younger journalists rated it as important. When respondents rated the importance of to “change society” the

tendency was not as clear but still visible. In the two oldest age groups in total 47% thought it was important, in the two youngest 56%.

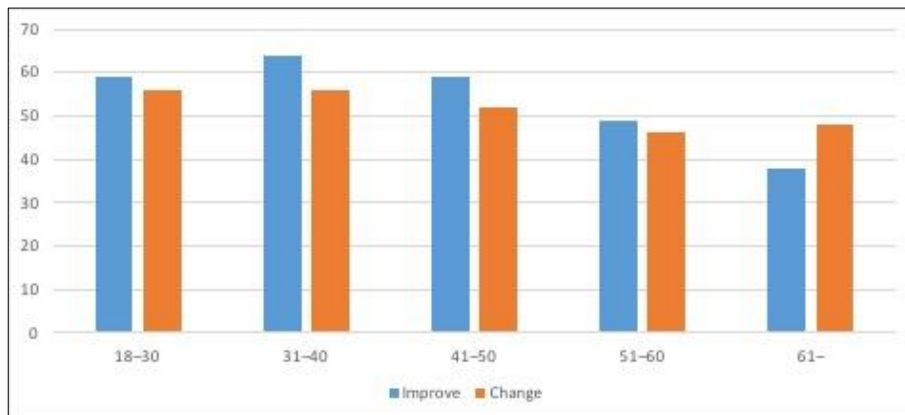


Figure 13. Participants who regarded improve/changing society as important.

### 4.3 Preconditions for good work

This section presents the results from questions regarding the ability to perform well at work and about job satisfaction among journalists.

#### 4.3.1 Job performance

The respondents were usually able to do their best at their workplace; a small majority of the respondents (109) answered yes (see Figure 14) when asked directly. In total 102 respondents chose one of the negative alternatives. Out of them the majority claimed that there is not enough time for them to do their best. 19 journalists had other reasons and 10 of these gave further explanations. Among them were low salary, fatigue, a lack of control over the material as a freelancer, unclear goals and a sense of inadequacy (due to personal shortcomings or a lack of resources). One respondent expressed a frustration towards a decreasing ability among the audience to understand journalistic reporting and analysis, which leads to a constant need for the journalists to explain background, and difficulties in producing neutral and analytical journalism.

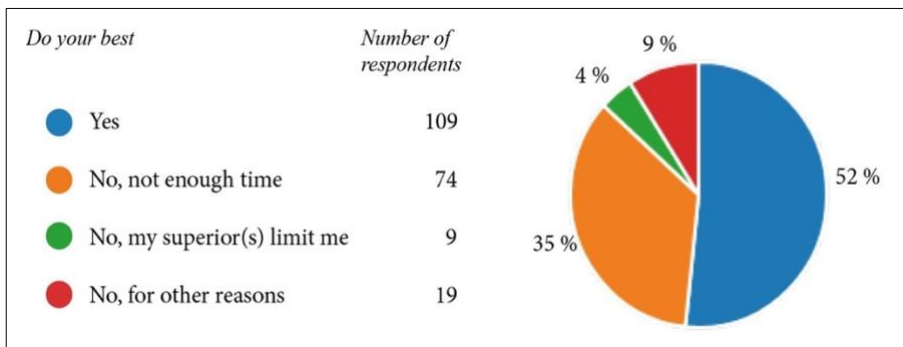


Figure 14. Are you able to do your best at your job?

### 4.3.2 Job satisfaction

When asked if they are satisfied at their current work, a convincing majority (171) said yes (see Figure 15). Among the negative responses, 18 had other reasons than the given alternatives. 12 of these gave explanations, and among these were too much focus on getting clicks, too much evaluation of the work being done, more non-journalism is finding its way in, pressure, a constant deterioration of working conditions, a lack of motivation after many years in the field, a general shortage of journalistic ambition at the workplace and job insecurity.

97 of those who said yes gave suggestions for improvements and/or complained in the open-ended answers about problems. 43 of the comments mentioned resource-related issues like wanting more journalists on the job, more time or better economy. 33 comments were about a need for better leadership. Other comments from those who claimed to be satisfied at their jobs expressed a wish for better communication, improvements in work environment, organizational issues and higher salaries. 59 of those who were satisfied did not leave any comments to the question about improving their work or workplace. These are quotes of participants expressing satisfaction at their job:

The communication is very bad, primarily from the top level down to us, the employees. Work is sometimes unfocused. Cutbacks have been made, but what tasks or areas we can abandon hasn't been clarified. There is often a sense of inadequacy, at the same time as it is difficult to make news victories and our profile becomes unclear to the audience – at a time when we need the opposite. (R68: female, newspaper)

That the editorial leadership would stop lying to themselves, believing that fewer writing/photographing/layouting journalists make a media company sharper or better. (R12: male, newspaper)



