

ILMARI HILTUNEN

# External Interference in Finnish Professional Journalism



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in Finnish Professional Journalism

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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# ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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To all those who have suffered and sacrificed to bring out the truth.



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Helsinki, on the 9th of June

Ilmari Hiltunen



# ABSTRACT

Autonomy is regarded as a cornerstone of modern Western journalism and often considered a prerequisite for professional journalism's ability to fulfill its democratic functions effectively. In stable democratic societies with highly institutionalized press freedom, the autonomy of journalism and the mental and physical safety of journalists have often been taken for granted. However, social, political, economic, cultural, and technological transformations constantly make their mark on the status and position of journalism, and the process of transition from the analog era's mass-media landscape to a still-evolving contemporary digital hybrid media environment has brought new challenges. Professional journalists in today's media environment face a multitude of external pressures and threats, ranging from political and commercial interference to online harassment and growing anti-press sentiments.

The dissertation examines how external actors strive to interfere with journalists and their professional conduct in Finland, and it explores the associated implications for journalistic work. Adapting elements from field theory, this work positions professional journalism as a field engaged in constant struggle to protect its autonomy and its specific logic, norms, and practices from encroachment by external fields, with concrete manifestations of that encroachment being articulated and operationalized via the concept of external interference. The latter conceptual umbrella covers all active and/or invasive methods that actors external to journalistic organizations employ in aims of transgressing the bounds of the relevant professional autonomy and interfering in journalistic processes and their outcomes. This lens affords exploring a host of interference types simultaneously, from low-intensity mechanisms such as verbal pressure to more aggressive and intrusive ones such as explicit intimidation and violence directed at journalists. This makes it possible to produce a nuanced and multifaceted picture of various types of interference present in contemporary journalists' work.

Three core aims underlie this project. The first is to produce empirical evidence demonstrating how external interference manifests itself and the ways in which professional journalists negotiate and make sense of it in the context of stable and democratic high-press-freedom countries such as Finland. Secondly, the dissertation

explores how social, economic, political, cultural, and technological transformations accompanying transition from a mass-media environment to today's hybrid one are reflected in the ensuing external interference and its influence on professional journalists. The final aim is to produce output that supplies the actors in the journalistic field with practical knowledge whereby they can improve their responses to external interference and bolster their resilience against it.

The research followed a sequential mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative datasets and methods. The foundation of its quantitative component is descriptive and statistical analyses of 875 sets of survey responses from Finnish professional journalists. The qualitative material comprises an array of open-ended comments from 353 journalists in a questionnaire-based survey, semi-structured focused interviews of 31 journalists, and background interviews with representatives of four stakeholder organizations. An inductive variant of applied thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data.

Together, the findings presented in the four associated original publications characterize the manner in which external interference introduces stressors and sources of mental strain to journalistic processes, thus affecting journalists' work and their personal wellbeing. External interference is not uniform, however; neither does it affect all professional journalists equally. While most Finnish journalists encounter expressions of external interference only rarely and sporadically, a small set of journalists who hold certain positions and capital in the journalistic field get targeted disproportionately. The results suggest that evolution of a hybrid media environment has intensified specific aspects of external interference. With novel tools of communication, organization, and action at their disposal, audiences have emerged as a significant source of interference and threat in the current media environment. Polarization of politics and of society more generally has imposed new challenges to professional journalism's social status and legitimacy. They manifest themselves in a perceived increase in hostility toward professional journalists and their work. These developments require journalistic organizations to pay special attention to how they might foster professionalism, confidence within their ranks, and a culture of open communication among journalists while simultaneously offering effective means of support to mitigate key detrimental effects of interference.

By detailing the case of Finland, the dissertation reveals patterns in how external interference is exhibited and affects professional journalists in a democratic Western nation that has strong legal, cultural, and institutional safeguards of press freedom and autonomy in place. Because that aspect of journalism's production has seldom been studied in the context of countries that accord great value to freedom of the

press, this treatment makes an important contribution to global debate on the challenges that face professional journalism in a communication environment amid transformation.

**Keywords:** Autonomy; Journalism (profession); Pressure; Interference; Harassment, Intimidation; Threats; Violence

# TIIVISTELMÄ

Autonomiaa pidetään modernin länsimaisen journalismin kulmakivenä ja edellytyksenä sille, että journalismi voi menestyksekkäästi toteuttaa demokraattista tehtäväänsä yhteiskunnassa. Vakaisissa demokratioissa ammattimaisella journalismilla on tyypillisesti ollut vakiintunut yhteiskunnallinen asema, ja tätä asemaa sekä journalistien mahdollisuutta tehdä työtänsä ilman pelkoa vakavista uhista on totuttu pitämään itsestäänselvyytenä. Yhteiskunnalliset, poliittiset, taloudelliset, kulttuuriset ja teknologiset kehityskulut vaikuttavat kuitenkin jatkuvasti journalismin toimintaympäristöön ja tätä asemaa tukeviin tekijöihin. Siirtymä analogisesta joukkoviestintäympäristöstä nykyiseen hybridiin mediamaisemaan on tuonut mukanaan uusia uhkatekijöitä, ja nykypäivän mediaympäristössä journalisteihin ja heidän työhönsä kohdistuu vaikutusyrityksiä ja uhkaa lukuisissa eri muodoissa. Nämä vaihtelevat poliittisesta ja taloudellisesta painostuksesta aina verkkohäirintään ja lisääntyvään journalisteihin kohdistuvaan vihamielisyyteen.

Väitöskirjassani tarkastelen ulkopuolisten toimijoiden journalismiin kohdistamia vaikutusyrityksiä sekä niiden vaikutuksia ammattijournalisteihin ja heidän työhönsä Suomessa. Kenttäteoriasta lainaten hahmotan ammattimaisen journalismin kenttänä, joka pyrkii suojelemaan kentän autonomiaa ja sen toimintaa ohjaavia periaatteita, käytäntöjä ja normeja ulkopuolisten toimijoiden suoralta puuttumiselta. Käsitteellistän ja operationalisoin tämän puuttumisen ulkoisen vaikuttamisen käsitteen avulla. Ulkoinen vaikuttaminen kattaa laajasti kaikki sellaiset aktiiviset ja/tai invasiiviset menetelmät, joiden avulla toimitusorganisaation ulkopuolinen taho pyrkii oikeudetta vaikuttamaan journalistiseen prosessiin ja/tai journalisteihin ja tätä kautta journalismin sisältöön ja autonomiaan. Tämän käsitesateenvarjon alla on mahdollista tarkastella samanaikaisesti useita erilaisia ja intensiteetiltään vaihtelevia vaikuttamisen menetelmiä aina sanallisesta painostamisesta uhkailuun ja henkiseen ja fyysiseen väkivaltaan. Käsitteen avulla voidaan siis monipuolisesti kartoittaa nykyisessä mediaympäristössä journalisteihin kohdistuvan ulkoisen vaikuttamisen kokonaiskirjoja ja yhteisvaikutuksia.

Väitöskirjallani on kolme päätavoitetta. Ensimmäinen tavoite on tuottaa empiiristä tietoa siitä, millaista journalisteihin kohdistuva ulkoinen vaikuttaminen on Suomessa, miten journalistit suhtautuvat vaikuttamiseen ja miten he torjuvat sen

seurauksia työnsä osana. Koska Suomella on erityisasema yhtenä lehdistövapauden kärkimaista, näin syntyvää empiiristä tietoa voidaan hyödyntää tutkittaessa journalistien kohtaamaa ulkoista vaikuttamista muissa korkean sananvapauden konteksteissa. Toiseksi tarkastelen sitä, miten siirtymä analogisesta joukkoviestintäympäristöstä nykyiseen hybridiin mediaympäristöön ja sen mukanaan tuomat yhteiskunnalliset, poliittiset, taloudelliset, kulttuuriset ja teknologiset muutokset heijastuvat journalistien kohtaamassa ulkoisessa vaikuttamisessa. Kolmanneksi pyrin väitöskirjani kautta tuomaan journalistiselle ammattikentälle tietoa, jota alan toimijat voivat hyödyntää. Tavoitteenani on parantaa suomalaisten journalistien ja journalismin kykyä vastustaa ja torjua ulkoista vaikuttamista ja sen ei-toivottuja seurauksia.

Väitöskirjan kokonaisuus perustuu monimenetelmälliseen aineistoon ja määrällistä ja laadullista tutkimusta yhdistelevään lähestymistapaan. Määrällinen osuus perustuu tilastolliseen analyysiin 875 suomalaisen ammattijournalistin tutkimuskyselyyn antamista vastauksista. Laadullisen osuuden aineisto muodostuu 353 journalistin avovastauksista samassa kyselyssä, 31 journalistin teemahaastattelusta ja 4 sidosryhmähaastattelusta. Laadullisen aineiston analyysissä käytin menetelmänä sovelletun temaattisen analyysin induktiivista muotoa.

Väitöskirjan neljän osajulkaisun löydökset havainnollistavat mekanismeja, joiden välityksellä ulkoinen vaikuttaminen lisää journalistiseen työhön liittyviä stressitekijöitä ja siten potentiaalisesti kasvattaa työn henkistä kuormittavuutta. Ulkoinen vaikuttaminen ei kuitenkaan kohdistu kaikkiin journalisteihin yhtäläisesti. Valtaosa suomalaisista journalisteista kohtaa työssään erilaisia ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmiä harvoin ja epäsäännöllisesti, mutta tietyt erityisryhmät ammattikentällä ovat jatkuvasti vaikuttamisen kohteena. Tutkimustulosten perusteella siirtymä hybridiin mediaympäristöön on muuttanut näkyvästi tiettyjä ulkoisen vaikuttamisen osa-alueita. Yleisö ja siihen rinnastuvat toimijat ovat uusien viestintä- ja organisoitumismahdollisuuksien kautta nousseet journalistien näkökulmasta merkittäviksi uhkatekijöiksi. Poliittinen ja yhteiskunnallinen polarisaatio haastavat ammattijournalismin asemaa ja legitimizeettiä yhteiskunnassa uudella tavalla. Tämä näkyy esimerkiksi kasvavana journalisteihin ja journalismiin kohdistuvana vihamielisyytenä. Nämä kehityskulut pakottavat tiedotusvälineet ja ammattikentän kiinnittämään huomiota siihen, miten epätoivottuja vaikutuksia voitaisiin ehkäistä. Väitöskirjassani journalismin autonomiaa tukeviksi tekijöiksi hahmottuvat professionalismin ylläpitäminen, sisäisen luottamuksen rakentaminen ja avoimen viestinnän ja tukemisen kulttuuri organisaatiossa.

Tarkastelemalla ulkoista vaikuttamista juuri Suomessa, väitöskirjani tuottaa uutta tutkimustietoa siitä, millaisia ilmentymiä ja seurauksia journalismiin kohdistuvalla ulkoisella vaikuttamisella on demokraattisessa, vakaassa länsimaassa, jossa lainsäädäntö, kulttuuri ja institutionaalinen ympäristö ovat monella tavalla journalismin autonomialle suotuisia. Koska tätä osa-aluetta journalistisesta työstä on erittäin harvoin tutkittu korkean sananvapauden valtioissa, väitöskirjani tuottaa merkittävää uutta tietoa keskusteluihin ammattijournalismin kohtaamista haasteista muuttuvassa viestintäympäristössä.

**Avainsanat:** Autonomia; Journalismi (professio); Painostus; Vaikuttaminen; Häirintä, Uhkailu; Uhkatekijät; Väkivalta

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# ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

At the heart of this dissertation are the following original publications, referred to in the text as publications I to IV.

I Hiltunen, Ilmari (2019). “Experiences of External Interference among Finnish Journalists: Prevalence, Methods and Implications.” *Nordicom Review* 40 (1), 3–21.

II Hiltunen, Ilmari, and Suuronen, Aleksi (2020). “Differences Based on Individual- and Organizational-Level Factors in Experiences of External Interference among Finnish Journalists.” *Journalism Practice*.

III Hiltunen, Ilmari (2020). “Ulkoisen vaikuttaminen ja sen vastakeinot suomalaisessa journalismissa.” *Media & viestintä* 43 (3), 176–205.

IV Hiltunen, Ilmari (2021). “External Interference in a Hybrid Media Environment.” *Journalism Practice*.

# DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP IN CO-AUTHORED PUBLICATIONS

**Publication II:** Ilmari Hiltunen was primary author, with the second author, Aleksi Suuronen, being responsible for quantitative statistical analysis.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

In a modern society, journalism as an institution serves several important democratic functions. Firstly, it disseminates societal information that citizens need in order to make informed democratic decisions (McNair 2009, 238–239). Secondly, journalism aspires to act as an independent estate: by monitoring actors who wield societal power and reporting on how and to what effect this power is used, it provides an additional check and balance (Hampton 2010). Thirdly, journalism creates a shared public forum for diverse interests and gives a public voice to the society’s actors and citizens, fostering democratic debate and exchange of thought (Luostarinen 1994, 28–29). These notions are central to professional journalists’ understanding of their work and its societal significance (e.g., Hanitzsch et al. 2011; 2019; Revers 2017, 5). As McNair (2009) points out, the origin and development of democracy and journalism in the West are historically tied together, and modern Western journalism’s claim to legitimacy and its identity have been connected to its democratic functions (Revers 2017, 5; see also Kunelius and Ruusunoksa 2008, 666).