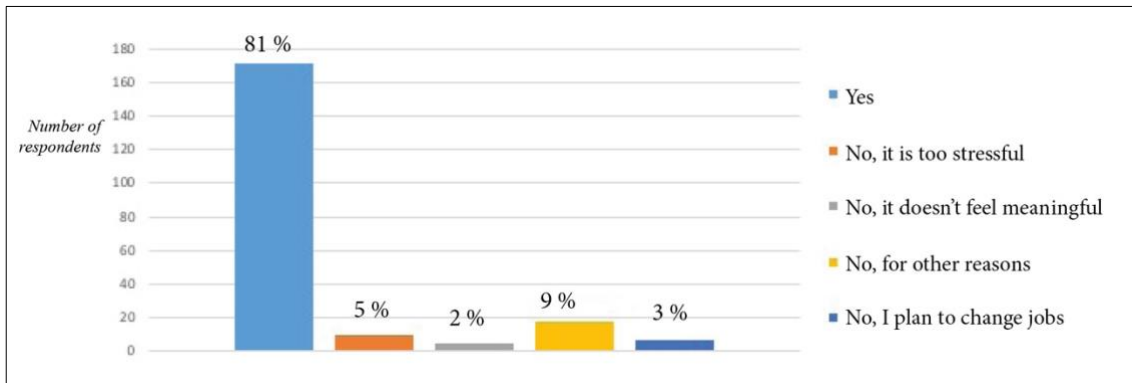


Figure 15. Are you satisfied at your job?

## 4.4 Journalists and the future

For the purpose of investigating what the journalists wish for and expect in the future, answers to a few different questions are analyzed. Thus, the topic is approached from various angles. Through answering the multiple-choice question “What type of journalism do we need more of?”, and the open-ended question “Explain in your own words what you want future journalism to be like”, the journalists were able to express visions about the future. The other open-ended question in the survey was “What could improve your work and/or your workplace?”, and that is also a relevant aspect in this context. By categorizing the answers into themes according to appearance in the open-ended answers, four main themes were identified, and they are presented in subsections below.

### 4.4.1 More investigative and quality

Many of the journalists in this survey want more investigative journalism. It is shown in the multiple-choice answers accounted for in Figure 16, and in the answers to open-ended questions. Also, since watchdog journalism is another term used for investigative journalism, the results shown in Figure 11 support this theory by showing that being the “watchdog of democracy” was the most important role for the journalist, according to the respondents, and to “investigate and uncover” also received high points. In the survey the term investigative was not defined, but it is plausible that the respondents refer to a form of independent journalism where the journalist actively investigates and publishes matters

that would otherwise be hidden to the public, and incorporate features like investigative, fact-based, independent and transparent (Strömbäck 2003).

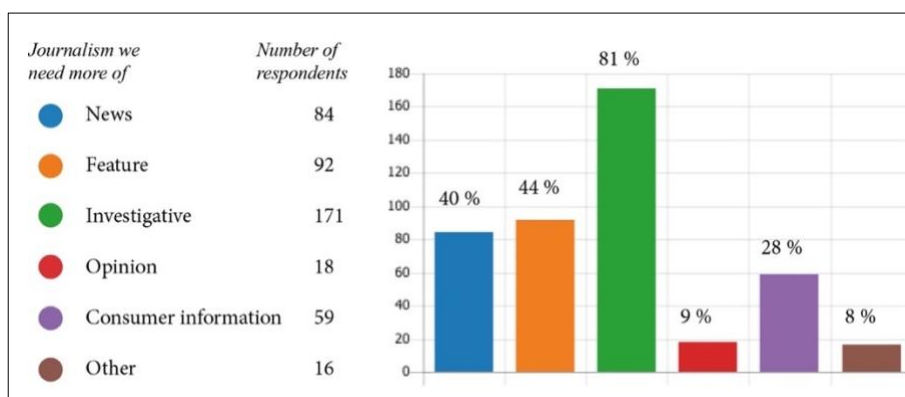


Figure 16. More investigative journalism is what the participants want the most.

The open-ended question, where the respondents were able to express their thoughts about the future of journalism in their own words, gave considerable insight into the respondents' motives and thoughts (see Figure 19). Many of the respondents described their wish for this type of journalism using different words: examining, analyzing, critical, elaborative, investigative, well researched, varied, in-depth, uncovering, fact-checked. Two respondents expressed their opinions like this (translated from Swedish):

Focus on quality, correctly describe society, critically examine policy-makers but without clickbait journalism. (R4: male, newspaper)

More investigating and examining. Less sensationalizing and polarizing. (R38: female, newspaper)

In question 14 the respondents were asked to disclose their experience of the focus on journalistic quality. A vast majority of the respondents said there is not enough focus on quality (see Figure 17).

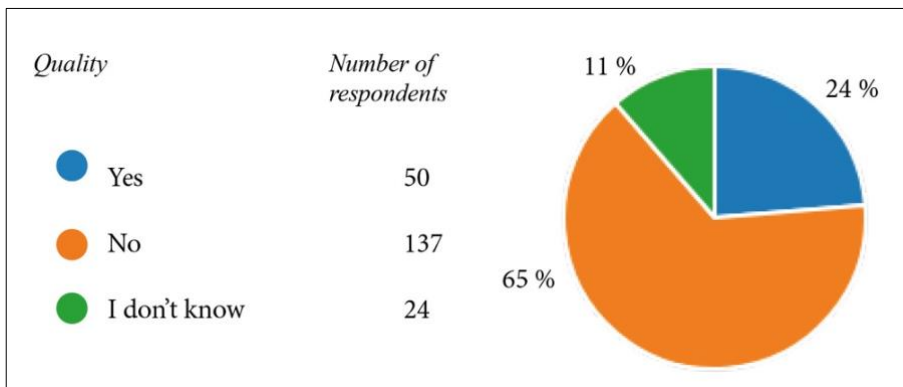


Figure 17. Is there enough focus on journalistic quality?

The term *quality* frequently occurred in the open-ended answers when the respondents expressed what they value and want more of in journalism. The word *clickbait* was often used as a contrast to quality journalism (in Swedish: *klickjournalistik*). Clickbait means tempting headlines that are aimed at getting people to click on them, but they are often exaggerated or misleading (Frampton 2015). The wish for more analysis is clear, although what was meant by the term *analysis* in this context was not defined. It may refer to the genre in which the journalist analyses something in media – like an editorial or a column – or it could relate to the journalists’ approach during the work process – or both. Among the responses it was not obvious which interpretation the respondents used unless it was expressed, for example, like this:

Actions in society are analyzed and illuminated through different genres so that journalism does not become a plain sludge. (R50: female, newspaper)

Clickbait was not considered to be a representative of so-called quality journalism, according to the respondents, and there were some other terms associated with poor journalism as well among the responses. Less sloppy and entertaining journalism, celebrities, rumors and nonsense were mentioned. There was a desire for less of these in the future. In Swedish the word *snuttifiering* came up in a negative sense. It means to divide news into shattered pieces and thereby lose the context. The term is sometimes used to express a worrying trend in journalism. There was also a wish for a deeper understanding of influential factors among journalists:

See through the overall narratives that control our way of thinking too much, also among journalists who believe they have a critical approach. More fact-orientation, much better fact-checking, less need of being seen and expressing our own opinions. Less black-and-white-thinking, see through also the “good ones”, admit our own faults. (R125: male, different media)

#### 4.4.2 To express opinions

To take sides or not to take sides is a divider within journalism. Some claim, for example, that journalists should not express their own opinions, or even perform analyses. *Neutral* was a common word used by the respondents. In the material there were two differing views; one faction claimed neutrality as the only way for journalists to keep their credibility, that journalists are not activists and should not be, that they should not analyze and thus “teach” the audience.

We have to see, listen to and talk to the people who are, for example, affected by different decisions. I hope we will stop with the “personal view” journalism, where journalists have their own opinion about everything. If we don’t have expertise in the area, why would we as journalists express our opinion about it in media? (R118: female, Yle)

The other faction wanted more analysis and opinions, a stronger position against, for example, anti-democratic or anti-vaccination movements and for journalists to not just claim “objectivity”. They often associated position taking with courage. To take a stand for or against something in journalism can occur in different ways; the journalist can write a column where an opinion is expressed quite to the point. Another method is through an analysis, editorial or otherwise processed analytical text, which is supported by facts and results with a well-motivated conclusion. A third way is to be more implicit, like choosing whom the journalist interviews or what angle he or she chooses for a story. In this survey the respondents appeared to refer to different ways – explicit and subtle ways of expressing a position, although direct opinions did not receive much support. This was confirmed by the answers in Figure 11, where the alternative to “express the journalist’s opinion” received the lowest points. Only 9% thought it was important.

In the open-ended answers to question 18, there were supportive comments about future journalism being engaging, fair, attentive to what is important in society, less polarized, not just show wrongdoing but also solutions, to focus less on the bad news and more on the good ones, to stop scaring people, to not get cynical, to be accepting and believe in the possibilities of politics and society and to be more constructive and less complaining. These properties are in accordance with the results presented in Figure 10, where the alternatives “forward-looking” and “looking for solutions” received relatively high points, placing them in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> place out of 8. These, as well as the other terms mentioned above, are central themes in the journalism movement *constructive*

*journalism*, which is defined in the theory section. The movement’s ideals received more support by the results presented in Figure 11, where the answers to the question concerning the most important role for a journalist gave the alternative “improve society” relatively high points, and in Figure 12 where to “change society” was also highly regarded. However, the word “positive”, received low ratings (see Figure 10) regarding journalism. There was a notable difference between age groups in this case, as seen in Figure 18.

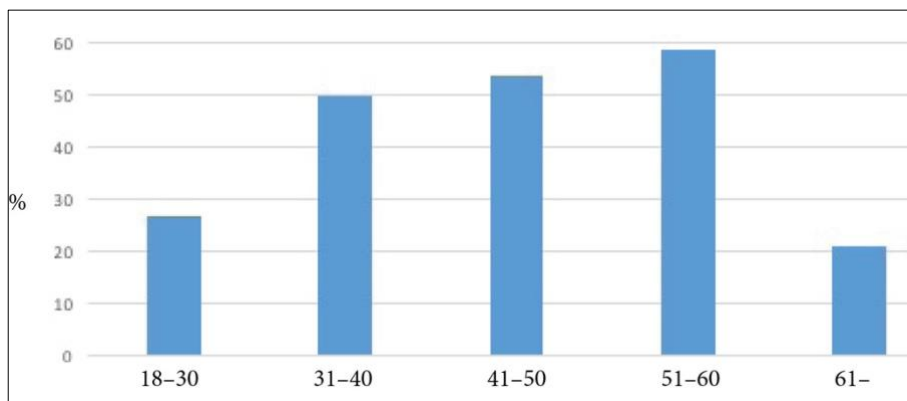


Figure 18. “Positive” journalism received different ratings from the age groups.