The major premise with the work presented in this dissertation is that journalism needs autonomy if it is to fulfill its democratic functions effectively. Historically, Western journalism sought separation from partisan politics and open profit-seeking, as it sought to establish a position as an independent public-minded institution serving democracy and the public good instead of partisan political or economic interests (Tumber and Prentoulis 2005, 62–63; Waisbord 2013, 19–20). A claim to autonomy and democratic ideals are features that fundamentally separate professional journalism from other forms of mass communication, such as advertising or strategic communication, thus giving journalism its distinct identity (Kunelius 2003, 23–25). The commitment to journalism’s ethics, ideals, and integrity that is made possible by this claim to autonomous status forms the cornerstone that guarantees the credibility of professional journalism in the eyes of the public (Kunelius 2003, 23–25; Mäntylä 2008, 130–131). If journalism loses these distinct features, its credibility, its societal significance, and its ability to effectively fulfill its democratic functions suffer greatly.

However, journalism's democratic functions and this distinct status also grant journalism itself a significant amount of societal power. Being able to manipulate or control journalism can, therefore, offer remarkable benefits and influence for actors seeking to further their own interests and agenda (Luostarinen 1994, 53). It is not a coincidence that the first order of business for totalitarian and authoritarian governments typically has been to clamp down on autonomous journalism and replace it with government-controlled propaganda (e.g., Peleg and Wozniuk 2019). It is not only governments, though, but a plethora of actors – from politicians, corporations, and non-profit organizations to cliques of ideologically like-minded individuals – who continuously seek to harness journalism to promote their interests. Additionally, it is not uncommon for members of the audience to take action in efforts to dictate what “should” or “should not” be reported or how things are to be presented in journalism (see, for example, Lee and Solomon 1990, 354; Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016; Nerone 1994). Sources, subjects, and audiences of journalism operate from their own motivations, resources, and methods when aiming to interfere with journalism. To preserve its claim to autonomy, professional journalism must be capable of repelling and otherwise dealing with various types of actions intended for manipulating the outcomes of journalistic processes. With this dissertation, I propose the concept of **external interference** for use in describing various active and/or invasive actions that actors external to the journalistic organizations utilize in their efforts to interfere with journalists, the performance of journalism, and its output. This concept, explored in detail in Chapter 2, demarcates the object of the dissertation. By situating the concept of external interference via an assemblage of elements adapted from field theory and theories of professionalism, the dissertation presents a theoretical framework for examining attempts to interfere with professional journalism as contests of societal power.

Luostarinen (1994, 16) notes that journalism and interference display a paradoxical relationship: every successful effort of interference potentially decreases the public confidence from which journalism draws its power and authority, eventually decreasing the benefit gained from influencing journalism in the first place. Therefore, succumbing to external interference entails journalism gradually relinquishing both its claim to autonomy and a major source of its societal status and power. The constant struggle between professional journalism's efforts to uphold this claim and various external actors' efforts to interfere with the output of journalism is the central tension addressed by the dissertation.

As a product of modernity, professional journalism is situated at the intersection of politics, economics, society, culture, and technology; hence, it is extremely

sensitive to alterations in any of these (Waisbord 2013, 5). Recent economic, political, and technological transformations have “shaken the old journalistic order with still unpredictable consequences” (Waisbord 2013, 5). These developments have brought with them new concerns and threats to the position of professional journalism, especially from 2010 onward. Media outlets have been struggling to establish sustainable business models for journalism, with cutbacks, layoffs, mergers, and closures ensuing (e.g., Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2018, 1088–1091; Nikunen 2011) and in some cases contributing to increased power of advertisers over editorial content (e.g., Atal 2018; Drew and Thomas 2018; Duffy and Cheng 2020; Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2018; Grönlund et al. 2021). New legislation and regulations limiting media freedom have been established in many countries (e.g., Reporters Sans Frontières, RSF, 2020; 2021a), and “media capture” through political and economic means has become a common tool for government suppression of journalism (e.g., Dragomir 2020; Schiffrin 2016; 2018). At the same time, strained international relations extend their effects on journalism as states seek to silence critical voices also abroad (e.g., Clark and Horsley 2020; Luque Martinez 2015; Milanovic 2020). Today’s global surge of right-wing populism has propelled anti-press sentiments and the demonization of journalists and journalism into the political mainstream (Waisbord 2020a, 7–8). Notwithstanding some very recent recovery (Reuters Institute 2021), audience trust in journalism has been steadily decreasing (e.g., Edelman 2021), in a pattern conceptualized as both a symptom and a cause of political polarization and institutional distrust. Increasingly hostile attitudes toward journalism materialize also in physical threats faced by journalists reporting from the field (e.g., RSF 2020; US Press Freedom Tracker 2021), and we have witnessed even such exceptional acts of violence as journalists being murdered for their work in countries that are members of the European Union (e.g., Bilefsky and de la Baume 2015; RSF 2019b; Urbániková and Haniková 2021). The current information environment is becoming increasingly polluted by misinformation and disinformation, to which journalists and their work are far from immune (see, for instance, Wardle and Derakhshan 2017). Simultaneously, harassment, abuse, and intimidation of journalists, especially in online environments, has become widespread (e.g., Chen et al. 2020; Lewis et al. 2020; Waisbord 2020a; 2020b).

A tendency long persisted to take the relative autonomy of professional journalism and the physical and mental safety of journalists in stable democratic Western contexts for granted (see Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016; Reich and Hanitzsch 2013, 134). However, recent transformations have emphasized the need to pay attention to various phenomena threatening that autonomy and safety also in

countries with high formal levels of media freedom and strong safeguards for the freedom of the press. It has become crucial for journalism scholarship to document and analyze how these challenges are manifested, how they affect journalists and their professional conduct, and how society could support journalists' ability to conduct their work "without fear or favor" in these contexts.

This dissertation focuses on Finland, which, as do the other Nordic countries, stands near the top of rankings of media freedom and democratic rights (e.g., Freedom House 2021; RSF 2021b). The Finnish media system boasts several systemic factors supporting relative autonomy of journalism, and the level of shared professionalism among Finnish journalists has traditionally been very high (Ala-Fossi et al. 2021; Pöyhtäri et al. 2014; 2016). Finland's mainstream media largely cut their ties with political parties in the early 1990s, so the country's media field today displays little political parallelism or political ownership (Manninen and Hjerpe 2021; Niemikari et al. 2019, 32; Nord 2008). A strong tradition of newspaper readership and tax-funded public broadcasting has kept the financial health of the media more stable in Finland (Ala-Fossi et al. 2021) than, for example, in the United States, where financial difficulties have completely devastated many local newspapers and other media outlets, leaving patches of "news deserts" across the nation (e.g., Abernathy 2020). While trust in news media has, nonetheless, generally declined in the course of the 2010s in Finland, it has remained high when compared to most countries' (Matikainen et al. 2020; Reuters Institute 2021).

This background makes Finland an extremely interesting case study for the type of research presented here. From a systems perspective, Finland should be an extremely favorable environment for relatively autonomous professional journalism and for the safety of journalists. The literature reflects this supposition, in that very few studies in recent decades have touched on any problems related to professional autonomy of journalists in Finland, let alone discussed challenges and threats to it from journalists' point of view (but see Hemánus 1983; Koivunen 2017; Kuutti 1995; Luostarinen and Raittila 2014; Mörä 1999; Pöyhtäri et al. 2016; Reunanen and Koljonen 2014). Yet, as Hemánus (1983), Kuutti (1995), and Mörä (1999) illustrate, even in the later years of the mass-media era, pressure, interference, and threats have been a part of Finnish journalists' work environment. In the 2010s, incidents such as the media scandal over former prime minister Juha Sipilä's alleged behind-the-scenes efforts to interfere with reporting of his potential conflict of interest by Finnish public broadcaster Yleisradio Oy, YLE (Koivunen 2017), and unprecedentedly aggressive and widespread harassment campaigns targeting journalists (e.g., Aro 2019; Määttänen 2018) have occasionally brought these matters

into the public spotlight. Journalist associations and other stakeholders have publicly expressed their concern over proliferation of harassment and intimidation of journalists, seeing them as serious threats to freedom of expression (Ahtokivi 2016; Council for Mass Media, CMM, 2016; Association of Editors, PTY, 2016; Sanomalehtien Liitto 2016). Recent research illustrates how transformations in the current media environment have affected Finland's local and hyperlocal media, gradually weakening their economic situation and eroding the resources for critical journalism and, thereby, the possibilities for it (Grönlund et al. 2021; Pöyhtäri et al. 2016). In addition, newly established alternative- and counter-media outlets are explicitly challenging "legacy" media online, feeding the mistrust and hostility directed at mainstream journalism (Noppari and Hiltunen 2018; Noppari et al. 2019; Reunanen et al. 2021, 58–59; Tuomola forthcoming).

Hence, the dissertation project set out to explore the prevalence, methods, and implications of external interference targeting journalism in a societal context that, in many respects, has highly favorable conditions for relative autonomy of professional journalism and where journalists are usually considered able to conduct their work without encountering serious risks. This dissertation simultaneously examines how the transition from a mass-media environment to the contemporary hybrid one and diverse political, social, cultural, technological, and economic changes accompanying this transition are reflected in external interference, its methods, and factors contributing to it. As Luostarinen (1994, 73) states, methods of external interference are constantly evolving, and new methods are frequently introduced. Therefore, maintaining an up-to-date understanding of the factors and trends that tangibly threaten professional journalism's ability uphold its claim to autonomy necessitates continuous monitoring. Through examining and analyzing these manifestations in Finland, it is possible to delineate the threats to journalism's relative autonomy in similar societal contexts and explore the nature of the various threats' connections to broader transformations. Producing such knowledge is extremely important because of professional journalism's integral role in modern democracy. If its autonomy decreases, journalism risks losing its special status and public confidence, thus also putting the societal functions of journalism in jeopardy (see Pickard 2020). With this dissertation, therefore, I take a normative stance to professional journalism and democracy, seeing them as positive societal forces that depend on each other and considering them worth defending against other forms of mass communication and government.

Since the research approach represented by this dissertation emphasizes the perspective of professional journalists, it offers valuable insight as to how external

interference affects both individual journalists and the whole journalistic field in Finland. Journalism is already recognized as a stressful profession, with journalists subjected to a vastly competitive environment, constant time pressures, and multitasking requirements while simultaneously the outcome of their work is prominently featured in public and carries real societal stakes (e.g., Kalter 1999, 30; see also Monteiro et al. 2016; Nikunen 2011). The dissertation examines how external interference interacts with various other stressors present in journalistic work. Also, by exploring interference's implications alongside factors that enhance professional journalists' ability to preserve their autonomy despite it, this work provides practical knowledge that can inform development of practices, procedures, and support measures in journalistic organizations. Thus, it should bolster their ability to resist external interference and its effects.

## 1.1 The Project's Aims and the Research Questions

The aims for this dissertation are threefold. Firstly, due to the scarcity of up-to-date empirical work on this subject in the context of stable democratic Western societies, a need clearly exists to produce comprehensive empirical evidence of how external interference is manifested and how professional journalists make sense of and negotiate interference in their work. Interactions related to external interference can often be elusive and take place "behind the scenes" of journalistic work. Therefore, the first goal is to provide empirical documentation of processes, practices, and sensemaking related to external interference in the Finnish context. The results should render external interference, professional journalists' perceptions of it, and autonomy-preservation-connected journalistic boundary performances visible for audiences, practitioners, and academics alike, thus affording further discussion and study of these phenomena that is rooted in empirical evidence.

My second key aim has to do with analyzing how the transition from a mass-media environment to today's hybrid one and the transformations accompanying this transition get reflected in external interference and in journalists' capability of maintaining their professional autonomy against interference. As the autonomy of journalism is constantly negotiated amid a myriad of conflicting pressures (e.g., Nygren 2015; Waisbord 2013) and enforced by repetition in professional practices (e.g., Penttilä 2021) and boundary performances (Revers 2017), journalists are crucial sources in ascertaining how various developments have affected professional journalism's ability to shield its conduct from external interference. Examination



from this angle allows identification and analysis of current factors and tendencies that pose challenges and threats to journalism's external autonomy and independent functioning. The endeavor should form a contextual first-hand understanding of contemporary shifts and trends that affect the relative autonomy of journalism from the perspective of professional journalists themselves while also tying in the analysis with wider societal transformations.

My third and perhaps most important aim is to produce knowledge that actors in the journalistic field can put to practical use. Similarly to Luostarinen (1994, 19), I situate the research as a project aimed at improving the function of journalism in society by means of knowledge production and analysis, adopting "questions from the field and tools from academia." The dissertation, by shedding light on external interference and its countermeasures, informs of elements that are crucial for journalists' ability to uphold their relative professional autonomy and should equip journalistic organizations to better prepare for and deal with various types of interference. With the dissertation, then, I seek to inform the field of professional journalism, providing knowledge and analysis that journalistic actors can utilize to enhance their resilience to interference and to advocate for greater societal protection for autonomy of journalism. Because autonomous journalism is deemed vital for true democracy, this research can be seen also as an attempt to foster solid functioning of democracy by combating unwarranted external manipulation of journalism and by nurturing an informed democratic public.

The dissertation project employed sequential mixed-methods analysis to explore the prevalence, methods, and implications of external interference in contemporary Finnish professional journalism. These research questions provided the starting point:

RQ1: What kind of external interference do Finnish professional journalists encounter in their work? How prevalent is external interference for Finnish professional journalists?

RQ2: How does external interference affect the work of Finnish professional journalists?

RQ3: What factors in Finnish professional journalists' work environment support their efforts to preserve their external autonomy despite interference?

Answers to these questions are to be found through synthesis of findings described in the original publications. These findings are presented in detail in Chapter 4, and their implications and significance are further discussed in Chapter 5.

## 1.2 Contributions of the Dissertation

This section situates the dissertation within journalism research and addresses how it supplements and enriches the preexisting body of knowledge pertaining to external interference and its effects on journalists and journalism. Grounded in a review of prior research, the dissertation project yielded new insight on the research field through combining 1) a context of a democratic and stable setting, 2) individual-level analysis, 3) focus on documentation and manifestations of interference, and 4) a holistic approach exploring the combined effects. These contributions and their significance are discussed below.

### 1.2.1 Context: A Stable Western Democracy

Scholars' attention to interfering with journalism through pressure, harassment, intimidation, sanctions (either positive or negative), and/or force has typically focused on authoritarian and semi-authoritarian contexts and unstable or emerging democracies (Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016, 880–881). In these contexts, the interference is often systematic and at least unofficially government-sanctioned (Harrison and Pukallus 2018). Research focusing on these contexts is very understandable, because the problems, challenges, and threats journalist face are far more numerous and prominent there than in democratic and stable settings (e.g., Carlsson and Pöyhtäri 2017; Grøndahl Larsen et al. 2020; Hamada 2021; Jamil 2019; Mitra et al. 2021).

However, historical accounts attest that “mob censorship” and various other methods of silencing controversial and critical journalism have not been uncommon in democratic contexts (see, for instance, Nerone 1994; Neuvonen 2018; Waisbord 2013). For instance, Reich and Hanitzsch (2013, 134) note that there has long existed a tendency to take journalistic autonomy for granted in democratic Western environments, even though several scholars have pointed out deterioration due to such factors as increased commercialization and the growing corporate control over journalism. Two explanations can be given for this tendency.

Firstly, while government-sanctioned or politically imposed limitations have been almost unanimously seen as detrimental to media freedom, the discussion surrounding limitations stemming from commercial considerations has not carried similar weight (e.g., Curran 2014; Pickard 2019a; 2019b; 2020; Schudson 2005, 216–218). This echoes the neo-liberal argument that as long as the media are independent of government, the free market will take care of providing independence, diversity, and accountability (Curran 2014, 14). Private ownership and profit-linked considerations have seldom been problematized or treated as threats to autonomy and the democratic function of journalism (see Pickard 2019b, 154). Therefore, research and the literature have focused on the politics-rooted and forceful subordination of journalism that is most prominent in unstable democracies and authoritarian contexts, often ignoring threats posed by market intrusion and other, similar structural effects (cf. Dragomir 2020).

Secondly, methods of interference in unstable and developing democracies and in authoritarian contexts are typically explicit and aggressive, running the gamut from constant government harassment and litigation to imprisonment, violent attacks, and killing of journalists (e.g., Carlsson and Pöyhtäri 2017; Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez 2018; Hughes and Vorobyeva 2019). Furthermore, impunity for crimes against journalists is often an additional political tool to silence and intimidate journalists in these contexts (Harrison and Pukallus 2018). In stable Western democracies, the methods of interference are typically subtler and more covert, and they are rarely made public (Parker 2015, 2–3; Clark and Grech 2017). Recognizing and measuring these more slippery methods of interference and their effects on journalism requires a mindset and instruments different from those suited to exploring pressures and interference in contexts where journalists are overtly subjugated and subjected to methods of extreme intimidation (Parker 2015, 2–3).

The dissertation fills this research gap via an empirical examination of external interference in the context of a stable and democratic European country with a high degree of institutional press freedom and press autonomy. Taking Finland as its primary case, the dissertation illustrates how external interference manifests in and affects professional journalism in Western settings of this nature, thus broadening the area addressed by research. The knowledge produced allows us to pinpoint and analyze developments that place the level of professional autonomy of journalism under threat in comparable contexts and to identify wider trends that contribute to them. Simultaneously, this dissertation is a conceptually and methodologically oriented example of documenting external interference, including its effects, and of how we can operationalize related research questions in similar societal settings.

## 1.2.2 Level of Analysis: The Perspective of Individual Journalists

Professional autonomy of journalism has often been explored at macro and meso levels, with attention to, for example, legislation, ownership of the media, and the media economy (e.g., Brogi et al. 2020; International Research & Exchanges Board, IREX, 2019; Trappel and Tomaz 2021). This dissertation, however, articulates a micro-level approach whereby autonomy against interference is examined at the level of individual journalists and their experiences. This enables effectively identifying potential weak signals of broader trends, since individual journalists are often the first to encounter their effects. In addition, a micro-level approach can be especially useful in drawing together multiple levels of analysis. With individuals, it is possible to adopt perspectives and pose questions that allow us to step beyond the façade of structural factors to examine their actual manifestations in the journalistic environment.

From an individual-oriented standpoint anchored in the Finnish context, the dissertation illustrates how journalists may perceive their relative autonomy and its challenges and limitations in a societal environment that both boasts strong cultural, institutional, and legal safeguards to press freedom and, according to macro- and meso-level metrics, should greatly favor the independence and autonomy of professional journalism. By cross-examining these factors, one is able to identify possible contradictions and discontinuities between distinct levels of analysis. For instance, both my work and previous research utilizing similar levels of analysis (see Kuutti and Koski 2021) have identified shortfalls in government officials' ability and willingness to provide public information to journalists irrespective of the Finnish law on openness of government activities explicitly granting extensive access to government documents. This scholarship reveals a disconnect between the formal legislation, on macro level, and the implementation in practice, thus illustrating how micro-level analysis can be a crucial element of triangulation for those exploring structural elements' interaction in a particular journalistic environment.

Additionally, this perspective aids in considering how professional journalists perceive external interference as individuals and examining the factors that support their individual-level professional autonomy in the face of it. Likewise, it offers a similar opportunity to analyze and discuss possible contradictions and discontinuities between organizations' support measures, communication, and guidelines and their practical application. Identifying problems and contradictions enables us to address these inconsistencies and examine underlying factors contributing to them.

### 1.2.3 Documentation: Focus on the Occurrence and Manifestations of Interference

Individual-level studies of journalistic autonomy have typically examined general perceptions and feelings of freedom among journalists (Urbániková 2019, 4–5; for examples, see Hanitzsch et al. 2011; 2019; Hughes et al. 2017; Nygren and Degtereva 2012; Nygren et al. 2015; Reich and Hanitzsch 2013; Skovsgaard 2014; Weaver 1998; Weaver and Willnat 2012). There are several noteworthy limitations to measuring perceived autonomy. Firstly, perceptions of autonomy are very subjective, and it is difficult to establish a baseline allowing for reliable comparisons across contexts. This is especially problematic in contexts wherein journalism’s professionalism and relative autonomy remain weak and there are long traditions of state control, media patrimonialism, and media capture (Schiffrin 2016; 2018; Waisbord 2013). One could argue that journalism in these contexts has not achieved a position of sufficient autonomy and is still considered a subfield of politics (Waisbord 2013). This dynamic may explain the gulfs visible between media-freedom indices (Freedom House 2021; RSF 2021b) and journalists’ surprisingly optimism-laced perceptions of their relative autonomy in, for example, Russia, Sudan, and Thailand (see Hamada 2021; WJS 2021a). State intrusion and media patrimonialism pose systematic obstacles to development of the field’s genuine autonomy, for the core aim is to keep journalism subordinate to the political field and suppress aspirations to professional autonomy (Waisbord 2013; Hamada 2021). In these contexts, representatives of the field of journalism may explicitly promote submission to other fields themselves, thus weakening journalism’s professional solidarity, calls for increased autonomy, etc. and rendering it meaningless to measure perceived autonomy (see Waisbord 2013, 166; Nazarenko 2021a).

The second limitation is that studies applying broad categories such as “perceived influences” (e.g., Hanitzsch and Mellado 2011; Hanitzsch et al. 2010; 2019; Maurer 2019; Mellado and Humanes 2012) or “pressures on one’s work” (e.g., Hanusch et al. 2020; van Dalen 2012) do not provide information on the mechanisms and dynamics behind the effects – they fail to demonstrate the mechanisms that lead to tangible effects on the journalists’ conduct in their occupation (Urbániková 2019, 4). While studies employing these approaches convey useful insight as to how journalists perceive and experience implications of various influences and pressures, their analysis of how influences and pressures appear in journalistic work is lacking because of a tendency to reduce these to abstract forces that operate outside societies’ and professions’ power structures. Also, research instruments constructed

in line with this approach can be considered more interpretive, since understandings of “influence” or “pressure” can vary hugely, depending on the respondent, potentially decreasing the validity of the results (e.g., Pöyhtäri et al. 2014, 24–29; see also Molyneux and Zamith 2020, 7).

Urbániková (2019, 4) states that techniques measuring the incidence of concrete forms of interference have potential to produce more valid and reliable data. However, very few studies have empirically explored the manifestations of external interference, studying how it actually materializes in journalistic work (however, see Clark and Grech 2017; Clark and Horsley 2020; Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2018; Goyanes et al. 2020; Kodellas et al. 2014; Parker 2015; Urbániková 2019). Research directly considering interference in the Finnish context is especially scarce (but see Hemánus 1983; Kuutti 1995; Mörä 1999; Pietiläinen 2007). By turning the research focus to concrete forms and the incidence of external interference, the dissertation project represents empirical research systematically assessing how threats to journalistic autonomy are made manifest in professional journalists’ work. The findings provide knowledge that can inform development of effective responses to external interference in a contemporary media environment. If supplemented in future with longitudinal research, these findings could also afford identifying and analyzing shifts and trends in external interference targeting Finnish journalists.

#### 1.2.4 Holistic Approach: Taking Account of the Combined Effects of Various Types of Interference

The fourth contribution of the dissertation lies in the objective of exploring the joint effects of various types of external interference. While recent research has expressed some interest in commercial pressures (e.g., Atal 2018; Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2018; Hanusch et al. 2016; 2020) and in harassment directed at journalists (e.g., Adams 2018; Miller 2021; Miller and Lewis 2020), with a surge of contributions examining online abuse and harassment in particular (e.g., Barrios et al. 2019; Binns 2017; Chen et al. 2020; Holton et al. 2021; Koirala 2020; Landsverk-Hagen 2015; Lewis et al. 2020; Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016; Obermaier et al. 2018; Post and Kepplinger 2019; Sarikakis et al. 2021; Stahel and Schoen 2020; Waisbord 2020a; 2020b), the focus of these studies has usually been narrow and specific. Work examining multiple types of interference and their combined effects has been thin on the ground (however, see Clark and Grech 2017; Clark and Horsley 2020; Kodellas et al. 2014; Parker 2015).

I argue that examining specific types of interference separately does not reflect contemporary journalists' lived experience, because they are often targeted with multiple types of interference at the same time in their work. Therefore, I sought to develop theory and methodology that enable capturing the combined effects. By combining the concept of external interference with an assemblage of elements adapted from various societal theories, this dissertation offers a flexible conceptual framework that can accommodate the diverse evolving methods and tactics aimed at interfering in the performance of journalism and at influencing journalists. This framing permits studying low-intensity interference alongside more intrusive and aggressive methods while simultaneously allowing analysis of their combined effects. Thereby, it becomes possible to paint a nuanced and holistic overall view of the external challenges and threats to autonomy of professional journalism in a certain context. As examples from recent experience attest, journalists do not face just targeted political and economic pressure; increasingly, they must deal also with effects such as psychological and legal harassment/intimidation at the same time (e.g., Clark and Grech 2017; Dragomir 2020; Herr 2020; Luque Martinez 2015; RSF 2019a; Waisbord 2019). Simultaneously, the proliferation of communication and public relations (PR) activities and the rise in anti-press sentiments have erected new obstacles to journalists' ability to obtain information and report freely and safely from the field (e.g., Gold 2017; Raman 2020; Siddiqui 2017; Sterne and Peters 2017).

Through examining multiple types of external interference simultaneously, this dissertation addresses how their combination affects work of professional journalists in the present-day media environment. This allows us to analyze how constellations of diverse societal, cultural, political, economic, and technological developments and transformations get reflected in the field of professional journalism. Additionally, the approach utilized facilitates more accurate contextualization of the factors that professional journalists today consider crucial for their ability to uphold their autonomy against encroachment by various external actors.