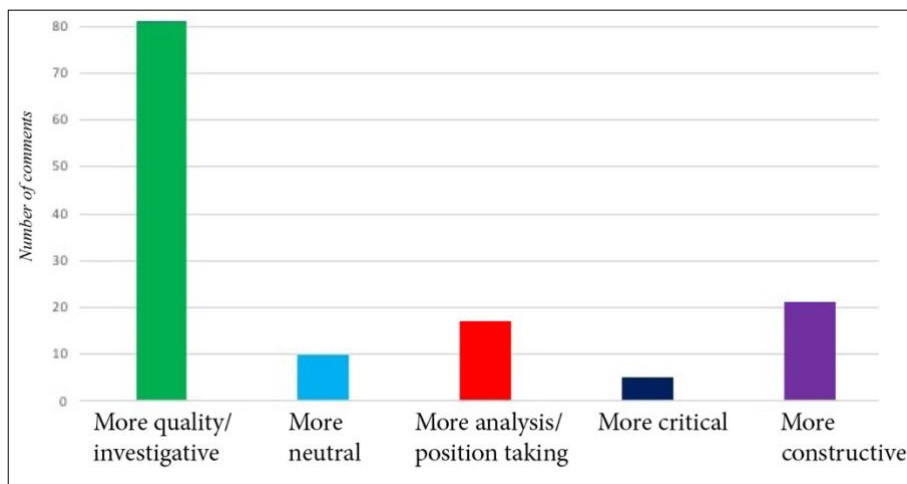


Figure 19. Open-ended answers that expressed a wish for more of these types of journalism.

This was the view of a participant regarding the future of journalism:

More courage, significantly independent, make journalism for the public and not for decision makers. Not to sink to internal political lingo and not to become cynical in their supervising role. Be broad-

minded, dare believe in the possibilities of politics and society. Show that things can also go well. (R64: female, newspaper)

#### **4.4.3 More resources, better routines**

The respondents were asked to suggest directly what would improve their workplaces. There was a clear wish for more resources in the answers to both open-ended questions – resources such as more time to do the job (38 comments), more journalists (21 comments), steady employment instead of temporary contracts and having the right people in the right places (see Figure 18). Those who called for more time motivated it often with having a chance to do a better job, to have less stress, more time to discuss with colleagues or to receive training. There were also suggestions for how routines should be improved, and existing resources redistributed, like focusing on where to put the energy (in some cases after severe cuts in the staff), less multitasking and more time to immerse, more coaching, feedback and discussion, more freedom and trust from the leadership, courage to try new methods and to prioritize one's own findings.

More time to do a thorough job, and that we at our little local newspaper would separate the Internet and the traditional paper more and publish fewer times a week on paper. Give everybody time to do their work considering which product they work for. (R197: female, newspaper)

The need for a better economy for the organizations was recognized as significant by some. As shown in Figure 13 earlier in this section, 35% of the respondents claimed to have problems performing their best at their work due to a shortage of time. Issues connected to the work environment were a wish for a more positive and encouraging environment, less disturbance and to not have to work in an open office landscape, more respect for each other's work and acceptance for diverseness, less restructuring and constant adjustments.

#### **4.4.4 Expectations on leadership**

When asked about improvements at their workplace as well as what they wish for the future of journalism, 30 respondents commented on the leadership and/or issues connected directly to the quality of leadership (see Figure 20). There was a desire for better communication and for leaders to be more closely connected to the daily routines. Complaints about bosses attending too many meetings were common, and respondents

were concerned about a lack of vision, direction and goals at their workplaces. A frequently occurring comment was that there were simply too many bosses on many levels in their organizations.

I wish there was more time to discuss ideas with my closest producer and I also wish for more time to do my job. I wish for more clarity within the company as to what kind of journalism we are supposed to engage in. And I wish there were more journalists and fewer bosses, because the amount of work put on a journalist is not entirely reasonable. (R165: female, Yle)

Less bureaucracy and/or hierarchy were on the wish list for two respondents working for newspapers and five from Yle.

Good leadership should mean that you know all the work processes it takes for content to be made, and know all the tools that should work, but don't. Good leaders should not be hierarchical but should serve the floor and focus on solving problems instead of creating them. We still have a bit to go there. (R88: female, Yle)

Better leadership in general was desired, defined as leaders who respect the employees, care about the content, communicate clear goals and directions and leaders who take the time to coach the journalists.

Better leaders and leadership are needed and not the same incompetent people who spin back and forth on the same positions but different media. One does not automatically become a good leader after being "in the house" for 20 years. (R185: female, different media)

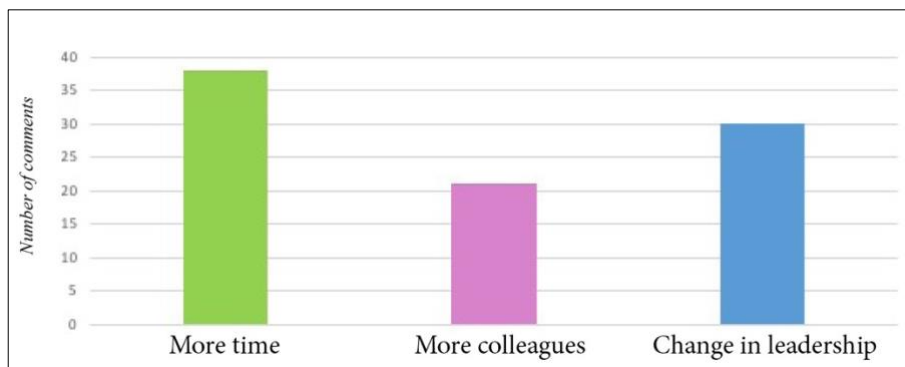


Figure 20. Requests for more time, colleagues and better leadership.

## 5 DISCUSSION

In this thesis I have studied the situation for the Swedish-speaking journalists in Finland through three research questions: "What ideals do Swedish-speaking journalists in Finland consider in their work routines?", "How do Swedish-speaking journalists in

Finland experience job satisfaction and job performance?” and “What do Swedish-speaking journalists in Finland want for the future of journalism?”

The first question was a starting-point for the study, since the journalistic ideals constitute the backbone of the profession. The survey results revealed that the respondents claimed to lean primarily on the well-established Guidelines for Journalists, complemented by their own “gut feeling”. This is likely to be a natural consequence of the fact, that practical work situations for journalists often involve immersing into sudden and/or unfamiliar events, followed by expectations from editors to deliver results quickly and correctly. Therefore, journalists need to have a set of ideals nestled in their back bone as well as an ability to act independently according to the situation at hand. This assumption is supported by earlier research described in the theory section of this thesis, showing that the daily work of a journalist is characterized by individual decisions.

It is relevant to compare the situation for Swedish-speaking journalists in Finland with both Finnish studies and studies made in Sweden, since the situations are similar; in both countries, and for both language groups, economic problems have led to significant cutbacks during the last ten years, and the technological development is the same. Therefore, there are also similar discussions of the changes in journalism and the journalists’ role in both countries. I have compared some of the results with findings in a Swedish study on ideals, where Wiik (2015 pp. 124–125) found significant differences in the views on objectivity and neutrality between generations and even notes that the young journalists had a different professional identity than the older ones. She concluded that the online generation leaned towards the Anglo-American model in their belief in objectivity and neutrality. In my study I did not find such clear differences between age groups in this context. Wiik acknowledged that there had been an academification process among Swedish journalists since the 1990’s, and that a larger part of the youngest generation therefore had a university degree, often in journalism. That may, according to Wiik, be one reason behind the changes. In my study, too, there was evidence of a professionalization – in the sense that the younger age groups were more prone to have studied journalism or to have a degree in journalism (see Figure 21). The overall educational level among journalists in Finland has changed in the same direction for many years (Slotte 2008). When considering that this study was conducted four years after



Wiik's, some of the youngest journalists are likely to have moved from the youngest age category to the next, and thus the situation may have altered also in Sweden since 2015.

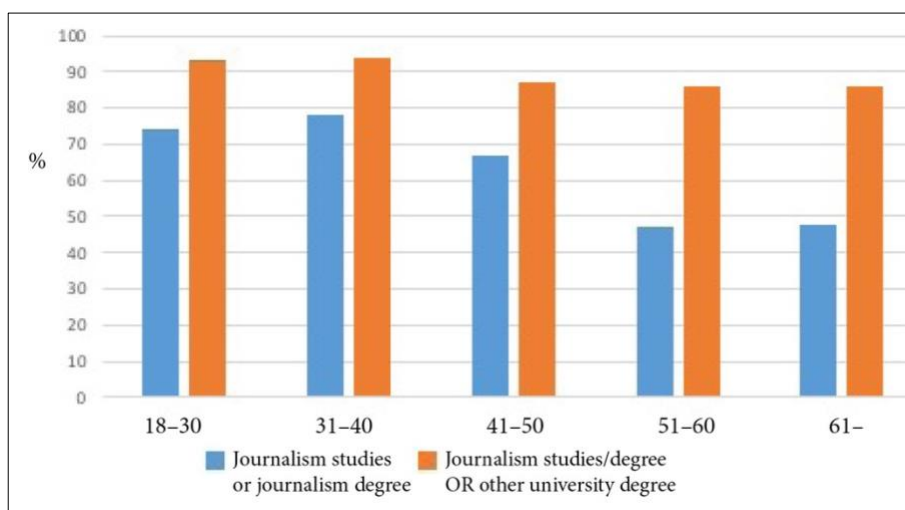


Figure 21. Educational level, difference between age groups. There is a difference between generations in the level of journalism studies, but it is negligible when considering both journalism studies/degree and other university degrees.