### 1.3 The Finnish Context in the 2010s

This section presents the setting of the project, contemporary Finnish society and the transformations taking place in the 2010s. The discussion here provides contextualization by examining Finland's political landscape, media system, media market, safeguards of press freedom, journalistic work practices, trust in the media, alternative-media sphere, and challenges that have recently come to face society and



professional journalism. Background on these aspects was derived from contemporary research into the key elements of media, society, and the public sphere (e.g., Ala-Fossi et al. 2021; Manninen and Hjerppe 2021; Niemikari et al. 2019; Reunanen et al. 2021; Strandberg and Carlson 2021). Since the focus of this dissertation is on the present day, it does not feature a historical account of how this context formed or present details of the temporal development of freedom of the press in Finland (for such a treatment, consult, for instance, Neuvonen 2018; Nordenstreng 2015; Pere 2015; Tiellä sananvapauteen 2017).

Finland is an affluent, sparsely populated EU country with a small population: 5.5 million inhabitants. Its political and socioeconomic structures are typical of the Nordic welfare model, characterized by a large public sector, tax-financed welfare benefits and services organized in accordance with universal-coverage principles, a strong position for women, and an autonomous labor market functioning in cooperation with the state (Kuisma 2017, 437). While previously defined as semi-presidential, the political system in Finland in more recent years has been described as a multiparty parliamentary democracy with a government accountable to the parliament and a directly elected president (Karvonen et al. 2016, 14–15).

The traditionally stable **Finnish political landscape** has undergone significant changes over the last decade. While the party structure previously reflected historical socioeconomic divisions in Finnish society, those parties enjoying prominence today have gradually evolved more in the direction of universal catch-all parties (Strandberg and Carlson 2021, 71–72). The multiparty system, in combination with more extensive fragmentation of electoral support and a tradition of majority governments, has contributed to formation of broad-based coalition governments and accentuated the necessity of cooperation among the political parties (Strandberg and Carlson 2021, 71–73). As have the other Nordic countries, Finland has seen a groundswell of electoral support for populism, with the right-wing populist Finns Party seeming to have gained a steady foothold in the Finnish political landscape from 2011 onward (Strandberg and Carlson 2021, 69). This has disrupted the tradition of a party system previously dominated by the triad of the Social Democratic Party, the Centre Party, and the moderate-right National Coalition Party, and it has brought traditionally consensus-seeking Finnish politics into flux (Ylä-Anttila and Ylä-Anttila 2015). The Finns Party has succeeded in bringing voices that question and politicize a somewhat stable mutual understanding of various themes – such as immigration, gender equality, EU policy, and actions needed for curbing climate change – into the country’s political mainstream (e.g., Arter 2020; Hatakka 2019; Kuisma and Nygård 2017; Saresma 2018; Ylä-Anttila and Luhtakallio 2017;



Ylä-Anttila and Ylä-Anttila 2015). While the Finns Party was a member of the governing coalition from 2015 to 2017, the party agenda and optics related to it have left other parties somewhat wary of cooperation, thereby allowing it to exploit its “pariah” status for electoral gain and to bolster its anti-elitist stance (Arter 2020). Mutual antagonism with the Green League party has allowed these two parties to position themselves as polar opposites, creating a sharp divide in the political landscape (Arter 2020; Raunio 2020).

The **Finnish media system** has traditionally been described as a Nordic variant of the democratic corporatist model, per Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) categorization (Ala-Fossi et al. 2021, 153; Nord 2008). Democratic-corporatist media systems are characterized by early development of a mass-circulation press, a strong position of public broadcasting, low political parallelism in the media, well-developed media autonomy and professionalization, and strong state intervention but with protection for pluralism and press freedom (Ala-Fossi 2020, 134; Ala-Fossi et al. 2021, 153). The Nordic system has been conceptualized also as a “media welfare state,” involving a notion of communication services as universal public goods, institutionalized editorial freedom, viewing the media as part of culture policy, and favoring of policy options that entail cooperation between public and private stakeholders (Ala-Fossi et al. 2021, 153; Syvertsen et al. 2014, 17). However, newer research questions the validity and explanatory power of the single “Nordic model” approach and the Nordic welfare state’s sustainability as a guiding concept. Nord (2008) has concluded that, instead of the archetypal Nordic market, there are four distinct variations, which differ in their combinations of democratic corporatist national structures and external liberal influences. Ohlsson (2015) found that the Nordic media markets are growing increasingly similar to markets in other Western countries. Likewise, Ala-Fossi (2020) demonstrated that all the Nordic countries have in the last few decades made media-policy decisions that deviate from the ideals of a Nordic media welfare state, with Finland having occasionally made significantly more (neo-)liberal decisions than Norway, Denmark, or Sweden.

The smallness of the **Finnish media market** and the distinct language area have contributed to a relatively concentrated media system and shielded its distinctive features (Ala-Fossi et al. 2021, 153). However, the 2010s witnessed rapid changes affecting the structure of the media sector, media-consumption habits, and journalistic practices in Finland (Ala-Fossi et al. 2021; Nikunen 2011; Reunanen 2021 et al.; Strandberg and Carlson 2021). Media production and consumption are undergoing increasing change as the boundaries between the analog and digital version of a given media outlet grow more blurred and as the number of digital

subscriptions and the size of online audiences soar (Reunanen et al. 2021; Strandberg and Carlson 2021, 70, 76). While Finns have remained heavy media-users (Reunanen et al. 2021), the last decade has been especially rough for the newspaper industry, with several outlets closing or merging with other titles and many more struggling economically (Strandberg and Carlson 2021, 76). Generally, circulation of newspapers and magazines in Finland continued to decline throughout the 2010s, and print-advertising revenue has steadily decreased. While online and digital advertising have simultaneously surged, legacy media face fierce competition from Google, Facebook, and other global media corporations, which together control more than half of the digital advertising market in Finland (Ala-Fossi et al. 2021, 154). As a result of declining circulation, dwindling advertising revenues and the digitally and culturally related transformations in newsrooms, the number of employees in the media industry decreased by about a fifth in the 2010s, with most reductions taking place in publishing, television, and radio (Ala-Fossi et al. 2020, 14). A gradual long-term shift toward high consolidation of ownership within all media sectors steadily continued in the Finnish media market throughout the 2010s (Ala-Fossi et al. 2021; Grönlund 2016). While numerous national newspapers and magazines are published, a few major companies control most of the print market, and most regional and local markets are dominated by a single newspaper facing no serious competition (Ala-Fossi et al. 2021, 154). While concentration levels in Finland previously remained comparatively low by global standards (Noam and Mutter 2016), consolidation of media ownership has been increasingly recognized as a potential risk factor in the Finnish context (Manninen and Hjerpe 2021).

However, the contemporary Finnish context still features relatively strong cultural, legal, and institutional **safeguards for press freedom and autonomy** (Ala-Fossi et al. 2021; Karppinen et al. 2011; Manninen and Hjerpe 2021). Finland (alongside the other Nordic countries) has generally ranked very high in indices measuring media freedom (Freedom House 2021; RSF 2021b), and it topped the Reporters Sans Frontières World Press Freedom Index seven times in a row, in 2009–2016. Among the structural factors supporting the relative autonomy of journalism in Finland are a tradition of newspaper readership, the strong position of public broadcast media, high levels of professionalism, institutional self-regulation through an independent press council, and low levels of political parallelism in the media (Ala-Fossi et al. 2021; Nord 2008; Reunanen et al. 2021). Additionally, legislation protecting freedom of expression and citizens' right to information is well-developed in Finland, granting journalists protected status and extensive access to government documents (Manninen 2020, 9). That said, there are potential

systematic risk factors related to market plurality and aspects of political and economic independence in the Finnish media system, in that Finland generally lacks specific legislation that could be invoked if problems related to these arise; also, the country lacks special overarching legislation that protects whistleblowers (Manninen and Hjerppe 2021).

Changes related to economic challenges and developments in media technology transformed **journalistic work practices** in Finnish professional journalism in the 2010s. These trends encompass organizational reforms leading to a smaller workforce, decreasing specialization, and more centrally managed newsrooms (Koljonen 2013; Nikunen 2011). Emergence of digital editions has shifted the focus in newsrooms from single stories with fixed deadlines to multitasking, continuous publishing, and production of multiple versions for various platforms (Nikunen 2011). As for the journalists' perspective, interpretation-oriented content, news commentary, and opinion pieces have grown more commonplace in Finnish journalism since the turn of the millennium, pointing to the emergence of a shift from the "objective" reporting associated with the "high modern" to more personal journalism characterized by the ethos of the "liquid modern" (Kantola 2011; Reunanen and Koljonen 2014). However, Finnish journalists still seem to share and value collective professional standards (e.g., Reunanen and Koljonen 2014, 163–165), and several studies provide evidence of strong commitment to professionalism, autonomy, and objectivity (e.g., Ala-Fossi et al. 2021; Karppinen et al. 2011; Manninen and Hjerppe 2021; Pöyhtäri et al. 2014; 2016; Reunanen and Koljonen 2014; Väliverronen 2018; 2022). Finnish journalists have highlighted the importance of professionalism and professional integrity, regarding themselves as maintaining a distance from direct external influences (e.g., Ala-Fossi et al. 2021; Pöyhtäri et al. 2014). In work examining professional role orientations, Finnish journalists stressed the role of a detached observer reporting things as they are and providing analysis of current affairs while simultaneously rejecting angles such as supporting the government or setting a political agenda (Väliverronen et al. 2016, 2). These findings echo the classic Western journalistic ideals of the journalist as an independent observer, conveyer of societal information, and representative of the common interest in the public sphere (Deuze 2005). Finnish journalists report perceptions of relatively extensive professional autonomy and control over their work (Pöyhtäri et al. 2014; 2016; Reunanen and Koljonen 2014; Koljonen 2013), also stating that government officials, politicians, the owners of media outlets, PR agencies, other businesses, the military and the police, pressure groups, censorship, and advertising considerations have little to no influence on their work (Pöyhtäri et al. 2014, 24–28).

Compared to journalists in the non-Nordic countries with high press freedom, Finnish journalists report less economic pressure; this may indicate that the influences of commercialization and growing competitiveness are, at least at some level, moderated by the traditions and structural particularities of the Finnish media system (see Ahva et al. 2017, 607). However, in comparison to journalists in Sweden and Norway, those in Finland and Denmark reported significantly more political influence in their work (Ahva et al. 2017, 607).

**Trust in both public and commercial news media**, nonetheless, has remained comparatively high in Finland (e.g., Hanhivaara 2020; Kunnallisalan Kehittämissäätiö, KAKS, 2019; Matikainen et al. 2020; Reunanen et al 2021; Reuters Institute 2021), with 65% of respondents indicating that they trust most of the news most of the time and 73% stating that they can trust most of the news from media sources that they personally use (Reunanen 2021 et al., 46–47). Audience expectations for journalism in Finland seem to reflect the professional ethos of Finnish journalists: 77% of audience members seem to prefer neutral news-media sources to partisan ones, and in the same proportion the public sees independent journalism as very or extremely important for the functioning of society (Reunanen 2020, 33–34). This indicates also that professional journalism enjoys a high level of legitimacy in the eyes of the Finnish public, contributing to its societal status and power (see Luostarinen 1994, 91). That said, gradual decline in overall trust levels and some indications of polarization of trust along party lines can be identified, with members and supporters of the Finns Party standing out as generally the most distrustful of mainstream news media (Koivula et al. 2016; Matikainen et al. 2020; Pitkänen 2016; Reunanen 2020; Sivonen and Saarinen 2018). The party has also profiled itself as a vocal critic of the Finnish Broadcasting Company, YLE (e.g., Korhonen 2017; Perussuomalaiset 2020).

Traditionally, the **alternative-media sphere** was not highly active in Finland, but in the 2010s a handful of partisan online counter-media Web sites became established as part of the Finnish digital media landscape (Hatakka 2019; Noppari and Hiltunen 2018; Noppari et al. 2019; Tuomola forthcoming). The influence of counter-media Web sites is still very limited in Finland, though, with the five most popular sites having a combined weekly reach of seven percent of the population (Reunanen et al. 2021, 58–59). As hinted by the discussion above, it is Finns Party members and supporters who put by far the most trust in online counter-media entities (Koivula et al. 2016; Sivonen and Saarinen 2018).

In recent years, concerns have emerged in the public arena about hate speech, defamation, and harassment, alongside their effects on Finnish society. Studies and

reports have explored the detrimental effects of these phenomena on societal institutions (Finnish Ministry of the Interior, Sisäministeriö, 2021), elected representatives (Knuutila et al. 2019), freedom of expression (E2 2016; Pöyhtäri et al. 2013), and the society's equality and safety (Mäkinen 2019). Furthermore, the Ministry of the Interior has drafted policy proposals recommending more effective measures against hate speech, online abuse, defamation, cyber-bullying, and harassment (Mäkinen 2019; Sisäministeriö 2021), since they are perceived as increasingly affecting the work of the police, prosecutors, and government officials. Also, the Ministry of Justice has published a practical guide specifically focusing on the issue of hate speech against journalists (Finnish Ministry of Justice, Oikeusministeriö, 2019). The increasingly aggressive public discourse appears to go hand in hand with the perception of a polarizing public sphere, which seems to encourage the most extreme and partisan voices while discouraging participation of moderates (see, for example, E2 2016). This pattern has impinged on the work environment of professional journalists – there have been several high-profile cases of journalists being targeted with exceptionally serious harassment, defamation, and intimidation campaigns publicly (e.g., Aro 2019; Määttänen 2018).

In the grand scheme of things, the **challenges facing Finnish society and journalism** are very similar to many in other Western democracies. Trust in society's institutions and leadership is undergoing polarization globally (Edelman 2021), and the rise of populist parties and politicians has caused stirring in the political field. While traditional journalistic media have largely retained their societal standing, their financial stability has deteriorated and trust in legacy media has been gradually declining amid polarization. Additionally, there is concern about the effects of misinformation and growing partisanship. The upswing of right-wing populist sentiment has contributed to fostering and mainstreaming of anti-press attitudes, legitimizing the view that journalists are “enemies of the people” (see Waisbord 2020a, 7–8). The discourse in digital media has raised concern as to the consequences of hate speech and online harassment, along with how they affect the public sphere and democratic debate. This debate is tied to that about the power of social-media companies and whether they should be held responsible for content spread by means of their platforms.

Finland provides an extremely interesting case study for tackling the research questions. One might expect journalism in Finland, as a stable and democratic Nordic country with high levels of press freedom and several structural factors supporting autonomy of professional journalism, to exhibit high levels of resilience to external interference. However, historically being a small nation with small elite

networks and being consensus-oriented have proven to be detrimental to journalistic autonomy in many cases. During the Cold War era, the Finnish public sphere was characterized by self-censorship and chilling effects related to affairs in the neighboring Soviet Union (e.g., Niemikari et al. 2019, 32–33). These very real limitations to freedom of speech were not legislative or officially dictated but determined and upheld covertly by networks of elite actors ranging from politicians to editors-in-chief (e.g., Berndtson 1991, 28–29; Neuvonen 2018, 257–263). Indeed, YLE itself has a politicized history with journalistic positions filled via political mandates until the early 1980s (see Salokangas and Tommila 1996). Previous studies (e.g., Kunelius et al. 2010; Kuutti 1995, 246–250; Reunanen and Kunelius 2021) and journalists’ memoirs touch on the inner workings of elite networks and their continued effects on Finnish journalism in both commercial media and public broadcasting (e.g., Arolainen 1998; Ekholm 2021; Eronen et al. 2017; Karhula 2021a; Korvola 1998; Nykänen 2015; Pietilä 2021; Pietiläinen 1998; Yrjänä 2018). It has been claimed that conventional metrics for corruption typically overlook the effects of reciprocal elite networks, explaining why these forms of societal power often elude identification and critical debate (e.g., Karhula 2021b; Nazarenko 2021b). A similar tendency may be visible in the measurement of external interference. Since this dissertation adopts the perspective of individual journalists, it can be seen also as an effort to catch a glimpse behind the official numbers and statistics, for exploring how challenges and threats to journalistic autonomy stemming from such networks manifest themselves in Finland.

## 1.4 The Constituent Publications

The dissertation comprises peer-reviewed publications published between 2019 and 2021. The research questions for these four publications are listed below, in Table 1. Their numbering here reflects the order of their publication.

Article	Research questions	Publication venue
<b>Publication I:</b> “Experiences of External Interference among Finnish Journalists: Prevalence, Methods and Implications”	1) What kinds of methods of external interference have Finnish journalists encountered? 2) How frequently do Finnish journalists encounter the various methods of external interference? 3) How does external interference affect the work of Finnish journalists?	<i>Nordicom Review</i> 40 (1) (2019)
<b>Publication II:</b> “Differences Based on Individual- and Organizational-level Factors in Experiences of External Interference among Finnish Journalists”	1) What kinds of differences, based on individual-level factors and organization-level factors, can be observed in experiences of external interference among Finnish journalists? 2) What kinds of differences, based on individual-level factors and organization-level factors, can be observed in the perceived implications of external interference for journalistic work and the journalistic profession?	<i>Journalism Practice</i> (2020)
<b>Publication III:</b> “Ulkoisen vaikuttaminen ja sen vastakeinot suomalaisessa journalismissa” (“External Interference in Finnish Journalism and Countermeasures to It”)	1) What kinds of methods of external interference do Finnish journalists encounter in their work? 2) What kinds of countermeasures do Finnish journalists utilize to resist external interference?	<i>Media &amp; viestintä</i> 43 (2020)
<b>Publication IV:</b> “External Interference in a Hybrid Media Environment”	1) How is the hybridization of the media environment reflected in journalists’ experiences of external interference? 2) What factors in journalists’ work environment support their ability to maintain their external autonomy despite interference?	<i>Journalism Practice</i> (2021)

**Table 1.** Publications constituting portions of the dissertation

Publication I, titled “Experiences of External Interference among Finnish Journalists: Prevalence, Methods and Implications,” was published in February 2019 in *Nordicom Review*. The article principally addresses survey data from March 2017 that pertain to journalists’ experiences and perceptions of the implications of external interference. The article speaks to three aims. Firstly, it provides a broad empirical overview and initial analysis of various methods of external interference that Finnish journalists encounter in their work. Secondly, it illustrates how frequently various types of interference are experienced by journalists. Finally, it



explores journalists' perceptions of how external interference affects their journalistic work and, more broadly, the journalistic profession in Finland. The findings indicate that aggressive interference targeting journalists is rare in the Finnish context. Most of the types of external interference identified were encountered only occasionally and sporadically by respondents. Low-intensity interference associated with source relations and access to information and, secondly, mediated verbal abuse were reported most often. Only about a third of the respondents stated that the amount of external interference encountered in their work had increased in the preceding three years, indicating that there were no dramatic large-scale changes in the amount of external interference between 2014 and 2017. However, the findings do suggest that a segment of the Finnish journalistic profession encounters external interference on a regular basis, frequently facing multiple types of increasingly aggressive interference. This points to polarization and concentration of interference in certain quarters of journalism. Additionally, the findings indicate that even only a perceived risk of interference can cause concern and self-censorship among journalists. This finding highlights the significance of the effects external interference exerts on the broader journalistic field.

Dealing with the same data as Publication I, the second research article, "Differences Based on Individual- and Organizational-Level Factors in Experiences of External Interference among Finnish Journalists," expands on the earlier analysis by exploring the connections that various individual- and organization-level factors show with the methods, frequency, and perceived implications of external interference. The findings indicate that individual-level age and gender factors have only a marginal effect on the methods and prevalence of external interference. Of the organization-level factors analyzed, occupational position and the media outlet used for the reporting were the most significant, with journalists working at national and regional newspapers generally experiencing external interference the most and journalists working at magazines the least. Compared to those with other occupational positions in the profession, editors-in-chief and special reporters experienced most types of external interference more frequently. The analysis of perceived implications of external interference showed that female journalists held consistently more negative views and reported greater self-censorship and increased mental strain because of interference than male journalists did. Reporters (among them special reporters) indicated having less confidence in their superiors and their media outlet's ability and willingness to resist external interference and its effects than did managing editors, producers, and editors-in-chief. As these observations illustrate, the relationship between experiences of external interference and its



perceived implications is not linear and straightforward but complex and mediated by various factors, on several levels. The factors and relations addressed in this piece, published in September 2020 in *Journalism Practice*, are explored further in publications III and IV.

Publication III is a Finnish-language research article run by *Media & viestintä* in September 2020. The article, whose title translates to “External Interference in Finnish Journalism and Countermeasures to It,” introduces an empirically grounded qualitative typology of external interference and countermeasures to it. The typology is based on focused interviews with professional journalists and organizational stakeholders, conducted between January 2018 and December 2019. The article groups methods of external interference into six categories: 1) methods targeting information acquisition, 2) psychological methods, 3) physical methods, 4) institutional methods, 5) economic methods, and 6) methods using information technology. Proactive and reactive countermeasures utilized by journalists are examined in tandem with various methods of interference. By analyzing journalists’ accounts of external interference and countermeasures, this article provides detailed qualitative context-related information supplementing the quantitative findings reported in publications I and II. The discussion section of the article takes a closer look at how the effects of interference and of the societal and structural transformations affecting journalism act in combination in journalists’ work, alongside the ramifications of their interplay for journalists’ ability to preserve their professional autonomy and resist effects of external interference.

The final publication, titled “External Interference in a Hybrid Media Environment,” was published in *Journalism Practice* in April 2021. This article examines the same interview material as Publication III but focuses on the implications of the media environment’s hybridization for professional journalists’ experiences of external interference and on how various factors support their ability to resist the effects of interference. The analysis pinpoints four major transformations connected with external interference in the contemporary media environment: 1) proliferation of publicity control, 2) an increasingly contested public sphere, 3) societal and political polarization, and 4) personalization of journalism. Journalists reported their external autonomy to be supported by a combination of 1) journalistic professionalism, 2) confidence within the media organizations, and 3) communication and support measures. The findings indicate that hybridization of the media environment has intensified some elements of external interference that professional journalists face in their work. In the long run, the effects wrought by external interference together increase the workload and mental strain of journalistic

work and hold potential to lead to fatigue, chilling effects, and/or self-censorship. New skills and capabilities are required of journalistic organizations, accordingly – they need to establish confidence, communicate, and provide support for efforts at effectively resisting external interference and its influence in this environment.

## 1.5 The Structure of the Dissertation

This introductory chapter is followed by presentation of the theoretical framework and key concepts for the dissertation, constituting Chapter 2. I begin by discussing selected elements of field theory that I have adapted for this work. Then, I flesh out the theoretical framing through key concepts of professionalism, autonomy, and boundary work, moving on to illustrate why the concept of external interference is crucial for delineating the scope and area for this dissertation. That discussion is followed by a section addressing the hybridization of the media environment and how it has transformed the ways in which journalism is produced, distributed, and received and the role it plays in modern society.

With Chapter 3, I elaborate on the methods and data behind the dissertation. Firstly, I outline the motivation for taking a sequential mixed-methods approach and illustrate why a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was necessary for fruitfully exploring the phenomenon of external interference in Finnish professional journalism. This discussion is followed by sections about the benefits and limitations of the methods (surveying and focused interviews) and an account of the sampling and analysis procedures.

With the ground thus laid, Chapter 4 then synthesizes the key findings that provide the integrative backbone for the dissertation. This summary is arranged in line with the research questions posed in the introduction, answering each in its turn. Finally, with Chapter 5, I present conclusions that can be drawn via the findings. Additionally, I discuss the merits and limitations of the research and consider its implications for future research.

The four component papers are presented at the end of this integrative chapter. All are provided in the form in which they were originally published.

## 2 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND KEY CONCEPTS

This dissertation arose from the need for empirical study of external interference in Finnish professional journalism, a phenomenon heretofore overlooked by journalism research. My approach with the constituent articles, influenced by both an empirical knowledge interest and the dearth of work on the topic in this context, was heavily empiria-driven. This introductory chapter represents later theory-forming informed by the empirical findings. Journalism studies has always been a pluralistic field of research that draws from multiple academic disciplines and exists in constant flux, mirroring the shifts in its object of study (Löffelholz and Rothenberger 2011; Steensen and Ahva 2015; Zelizer 2000; 2004a). In keeping with this tradition, my aim is to situate the empirical discoveries in broader societal and theoretical context by adopting theoretical approaches and concepts from diverse social sciences (see Löffelholz and Rothenberger 2011, 8–9; Steensen and Ahva 2015) and integrating them to construct a theoretical understanding ideally suited to exploring the phenomenon of external interference in contemporary professional journalism.

With the dissertation, I adapt selected elements of field theory and synthesize these with the theories of journalistic professionalism, boundary work, and boundary performances to articulate a theoretical and conceptual framework suitable for outlining and analyzing the phenomenon comprising external interference, its effects, and its countermeasures. While the explicit focus of the dissertation is on micro-level study of individual professional journalists and their experiences, this sociological framework allows for higher-level analysis and findings, thus making it possible to simultaneously explore the broader significance of external interference for the field of professional journalism, the public sphere, and democracy. Moreover, the work, situated within the context of a hybrid media environment, employs analysis drawing from the field of media and communication studies. Through the concept of hybridity, my study proved able to approach the technological, cultural, and social transitions that affect contemporary journalism, adjacent societal fields, and their relations. This makes it possible to take into account how these transformations are reflected in professional journalists' experiences.

The following section introduces the theoretical assemblage and key concepts that constitute underpinnings of the dissertation, and it discusses how they are understood and applied in this work.

## 2.1 Theoretical Framing: Borrowing Elements from Field Theory

The dissertation explores society and journalism's position in societal networks of power through selective use of elements borrowed from field theory. Originally established by Pierre Bourdieu (1993; 2005; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), whose take on television, journalism, and their contributions to democracy can be described as pessimistic (Bourdieu 1998a; see also Marlière 1998), field theory has been revisited and further developed in journalism studies by several scholars (e.g., Benson 2004; Benson and Neveu 2005; Hesmondhalgh 2006; Maares and Hanusch 2020a; Penttilä 2021; Schultz 2007; Vos 2016; Waisbord 2013; Willig 2013). It offers a flexible framework with which to explore fluctuating social structures and power relations within a field (Maares and Hanusch 2020a, 2) but also enables one to examine how various fields interact and struggle when forming the societal structure (Baisnée and Nollet 2019). Field theory integrates structuralism, individuals' agency, and social constructionism by highlighting precisely how fields comprise social relations between positions occupied by individuals, groups, and institutions (Bourdieu 1993, 29–32).