However, there were some differences between generations in the study among Swedish-speaking journalists in Finland as well. The most obvious contrast was how they valued the importance of journalism's role to "improve society". Only 38% of the oldest journalists thought it was important, while 59% of the youngest rated it as important (see Figure 13). In the closely related question, where they rated the importance for a story to "change society" 56% of the younger journalists and 48% of the oldest rated it as important, and that merely showed a small difference between age groups.

My experience from more than 20 years as a journalist has resulted in background knowledge useful when constructing the survey and finding perspectives on the results. I have learned, that being directly or indirectly pressured by actors from outside of the editorial office is very common. An example of direct pressure is, when people being interviewed afterwards want to change what they have said, or they may want to stop a story from being made or they want to direct how a story is told. Then the journalist can, for example, use the Guidelines for Journalists as a base for action. A more indirect pressure is when an outsider contacts the journalist's boss and tries to influence decision-making that way. If that is the case, it is often harder for the journalist to resist the

pressure. Especially reporters need to recognize when they are pressured, and they should possess the knowledge on how to act. In the survey 63% reported that they had been pressured, 36% said no or that they did not remember. According to my experience the real number of journalists who have actually been pressured to go against journalistic ideals is likely to be higher – closer to 100%. Scholars claim, according to information reviewed in the theory chapter, that journalism as a profession is built by its ideologies, and thus the importance of nurturing the core ideals is a reasonable aim. The fact that such a large part of the participants does not recognize being pressured is, in a sense, more alarming than the number of journalists who reported being pressured and either refused to give in or admitted to giving in. There are at least two possible answers to why so many said no: 1) they do not recognize outside influence as “pressure” or 2) their definition of journalistic rules, differ from other journalists’. And, if a journalist is not aware that they are being influenced, they are most likely more prone to do as they are told by either the superior or the outsider. If we then consider, that one journalist in two of those who reported being pressured succumb to it (see Figure 9), it is reasonable to assume that those who do not recognize pressure succumb to outside demands to an even higher extent.

Rules 2 and 3 in the Guidelines for Journalists in Finland clearly state that journalists must not give in to pressure from outside the editorial workplace:

2. Decisions concerning the content of media must be made in accordance with journalistic principles. The power to make such decisions must not under any circumstances be surrendered to any party outside the editorial office.
3. The journalist has the right and obligation to resist pressure or persuasion that attempts to steer, prevent or limit communications. (Guidelines for Journalists 2014)

The second research question focuses on the preconditions for performing well at work, by asking how the respondents estimate their job satisfaction and performance – factors that give an indication of their readiness to seize everyday work challenges and, as a consequence, their ability to consider deeper aspects such as quality and ideals in their routines. Firstly, over 80% claim they are satisfied (in Swedish: *trivs*) at their work. Secondly, in Figure 14 we saw that 35% of the respondents claimed that their jobs are too stressful for them to do their best. But in Figure 15, when they were asked if they are satisfied with their workplaces, only 5% said “no, because it is too stressful”. This indicates that even if the job contains a lot of stress and a lack of time, journalists are still generally content. This is consistent with the results in a Finnish study by Pöyhtäri et al.,

where journalists claimed that there is an escalating conflict between speed and quality in their work, but that a high tolerance for stress is mostly accepted as a part of the job for the modern journalist (2016 p.19). However, both those who were satisfied and those who were not, complained about problems and made suggestions for improvements. This indicated that they recognized the situation not being perfect, but that they enjoyed working where they did anyway and wanted to keep their jobs. This is supported by the fact that only seven respondents (3%) answered “no, I plan to change jobs”. There is, however, a lot of room for improvements. The comments clarified that a lack of time and stress due to understaffing is the most urgent problem followed by inadequacies in the leadership. According to Pöyhtäri et al. (2016) the journalists in that study respected the core ideals of journalism, but they felt that stress forced them to bargain with them.

That brings us into the third research question, which focuses on what lays ahead. The future of journalism is affected by the journalists themselves and ideals they hold in high regard. To make the participants think about the future also tells us a lot about how they see the situation today, since they must takeoff from somewhere and express a will to change what is wrong. Most of all, when focusing on journalism, the respondents wanted more investigative journalism. Only 5% of them reported that they work with that type of journalism today, but in the future, they think it should be emphasized by giving it more time, resources and editorial support. A predominant majority claimed that there is not enough focus on quality, in their opinion, and there was a clear desire for better quality regarding journalism in the future. Judging from the large number of answers to the open-ended questions, the journalists care for their profession and want to contribute to an improvement of their working conditions as well as the quality of the content they produce.

There was a division in the answers about if journalism should be active in trying to improve or change society, as we see in Figure 22. The younger generation was more supportive of this notion, which indicates that journalism may be heading for that direction in the future. Another possibility is, that young people in general are more inspired to make an impact on the future, but that has not been analyzed further in this study. Especially when we consider “improving society”, the youngest respondents were clearly more supportive than the older ones, and that could imply that it is perceived as

more and more acceptable to see journalism partly as activism. However, being neutral had a stronger support so it is not possible to make any strong predictions about the future. Another way of looking at an active form of journalism is to recognize, that there was significant support for the active kind of journalism promoted by the movements presented in the theory section; the features of so-called constructive journalism were, by many, considered important (see Figures 10–12). Features like “forward-looking” and “looking for solutions” are not typical for the more traditional core ideals in journalism, but they are central in constructive journalism. But implications for the future is difficult to make, since the most support appears to be among the age groups in the middle (see Figure 23). The ideals central to constructive journalism were, however, frequently occurring also among the open-ended answers (see Figure 18), which may indicate that it is a growing movement.