Just as physical fields used for growing produce or playing sports do, metaphorical sociological fields have boundaries and are considered as suggested locations for distinct kinds of activities (Vos 2016, 384). Following Weber and Durkheim, Bourdieu portrays modernity as a process whereby all areas of human action gradually differentiate into increasingly specialized and semi-autonomous spheres of action such as politics, economics, religion, science, and cultural production (Benson and Neveu 2005, 3; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 97–98). As structured social spaces, the fields provide certain affordances shaping the activity that takes place in them (Vos 2016, 385). Relations of power within fields fundamentally structure human action, while power relations between fields are central elements in determining our social reality (Benson and Neveu 2005, 3; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 100–101). However, since fields and their relations are constantly shifting, the fields simultaneously represent interrelated aspects of power and change (Kunelius and Ruusunoksa 2008, 665–667). The fields' structures get affected by external conditions and contexts (relations to other fields) but also

by the actions of actors in the field as the fields are (re)produced in their behavior and interactions (see Benson and Neveu 2005, 6; Kunelius and Ruusunoksa 2008; Penttilä 2021). Hence, a field is also an arena of constant internal struggle, where some actors attempt to challenge or transform the structures of the field while others work to conserve and uphold them (Bourdieu 2005, 30). Field theory posits that field-internal tension and tensions between fields (external tensions) are an inherent feature of societal structure (Champagne 2005, 49–50; Martin 2003, 28). A field, therefore, can be characterized in brief as an assemblage of complex relationships between positions engaged in constant struggle to preserve or transform these relations and the structures of the field (Bourdieu 1993, 29–32; 2005, 30; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 97).

For Bourdieu, all field structures are, in essence, microcosms set within a macrocosm (Benson and Neveu 2005, 5). Therefore, journalism can be understood as a specialized field situated within the larger field of cultural production, and similar specialized (sub)field structures can be observed within the field of journalism (Benson and Neveu 2005, 5; Bourdieu 2005, 33; Schultz 2007). All fields are internally structured around two opposing force centers, with the so-called heteronomous pole representing forces and logics external to the field (in the case of journalism, often economic or political) and the autonomous pole representing specific capital and logics unique to the field in question (Benson and Neveu 2005, 4). All fields have their unique *nomos*, a fundamental vision that enables the construction of external division and positioning of the field and its actors within society (Eldridge 2018, 44–45). The journalistic field's *nomos*, which can be defined as collection and dissemination of truth in the public interest (for example, see Deuze 2005; 2019; Perkins 2002; Ward 2010; Zelizer 2004b), is reflected in all thinking and action in this field (Bourdieu 2000, 96–97).

For the field of journalism, the most significant external forces and logics are located within the economy, technology, culture, and politics fields (see Champagne 2005; Kunelius and Ruusunoksa 2008; Lindblom et al. 2022). Journalism production always relies on economic resources, and it can be argued that business considerations and logics have recently exerted growing influence over the journalistic field (e.g., Champagne 2005; Cornia et al. 2020; Kunelius and Ruusunoksa 2008, 667–668). Technology often drives journalism to adapt and adopt new formats, channels, and practices so as to cultivate new audiences and exploit new possibilities brought by technological transformations in production of journalism (e.g., Champagne 2005; Kunelius and Ruusunoksa 2008, 668–669; Neuberger et al. 2019; Spyridou et al. 2013; Young and Hermida 2015). Cultural

factors are connected to such economy- and technology-related undercurrents as trends of consumerism (Kunelius and Ruusunoksa 2008, 669–670), target audiences and shareability (e.g., Al-Rawi 2019), proliferation of entertainment-based values and 24/7 news streams (e.g., Thussu 2015), and sensationalism (e.g., Kilgo et al. 2018). Journalism operates in societies influenced by political power, and the representation capabilities of journalism are always entangled with power, for the journalistic field holds a central position in the societal power structure because of its ability to “lay claim to the imposition of the legitimate vision of the social world” (Bourdieu 2005, 36). In conclusion, products of journalism have a complex and multifaceted role, simultaneously representing a cultural and economic commodity; functioning as a vehicle for political and representation power (Bourdieu 1998a); and, on the basis of the professional ideology, acting as a force for public good that serves a crucial democratic role. The journalistic field’s position in the structure of power is, therefore, very ambiguous: while its position is highly influential in its effects (via status as the “fourth estate”), its operation is heavily integrated into the economic and politics fields too (Champagne 2005, 49), which led Bourdieu (2005, 33) to describe journalism as a “weakly autonomous field” with high degree of heteronomy and with scholars such as Bennett and Livingston (2003) dubbing it “semi-independent.” The power relations between the field of journalism and the fields of politics and the economy have always been in flux: historically journalism struggled for a long time to find and maintain a position and recognition as a distinct and autonomous field, with the market and political forces occasionally supporting and occasionally hindering these efforts (Waisbord 2013).

Field theory offers intricate concepts and instruments that can assist to examine and analyze relations and flows of power internal to fields (see Maares and Hanusch 2020a, 14–16). However, since all fields are connected with each other within a larger societal power structure, the prominence and significance of the autonomous logics unique to a particular field is always dependent on the overall autonomy of the field in question (Bourdieu 2005, 34). Vos (2016, 385) states that understanding a field and its autonomy requires understanding its position in the wider social structure and in relation to other fields. To maximize their unique logics and capital, fields strive to force their logics onto adjacent fields while simultaneously maintaining control over their own area. The tug-of-war between external fields’ endeavors to interfere with the field of professional journalism and journalists’ efforts to sustain their autonomous field logic against these intrusions is the central tension examined in this dissertation.

Therefore, the discussion here largely disregards the power relations within the field of journalism; instead, I have opted to investigate relations between the field of journalism and external fields. Adopting a micro-level perspective, oriented toward individual professional journalists in Finland, the locus of this project situates the dissertation within the **(sub)field of professional journalism in Finland** (see Schultz 2007). This delimitation excludes the areas peripheral to the broader field of journalism, such as citizen journalism and alternative/community journalism, from consideration in general, to facilitate concentrating on journalists who consider themselves members of a specific profession sharing a sufficiently common notion of professionalism, as illustrated in detail in the next section. The dissertation also sidelines larger brush strokes of socio-structural examination of field relations, instead focusing on conflicts of power **between** individual agents situated in different fields (see Bourdieu 2005, 31), in aims of laying bare the tangible interactions between professional journalists and actors representing other fields and their respective field logics (cf. Baisnée and Nollet 2019; Champagne 2005; Kunelius and Ruusunoksa 2008). Field theory offers a suitable framework for this type of analysis, offering a solid theoretical basis for understanding how actors representing various fields interrelate and struggle as they engage in constant interaction in society (Bourdieu 2005; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 109–110; Waisbord 2013).

Dynamics of this nature are especially prominent in journalistic practice because of its multifaceted societal role and its tendency to interact with multiple fields constantly (Bourdieu 2005, 31) while simultaneously competing for interpretive authority in their domains (Revers 2017, 5). Journalism must interact with sources and phenomena from all walks of life if it is to fulfill its role of collector and disseminator of information (Schudson 2005). Should journalism become too insular and detached from larger society and the audience, it risks losing its significance for people outside the journalistic field (Bourdieu 2005, 45; Schudson 2005, 219). Additionally, journalism formulates and presents truth claims in the areas in which it is involved, such as politics, the arts, business, and sports, competing with other specific institutions for institutional authority within these domains (Revers 2017, 5). In the course of all this engagement, professional journalism constantly struggles to preserve relative autonomy. Were it to fail to do so, it would risk compromising its unique capital, practices, and field logic – and, thereby, its distinct societal position – and ending up dominated and eventually absorbed by other fields (see Bourdieu 1993, 39–40). These dynamics constitute the central tension addressed by the dissertation project. In the course of their interactions with agents of other fields,



professional journalists must continuously strive to protect their autonomy and unique field logic and practices against these others' incursions.

Since my research adopts the perspective of individual journalists, the concept of **habitus** becomes a vital element for examining the relationships between the individual actor and a field. Habitus can be understood as an embodied intersection of personal history and one's position in the relevant field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 135–139). In Bourdieusian thought, habitus acts as the bridging factor between agency and structure, explaining how individuals can “be both knowing agents and reproducers of the social structure” (Vos 2016, 388). Individuals' actions and motivations are derived from their personal history/knowledge and perceptions of the field, which, in turn, get shaped by their position in the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 18–19, 135–139; Vos 2016, 388). Hence, habitus is a factor that enables agency and gives structure to the actions of an individual, simultaneously (Bourdieu 1977). Because the dissertation focuses on one specific professional field and my empirical investigation did not systematically account for the social history and trajectory of the journalists involved (see Schultz 2007, 205), the study utilized a particular aspect of habitus called **professional habitus**. Schultz (2007, 193) has defined this as mastery of “a specific, professional game in a specific professional field.” The approach can be regarded as mirroring Kaufmann's (2001) critical reading of Bourdieu and as reflecting Kaufmann's own conceptualizations of particular habitus theory (Roos and Rotkirch 2003). This perspective suggests that fields are key components in structuring the formation of habitus (Roos and Rotkirch 2003). Therefore, professional habitus is always connected to the field and its history, and it is constantly renewed and renegotiated (Bourdieu 1977; see also Penttilä 2021). Acquiring some professional habitus can be understood as a process of embodying the logic, values, and identity derived from one's position in the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 18–19; Eldridge 2018, 44–45; Schultz 2007) and of gaining an internalized practical sense and the “feel of the game” (Bourdieu 1998b, 25). Hence, agents of a particular professional field develop ways of thinking, speaking, and acting that differ from the professional habitus of other fields (Bourdieu 1989; 1998a). From this understanding, it is easy to demonstrate how specific professional habitus in the field of professional journalism differs from professional habitus in the political and economic fields. Professional journalism seeks to adhere to its *nomos*, field logic, and professional ideology of being a collector and disseminator of factual information serving the public good (Deuze 2005; 2019; Revers 2017, 5), while both the market and politics act as heteronomous forces seeking to dominate the field of journalism for their own purposes – with markets seeking private return on capital



and politics seeking to harness journalism as an instrument of partisan political power (Bourdieu 2005, 34–35; Goyanes et al. 2020, 3). Therefore, the autonomy of professional journalism is expressed in how the professional habitus of actors in the field is formed, exhibited, and negotiated (Penttilä 2021), and it acts as a symbolic resource of resistance when logics of adjacent fields are poised to encroach on the field of professional journalism and to force it to better serve those fields’ objectives (Lewis 2012, 841).

To capture these dynamics well from the perspective of professional journalism, I supplement this framework with notions drawn from studies of journalistic professionalism. The associated key concepts of professionalism, boundary work, and boundary performances and how they are understood and applied in this dissertation are discussed in detail in the following section.

## 2.2 Key Concepts

### 2.2.1 Professionalism and Autonomy

While Bourdieu vehemently questioned the validity of “profession” as a research concept (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 241–243), several journalism scholars have combined field-theory approaches with theories of professionalism (see, for example, Penttilä 2021; Revers 2017; Schultz 2007; Waisbord 2013; see also Schinkel and Noordegraaf 2011). I too find it a suitable component for a solid theoretical framework: it affords explaining the processes by which the journalistic occupation has claimed jurisdiction over a specific area of the journalistic field and formed a distinct professional ideology (Waisbord 2013). From this perspective, cultivating aspirations to achieve the status of an autonomous field and developing a shared project of professionalism among practitioners can be seen as simultaneous, interconnected processes.

The emergence of aspirations for a position of journalism as an autonomous field and for its status as a profession can only be understood in its historical context of broad political, economic, and social transformations (Waisbord 2013). Until the nineteenth century, journalism was conceived of as inevitably linked to organized politics and seen, at base, as a subfield of politics (Waisbord 2013). The people running the newspapers and writing the stories were often politicians by trade (Kunelius 2003, 65). Ever since the 1800s, technological advances allowing mass

production of inexpensive newspapers have made it possible to imagine journalism and news also as an economic mass commodity (e.g., Nerone 1987). However, journalism aspired to detach itself from domination by politics and the economy, and it sought recognition as making up a separate field with its own *nomos* and autonomous logic (Waisbord 2013). The rise of such ambitions stemmed from the notion that journalism should distance itself from partisan politics and simple profit-seeking, in aims of functioning as an independent public-minded institution oriented toward the greater good and service of democracy (Tumber and Prentoulis 2005, 62–63; Waisbord 2013, 19–20). Therefore, ideals of democracy and public service came to function as **transcendental sources of legitimacy** for journalism, justifying strivings for a more autonomous position (Kunelius and Ruusunoksa 2008, 666; Revers 2015; 2017, 5). This process was accompanied by cultivation of the idea that journalists should ascend to the standing of a profession in their own right, thereby achieving the status of “public servants” capable of fulfilling this role and safeguarding the realization of these ideals (Revers 2017, 5).