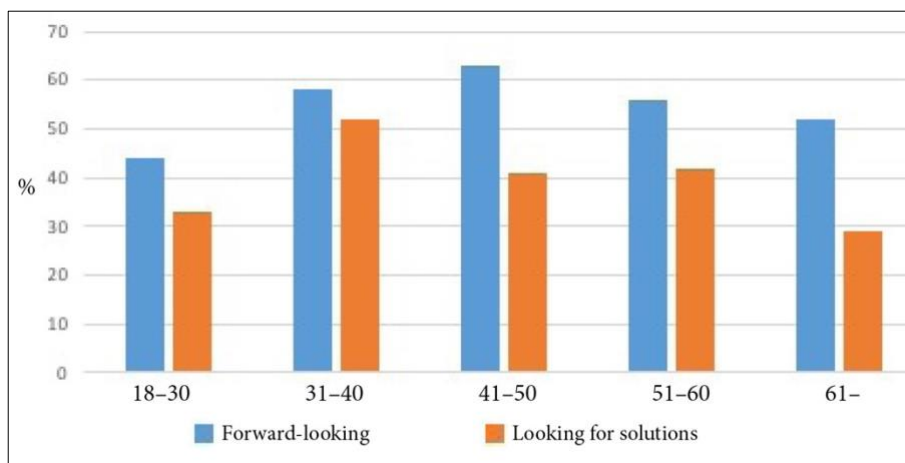


Figure 22. The importance of “forward-looking” and “looking for solutions”.

“Good storytelling” was the purpose of a news story that the most participants thought as important. As we see in Figure 24, there was a tendency that the support increased with age. But it is not possible to know if this was because age and experience changes the way journalists feel about storytelling, or if it was a generational difference, and storytelling thus may become considered less important in the future. It was, however, still quite important to the young respondents since almost 70% of the 18–30-year-olds rated it as important.

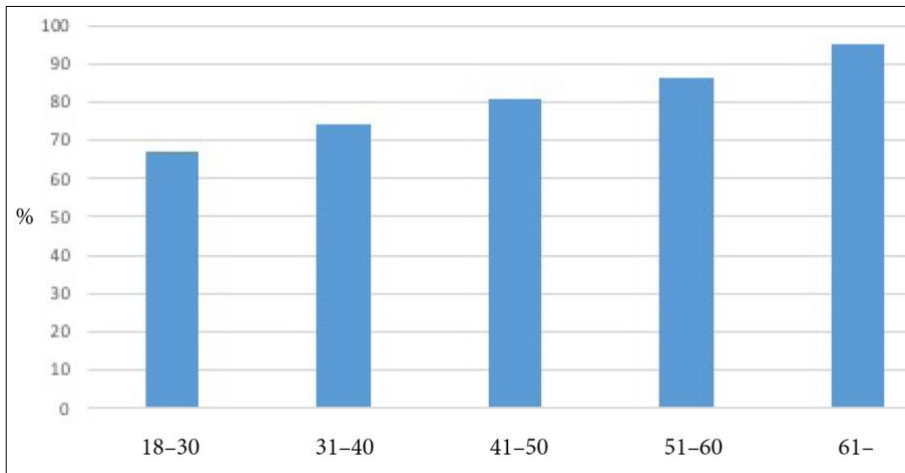


Figure 23. The importance of “good storytelling”.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has shown, that the Swedish-speaking journalists in Finland care about their profession, and that they mainly want to continue working at their current jobs. There is a clear desire for more focus on quality, and for putting more resources into investigative journalism. However, “quality” for one journalist is to be neutral and fast, for another to be analytical. Both ideals exist simultaneously. The respondents also greatly stress the importance of ideals like being trustworthy and fact-based, the watchdog of society, to explain complicated things and good storytelling – all being core values of journalism. Many journalists complain about stress and bad or absent leadership, and that is most likely a significant background factor causing the quality deficit. Based on the findings, and on previous research, the conclusion is that stress and lack of editorial coaching as well as unclear organizational goals impedes the journalistic work and weakens the professional identity.

The high tendency to give in to pressure and thus be forced to abandon journalistic ideals is worrying. It contradicts the value of being independent, which is one of the central journalistic ideals. Based on my experience from journalistic work I see it as highly likely that the actual number of journalists receiving pressure is much higher than the survey shows, and therefore the influence from outside – e.g. sometimes powerful actors like politicians, authorities and business representatives – is even more extensive than this study reveals.

The cutbacks during recent years have often led to understaffing, which causes stress and pressure to work more. In turn they have less time to consider journalistic ideals. Due to a lack of editorial guiding and organizational guidelines journalists are left to make more individual decisions. As Hujanen (2014) writes: “Following ideals leads to reliable, high-quality and independent information”. To conclude, there is a great demand for a leadership based on core journalistic ideals and supported by an overall organizational plan for the news companies. There is also a need for better communication and for discussions about ideals and values within organizations. Since there is a shared ideology, which is constantly evolving, everybody working within the profession needs to be involved in these types of discussions. In order to defend journalism against outside pressure the watchdog seems to need ... a watchdog.

This study has contributed to the research on journalistic ideals and working environments. It is relevant for journalists who reflect upon their own attitudes towards professional ideals, and to editorial as well as organizational leaders who aim to improve journalistic quality and the well-being of their employees.

My recommendations for further research in this field has two directions; firstly, we need to address the question whose well-being media is nurturing – is it the interest of citizens or someone else’s? There may be unconscious choices made on the editorial level, for instance. There is a great deal of pressure from outside actors aimed at journalists, and sometimes they succumb to it – even if it goes against their sense of journalistic ideals. Content analyses on how, for example, different power constellations or influential movements are pictured in the Swedish-language media may be one way to contribute. Secondly, in order to gain deeper understanding of how journalists treat the core ideals and how they react to pressure in their daily work, an ethnographic or auto-ethnographic study could be made, complemented by interviews. There is also a lack of understanding for the direct effects of the economic crisis on the journalists in Swedish-language media in Finland.

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## APPENDIX 1. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear recipient,

This is a survey about Swedish-speaking journalists' view on their role, on the journalistic ideals and on the prerequisites for doing a good job. Your answer is important for giving a picture of what dominates journalism today. The responses to the survey will be used in my master's thesis at Arcada school of applied sciences during spring 2019. Answering the questions takes about 6–10 minutes and you are completely anonymous. You will find the questions by following the link below. Only one response per participant.

Thank you for your contribution!

Ann-Sofi Berger

Student, Media Management, Arcada

### 1 Age:

- 18–30
- 31–40
- 41–50
- 51–60
- 61–

### 2. Gender:

- Female
- Male
- Other

### 3. Education (you can choose multiple answers):

- Journalism, university degree
- Journalism, other or not finished
- University, other
- Degree, other than university level
- No degree

### 4. I work for:

- Newspaper
- Yle public service media
- News agency
- Different types of media
- Other

If you answered "Other" in the last question you may explain here (voluntary):

### 5. I work mainly as:

- Editor / leader
- Reporter with steady employment
- Freelance reporter or temporarily employed reporter
- Layout journalist / art director / graphic designer
- Other

If you answered "Other" in the last question you may explain here (voluntary):

**6. What type of journalism is your main area of focus?**

- News
- Feature / interviews
- Investigative
- Opinions / analysis
- Consumer information
- All kinds
- Other

If you answered "Other" in the last question you may explain here (voluntary):

**7. What type of journalism do we need more of (you can choose multiple answers)?**

- News (in any area iike local, sports, political, economy etc.)
- Feature
- Investigative
- Opinion
- Consumer information
- Other

**8. How important, on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 equals the least important and 5 the most, do you think the following features are in journalism? That it is:**

- Fact-based
- Critical
- Positive
- Forward-looking
- Looking for solutions to problems
- Confronting
- Polarising / conflict causing
- Trustworthy

**9. In your opinion, what are the most important roles of a journalist (1 equals the least important and 5 the most important)?**

- To be the watchdog of democracy
- To quickly and neutrally report about events
- To investigate and uncover wrongdoings
- To improve society
- To analyze
- To explain complicated things in a simple way
- To express the journalist's opinion
- To entertain

**10. How important are the following purposes of a news story (1 equals the least important and 5 the most important)?**

- To get clicks
- To provoke
- To initiate discussion
- Good storytelling
- To evoke positive feelings
- To change society
- To be fast

**11. In your work as a journalist, what ideals or ethical guidelines do you aim to follow (you may check as many boxes as you want)?**

- "Guidelines for journalists"
- My own "gut feeling"
- The law
- To be the fastest
- "Never check a good story"
- Other

If you answered "Other" in the last question you may explain here (voluntary):

**12. Have you ever been pressured to produce a story against your sense of journalistic ideals or ethics (you can choose multiple answers)?**

- No
- Yes, but I have always refused
- Yes, by a superior
- Yes, by someone outside of work
- I don't remember

**13. Do you think journalistic ideals and ethics are more or less considered by journalists in general today than, for example, 10 years ago?**

- More
- Less
- I don't know

**14. Do you think there is enough focus on journalistic quality at your work?**

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

**15. What is the approach to new technology and development at your work, in your opinion?**

- There is the right amount of focus on it
- There is too much focus on it
- There is not enough focus on it
- I don't know

**16. Are you usually able to do your best at your current workplace?**

- Yes
- No, there is not enough time
- No, my superior(s) limit me
- No, for other reasons

If you answered "No, for other reasons" in the last question you may explain here (voluntary):

**17. Are you satisfied at your current job?**

- Yes
- No, it is too stressful
- No, it doesn't feel meaningful
- No, I don't want to be a journalist
- No, I plan to change jobs

- No, for other reasons

If you answered "No, for other reasons" in the last question you may explain here (voluntary):

**18. Explain in your own words what you want future journalism to be like.**

**19. What could improve your work and/or your workplace?**

**What was your experience from this questionnaire (1 star = bad, 5 stars = excellent)?**