Research focusing on various aspects of professionalism has been prevalent in the field of journalism studies (see Steensen and Ahva 2015). However, there exists no consensus among academics on whether journalism should be regarded as a profession or on which definition of the concept is appropriate (e.g., Davis 2010; Lewis 2012; Meyers et al. 2012; Tumber and Prentoulis 2005). Journalism is missing several key elements associated with “classic” definitions of professions, such as requirements of formal education or other qualifications as entry criteria (cf. Freidson 1994; Greenwood 1957; Wilensky 1964). Meyers et al. (2012, 191–192) note that mainstream journalism managed to achieve its status without ever formally professionalizing. While formal professions such as medicine and law hold a legal monopoly over their function, journalism’s monopolistic position has traditionally been rooted in economics and traditions of practice (Meyers et al. 2012, 191–192). High economic costs associated with gathering and disseminating news combined with privileged access to sources and information to assure journalism and journalists a certain status in the analog mass-media era (Meyers et al. 2012, 191–192). This status allowed journalism to form elements of shared professional ideology without the formal baggage of legal mandates (Meyers et al. 2012, 192). Consequently, journalism cannot resort to law-oriented means of enforcing its autonomy with regard to particular functions or practices.

Sarfatti Larson (1977) proposes that scholars should shift focus from criteria for a profession to **professionalization projects** – in other words, toward examination of how occupations strive to claim status and authority. Through its professional

aspirations, journalism was able to differentiate itself and achieve sufficient autonomy from the politics and economy fields (Waisbord 2013). This made it possible for journalism to develop capital and field logics that were unique to journalism and not reducible to logics of adjacent fields (Waisbord 2013). In other words, journalism managed to construct the foundation for its *nomos* and its core autonomous logics and capital (see Bourdieu 2005). In related work, Abbott (1988) argues for conceptualizing professionalism as a struggle over jurisdictions: various occupation-based groups seek to claim exclusive rights to perform a particular task in society, and they pursue legitimacy for that claim by demonstrating how their occupation-linked knowledge and work practices are necessary for said societal function. From this standpoint, journalism has sought a position representing facts, truth, and reality in society through its functions of gathering, verifying, and disseminating information (see Zelizer 2004b).

While journalism's qualification as a profession under various sets of criteria is debatable, a common notion of a professional function (e.g., Waisbord 2013), ethical fundamentals (e.g., Perkins 2002; Ward 2010), and a **shared professional ideology** of modern Western journalism are more widely documented and accepted (e.g., Deuze 2005; 2019). Here, a profession's ideology can be defined as a system of views, beliefs, and ideals characteristic of a particular occupation-related group that is developed over time through processes of inclusion and exclusion (see Deuze 2005, 445). Through the lens of this dissertation, what we call the professional ideology can be seen as discursive formulation of embodied professional habitus, reflecting the *nomos* of the field (see also Schultz 2007). Indeed, Deuze (2005, 446) states that journalism scholars seem to agree on a set of fairly universal principles for modern journalism that can be described as "a shared occupational ideology among news workers which functions to self-legitimize their position in society." According to Deuze, the elements of the shared professional ideology in modern journalism consist of public service, objectivity, immediacy, ethics, and autonomy. Nevertheless, all these elements can be problematized, and there has been lively debate as to, for example, whether objectivity is possible – even as an ideal – and whether it should be replaced by notions such as "neutrality," "fairness," "professional detachment," or "impartiality" (Boudana 2011; Deuze 2005, 448) or by emphasizing transparency of journalism instead (Karlsson and Clerwall 2018). Moreover, there exist significant differences in how particular elements of professional ideology are understood, stressed, and applied to practice in various societal and cultural contexts, making it possible to differentiate among distinct professional milieux within the field of

professional journalism (see Deuze 2019; Hanitzsch 2007; 2011; Hanitzsch et al. 2019; Waisbord 2013).

However, autonomy retains its position as both the most essential and the most problematic element of the professional ideology of journalism. Looking to field theory, one could argue that autonomy is the fundamental element logically prior to the others (see also Lewis 2012, 844; Penttilä 2021, 37). Without its successful push for sufficient autonomy, the field of journalism would not have been able to develop its *nomos* or distinct autonomous logics and capital in the first place (see also Nygren et al. 2015, 80). Moreover, autonomy can be conceived of as a prerequisite for the practical implementation of other elements of journalism's professional ideology. Only sufficiently autonomous journalism can report stories in line with its own judgment and guidelines, undertake independent consideration of ethics, and represent public democratic interests instead of partisan ones in the public sphere. Autonomy allows journalism to follow its unique field logic (stemming from the *nomos*) that distinguishes it from other fields (Waisbord 2013, 47).

However, as suggested earlier, in reality the field of journalism is influenced by a multitude of adjacent fields. As Bourdieu (2005) has stated, the various societal fields are engaged in constant interaction and power struggles both internally and externally. Therefore, the autonomy of journalism is always relative, and its position is not stable but constructed and reproduced amid a host of conflicting pressures (see Waisbord 2013; see also Hallin 1986). Social, political, cultural, and technological transitions constantly exert effects (Deuze 2019; Kunelius and Ruusunoksa 2008; Nygren et al. 2015; Reich and Hanitzsch 2013; Sjøvaag 2013), and the autonomy and professional ideology of journalism are subject to perpetual societal struggle (Nygren et al. 2015, 80). In environments where the autonomy of the field is severely compromised or limited, journalists are prone to development of a professional habitus differing from the one that dominates in more self-governing environments, and heavily altered field structures and professional milieux may emerge (Bourdieu 1989; 1998b; see also González de Bustamante and Relly 2016; Goyanes et al. 2020). If actors in journalism internalize external pressures, they can be said to internalize the norms, values, logic, and professional habitus of external fields (Goyanes et al. 2020, 9). Consequently, where media workers are subordinated to external control and lack autonomy, from this perspective it is debatable whether their work should be conceptualized as journalism; it could be examined, alternatively, as some other type of mass communication, following, for example, a field logic of the economy or politics instead (e.g., Hamada 2021, 14–16; Kunelius 2003, 23; Waisbord 2013).

As Vos (2019, 123) recently stated, “at some point, when independent judgment is minimized, journalism ceases being journalism and news ceases being news.”

The situation is made even murkier by the ever-growing interconnectedness of modern societies. While the modernist ideal of professions based on neat separation of fields was dubious to begin with, it seems especially reductive in contemporary societies characterized by complex interdependence (Waisbord 2013, 64–65). This problem is made worse by the tendency to reduce the matter of autonomy to a dichotomy between absolute freedom and complete subjugation, whereas all fields in contemporary society are actually, at least to some extent, reliant on and influenced by others – they are semi-autonomous at best (Waisbord 2013, 65–66). Absolute autonomy, therefore, remains a theory-borne illusion for all professions (Waisbord 2013, 16), and, as Schudson (2005) points out, complete detachment could even prove disadvantageous with regard to the societal goals of journalism.

All this notwithstanding, professional autonomy is hailed as one of the most prominent ideals of modern Western journalism (e.g., Deuze 2005; Mellado and Humanes 2012; Nygren et al. 2015). With this dissertation, I advance the view that **professional autonomy** should be seen as a profession’s claim to relative autonomy and its ability to determine its own practices, goals, and ideals and act in accordance with them (see Penttilä 2021, 37). While journalists’ reality entails operating in conditions influenced and shaped by multitudes of external fields, the prevailing professional ideology of journalism enshrines strivings to uphold the claim to relative autonomy and passionately rejects any attempts at direct external interference or control (Deuze 2005). Aspirations of this nature gain tangible manifestations in, for example, such practices as maintaining a separation and a firewall between “church” and “state” – in other words, keeping the professional goals of journalists and commercial objectives apart in media organizations (Waisbord 2013, 30). While absolute autonomy of journalism remains an unattainable ideal, the discursive claim to autonomy and the devotion to serving only the truth and the public interest remain essential in the *nomos* of the journalistic field. Therefore, the discussion in the dissertation proceeds from a premise that Finnish professional journalists share a common notion that their journalistic work processes and their outputs are to be protected from direct attempts of interference and control stemming from external actors. I base this position on substantial empirical evidence ranging from explicit statements in the codes of ethics of Finnish journalism (CMM 2022) to studies examining the journalistic culture and environment in Finland (e.g., Ala-Fossi et al. 2021; Pöyhkäri et al. 2014; 2016; Väliverronen 2022). All of these indicate a prevailing

strong commitment to protecting journalism from external interference among Finnish journalists.

Adapting elements from the conceptualization by Waisbord (2013), I therefore define **professionalism** here as the aspiration of a particular occupational group to force its professional ideology and practices upon a (segment of a) social field and exercise sufficient control over it while simultaneously protecting itself from direct intrusions and encroachment (see Waisbord 2013, 10–13; Vos 2019). This is manifested tangibly in practices such as boundary work and resistance to external interference, both discussed further on in detail. Professionalism is understood, accordingly, as a process in which members of the profession participate, rather than as a set of requirements or features determining whether a given occupation should be categorized as a profession or not (cf. Freidson 1994; Greenwood 1957; Wilensky 1964). As the empirical evidence attests, representatives of the field of professional journalism in Finland adhere to a sufficiently shared professional ideology; hence, this is a sensible locus for an investigation such as mine (see Ala-Fossi et al. 2021; Pöyhtäri et al. 2014; 2016; Väliverronen 2022).

Following this line of thought, the dissertation also applies a high-modernist view of journalism, emphasizing journalists' responsibility to the public and their role as public servants, since this is the dominant understanding of the issue in the field of Finland's professional journalism (e.g., Koljonen and Reunanen 2014; Pöyhtäri et al. 2014; 2016; Väliverronen 2022). However, some scholars have claimed that this mode of professionalism in journalism has become more and more difficult to sustain commercially, in response to the unraveling of a political-economic order that supported the high modernism of journalism and the professionalism fostered by it (Hallin 1992; Kantola 2011; Koljonen 2013; Waisbord 2013, 31). As long as producing journalism was economically profitable, an uneasy truce prevailed between journalists, with their professional ideology, and media outlets, with their focus on business results (Hallin 1992). Vos (2019, 122) has characterized this coexistence thus:

Journalists did not simply serve their employers, according to this line of thinking; they served the public. Thus, professional status has connected practitioner work to the public through an ethic of public service. Publishers were willing participants in much of this project, even if their motives might have differed from those of rank-and-file journalists. [...]

Commercialization of media, fragmentation and polarization of audiences, and the emergence of digital media ecosystems have disrupted the economic sustainability of this model, thereby drawing attention to the underlying contradiction of this



arrangement (e.g., Hallin 1992; Sjøvaag and Ohlsson 2019; Vos 2019; Waisbord 2013, 31). The fundamental question here pertains to the professional responsibility of journalism – specifically, whether journalists are accountable primarily to the managers and owners of the media outlets or, instead, to the public (Vos 2019). This debate has recently gained new global traction, with media capture via economic means and private ownership having become accentuated while politically independent journalism meanwhile faces hardships in various contexts (e.g., Dragomir 2020; Schiffrin 2018).

## 2.2.2 Boundary Work and Boundary Performances

The contemporary digital communication environment has also highlighted new questions pertaining to the boundaries between journalism and other media forms and between professional journalists and other actors (e.g., Hermida 2019; Lewis 2012). Such actors as citizen journalists (e.g., Ahva 2017; Wall 2015), bloggers (e.g., Domingo and Heinonen 2008; Matheson 2004), social-media influencers (e.g., Maares and Hanusch 2020b; Rønlev and Bengtsson 2020), and media activists (e.g., Al-Ghazzi 2014; Poell and Borra 2010), on one hand, and phenomena such as clickbait and aggregation (e.g., Molyneux and Coddington 2020), sensationalism (e.g., Kilgo et al. 2018), virality-seeking (e.g., Al-Rawi 2019), and partisan online alternative media (e.g., Nygaard 2020; Tuomola 2020), on the other, have raised new issues and debate surrounding who is a journalist, what journalism fundamentally is, and how the practices of journalism should differ from the practices utilized by other actors. Journalism engages in constant demarcation processes erecting boundaries that mark those who are accepted as journalists, media products accepted as journalism, etc. (Carlson and Lewis 2020, 123). Simultaneously, boundary work gets conducted field-internally to specify what is considered professionally acceptable/desirable and which kind of action is rejected and deprecated (see Penttilä 2021). Hence, boundary work clearly takes place both on the external borders of the journalistic field and internally at the border that delineates the (sub)field of professional journalism within the broader field. The process of setting boundaries involves symbolic contests related to control, legitimacy, and authority over the field that also connect to material struggles over the allocation of resources (Carlson and Lewis 2020, 123).

The cultural and epistemic authority of journalism stems from the accepted understanding of journalism as “a practice capable of supplying valid knowledge of events in the world” (Carlson 2016, 350). **Boundaries** can be conceptualized as

social constructs that denote particular actors and practices as legitimate for a certain field, here marking the borders of the area that may be conceptualized as the field of journalism and thus determining who may wield the associated cultural and epistemic authority of the field (Carlson 2016). The journalistic field as a whole engages in continuous **boundary work** to define the field, seeking to establish and maintain its authority by upholding a particular shared understanding of what constitutes journalism and which practices are acceptable in journalism through constant processes of inclusion and exclusion (Gieryn 1983; see also Carlson 2017; Lewis 2012). Discussing construction of boundaries in the context of science, Gieryn (1983, 782) defines boundary work as

[...] attribution of selected characteristics to the institution of science (i.e. practitioners, methods, stock of knowledge, values, and work organization) for purposes of constructing a social boundary that distinguishes some intellectual activities as “non-science”.

All professions practice boundary work when clarifying the ideals and logic of professional practice and demarcating the limits of the profession (see Gieryn 1983; see also Carlson 2017; Lewis 2012), sometimes engaging in internal “credibility contests” over the placement of boundaries (see Gieryn 1999). Proceeding from Gieryn’s (1999) work, Carlson and Lewis (2020) list the goals of boundary work as expansion, expulsion, and autonomy protection. The field of professional journalism protects its boundaries by regulating which people are accepted as professional journalists; what the acceptable practices and actions in professional journalism are; and which norms, beliefs, and ideals – i.e., which professional ideology – professional journalism should adhere to. Simultaneously, boundary work addresses which actors, actions, and norms are to be expelled from the professional field as deviant and which ones are perceived as threats to professional journalism and its autonomy.

For professional journalists whose work includes constant interaction with other fields and with actors serving as their representatives (Bourdieu 2005, 31–32), boundary work often is manifested in practice as **boundary performances**. Drawing from the work of Goffman, Revers (2014; 2017) defines boundary performances as performative actions aimed at symbolically asserting professionalism. These performances draw from the collective belief system (professional ideology) of journalism and symbolically reference it, for these performances may signal “affirmation of symbols of professionalism or opposition to symbols of unprofessionalism” (Revers 2014, 40). Boundary performances can, therefore, be understood as performative manifestations of professionalism used by journalists in their day-to-day interactions with external actors as symbolic resources



(Revers 2017, 9, 167–173). When these performances are acted out, professional journalists can draw from a pool of “props” to bolster the performance by, for example, invoking norms, laws, or organizational policy and highlighting their adherence to professional conduct and boundaries (Revers 2014, 43–45). Boundary performances can manifest themselves, for instance, as professional journalists underlining their work conduct’s meticulous adherence to objectivity and professional ethics if conflicts with sources or subjects of a story arise. On a more personal level, some journalists practice civic withdrawal, eschewing party membership and any other commitments that might bring their professional claims of impartiality under scrutiny (Revers 2017, 165–167). The interviews for the dissertation project gave the Finnish journalists an opportunity to reflect on and verbalize their boundary performances, thus aiding in exploration of how they assert and uphold their claim to professional autonomy and what kinds of resources, props, and settings enhance their ability to do so (cf. Revers 2014; 2017).

In conclusion, this dissertation examines how external actors aim to interfere with or limit the area of autonomy of professional journalism and explores how professional journalists seek to uphold their autonomy against this interference. These perspectives shed light on the tangible conflicts between agents in the field of professional journalism and in other social fields but also address (though in limited capacity) the dynamics internal to the field of professional journalism in Finland – the component publications illustrate how professional autonomy and various external pressures are negotiated and addressed within journalistic organizations (see also Goyanes et al. 2020; Urbániková 2019). For documentation and analysis of conflicts taking place between professional journalists and agents of other societal fields, the concept of **external interference** is necessary for delineating the area of interest for systematic study. Since external interference has a tendency to cascade and flow through media outlets and journalistic organizations, thereby becoming woven in with internal interference (see Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2018; Goyanes et al. 2020; Hemánus 1983, 192; Kuutti 1995, 246–248), I have applied the supplemental concept of **mixed interference** to broaden the scope of the dissertation project.

### 2.2.3 External and Mixed Interference

Journalism research has traditionally examined journalistic autonomy on two dimensions: external and internal (e.g., Mellado and Humanes 2012; Nygren et al.

2015; Reich and Hanitzsch 2013). The former refers to journalism's freedom from any coercive forces originating outside media organizations, such as political and legislative control or state censorship (Goyanes et al. 2020, 4; Nygren et al. 2015, 80; Reich and Hanitzsch 2013, 135). Internal autonomy, on the other hand, involves the position of journalists in relation to other parts of media organizations, among them actors such as managers, owners, and sales/marketing departments etc. (Nygren et al. 2015, 80). Internal autonomy is associated with journalists' ability to make occupation-related decisions independently of financial and management pressures and of other forces operating inside media organizations (Reich and Hanitzsch 2013, 135; see also Bunce 2019). Interference can manifest itself at both internal and external level; however, the two might not be easy to consider separately. Sjøvaag (2013, 157) found that "external and internal pressures restricting individual or organizational autonomy are not always clearly distinguished in the literature," and, as Goyanes and colleagues (2020) demonstrated, these sources of interference can be inextricably interrelated, further complicating attempts at separation.

As noted earlier in this work, individual studies have examined such phenomena as these and their effect on journalism: political and economic pressure (e.g., Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2018; Goyanes et al. 2020; Rožukalne 2020), denial of access to public information (e.g., Jamil 2020; Kuutti and Koski 2021), harassment and intimidation (e.g., Binns 2017; Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez 2018; Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016; Waisbord 2020a), hate speech (Charitidis et al. 2020; Obermaier et al. 2018), trolling (Luque Martinez 2015; Waisbord 2020b), bribery (e.g., Lodamo and Skjerdal 2009; Tsetsura 2015; Tsetsura and Aziz 2018), censorship (e.g., González-Quiñones and Machin-Mastromatteo 2019; Nicolini and Filak 2020; Simons and Strovsky 2006), and violence (e.g., Bartman 2018; Brambila and Hughes 2019; Gohdes and Carey 2017). What all these phenomena have in common is the fundamental aim of influencing journalistic processes, journalists, and the products of journalism. Perpetrators engage in these actions for purposes of influencing the way certain things are reported in journalism or, as Parker (2015, 128) puts it, "specifically to prevent journalists from reporting on things that are perceived to negatively impact them." In other words, these actions are intended to limit journalism's ability to fulfill its professional ideology, they transgress the external boundary of the area of professional journalism, and they disturb its autonomy. Since preserving autonomy is one of the key elements of professionalism, modern Western journalism has taken a rigid stance against all direct external interference and control, so as to safeguard autonomous implementation of the professional logic, ideals, and ethics notions in the field (e.g., Deuze 2005; see also Perkins 2002; Ward 2010).

Therefore, all the aforementioned actions constitute factors whose influence on professional journalism should be prevented, according to the field's professional ideology.

Additionally, it should be noted that forms of interference, especially in today's media environment, are not in any way mutually exclusive or separate. Journalists can experience multiple types of interference simultaneously, and interference may escalate or transform (Ferrier 2018; Holton et al 2021, 7–8). For example, unsuccessful attempts at bribery can turn into intimidation, and verbal harassment can escalate to physical violence. Studies looking at a single aspect of the constellation of phenomena, such as either political pressure or online harassment, cannot account for how simultaneous targeting (e.g., with both of the latter) affects journalists and their professional conduct or what happens when interference transforms or bleeds into other areas.

Therefore, I argue that, in order to examine the combined effects of the various methods of interference for professional conduct in journalism and its autonomy, these methods need to be situated and analyzed within a common framework. I suggest that all of these phenomena could be conceptualized as **external interference** since, from the perspective of journalists, they represent situations wherein external actors actively attempt to transgress the boundary and invade the field of professional journalism, violating its autonomy. Consequently, I propose the following broad definition for this concept: external interference covers all active and/or invasive methods that actors external to journalistic organizations use to interfere in the journalistic process and/or influence journalists and/or limit the area of journalistic autonomy in order to shape the editorial content (see also Clark and Grech 2017; Luostarinen 1994; Shoemaker and Reese 1996). The definition is inclusive enough to encompass methods of interference used strategically to induce a chilling effect and self-censorship among journalists in aims of influencing journalism in the future (see Clark and Grech 2017). As Luostarinen (1994, 73) states, tangible methods of interference directed at journalists and journalism are constantly shifting and changing, and new methods get introduced frequently. Accordingly, this analytical concept makes it possible to provide a common framework for study and analysis of a phenomenon whose individual elements are in continuous flux and can appear very differently from one context/culture to the next. Such a definition of external interference emphasizes the individual-level experience and perspective of journalists, thus rendering the social phenomenon accessible for research (cf. Reich and Hanitzsch 2013, 136).

This definition of external interference also covers actions and aggression that journalism research has conventionally conceptualized as **harassment, intimidation, or violence** (e.g., Bartman 2018; Brambila and Hughes 2019; Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016; Miller and Lewis 2020; Pöyhtäri et al. 2013). In my work, these are fundamentally understood as **instrumental aggression** for reaching a desired objective (Neuman and Baron 2005). In instrumental aggression, the harm caused to the target may be intentional but should be seen instead as a means to an end, since the ultimate goal is to affect the targeted journalist's job output (Neuman 2012; Parker 2015). Accordingly, only that harassment, aggression, and violence employed instrumentally with the perceived aim of influencing the professional conduct of journalists falls within my scope of study (see Parker 2015, 13). Phenomena such as sexual harassment (e.g., North 2016; Simorangkir 2020; Sreedharan et al. 2020), stalking (e.g., Gass et al. 2009; Miller and Lewis 2020), and objectifying comments (e.g., Finneman et al. 2019) are neither covered by my definition nor examined in this dissertation unless explicitly used by external actors in an instrumental manner to influence journalists' work.

This dissertation reflects the notion of journalistic autonomy that prevails in the field of Finnish professional journalism (e.g., CMM 2022; Pöyhtäri et al. 2014; 2016; see also Koljonen 2013, 25–26). Here, owners, publishers, and non-journalistic departments within media outlets are viewed as external actors in relation to professional journalists and journalistic decision-making. The border to the area of professional autonomy of journalism, therefore, is situated not between the media organization and external societal actors/institutions but inside the media organization. It separates the **journalistic organization** from both external societal actors and other parts of the media organization (those responsible for management, sales, advertising, etc.), which, per the professional ideology, should not play any role in journalistic decision-making.

Also within the scope of this dissertation is **mixed interference**, defined as situations of external interference getting intertwined with internal interference and being transmitted internally through a media organization or journalistic organization (see Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2018; Goyanes et al. 2020; Hemánus 1983, 192; Kuutti 1995, 246–250). Mixed interference can be carried through a media organization by such actors as media-outlet owners or managers or through a journalistic organization by editors-in-chief or managing editors. External actors often target journalists in editorial positions because the latter have the most power and influence over journalistic output and can issue orders to reporters – in effect, they hold the power to stop reporters from investigating or reporting on

certain topics (see Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2018; Kuutti 1995, 246–248). For example, Goyanes and colleagues (2020, 14) concluded that external and internal pressures in Spanish public broadcasting were inextricably interrelated, with political pressure often cascading from section heads and managing editors to reporters. Journalists who refused to submit to these pressures and alter their journalistic output to favor the ruling party met with internal reprisals (Goyanes et al. 2020, 12). This example illustrates that the possibility of individual journalists resisting external interference is limited if their media organization and/or journalistic organization promotes even partial submission to external actors.

However, it should be noted that the concept of external interference applied in this dissertation excludes standard PR and media lobbying activities (see Mykkänen and Ikonen 2019) such as issuing press releases and holding press conferences, granting information subsidies (Gandy 1982), holding organized media events (Boorstin 1977), and engaging in comparable agenda-building efforts (Weaver and Elliott 1985). While it is possible to argue that these activities are designed to steer journalism and can have significant influence on its content (e.g., Davies 2008; Jackson and Moloney 2016; Juntunen 2011; Moloney et al. 2013), these activities do not actively limit or violate the external autonomy of professional journalism. Luostarinen (1994, 15) reminds the reader that there is nothing unethical in actors promoting their activities and producing media material. The power to decide, for example, whether to use press-release material, participate in press conferences, or cover organized media events remains fully within the journalistic organizations. Therefore, these activities do not come under the definition of external interference used here, and my research did not examine their influence on journalism.

## 2.2.4 The Hybrid Media Environment

It has been convincingly shown that the journalistic field has formed and operates in an environment characterized by constant conflicting pressures related to both internal struggles and relationships between fields (Benson and Neveu 2005; Bourdieu 2005; Waisbord 2013). This subsection situates the societal and media context in Finland (discussed in the introduction) in terms of broader societal, cultural, and technological transitions related to the contemporary media environment and illustrates how both journalism's position and its relations to adjacent fields have transformed because of them. Technical and social changes related mostly to digitalization, the proliferation of devices capable of displaying and

producing digital media material, and the expansion of Internet use have transformed the nature and practices of media production, with professional journalism too, as a particular kind of media production, affected. Accordingly, the discussion below introduces the concept of **hybrid media environment** to contextualize and describe the radical transformations that have shaped media production, alongside how these changes have affected the status and role of journalism in contemporary society. The concept of hybrid media environment is necessary for aligning the research project with today's media landscape and providing understanding of the dynamics influencing both the field of journalism and its relations to other fields. It also conceptually connects the dissertation project with some of the most prominent current debate in media and communication research.

The journalists surveyed and interviewed for this study operate in an environment where the field of professional journalism is not bordered by material practices of distribution and access similar to those seen in the analog era of mass media (see Meyers et al. 2012, 191–192; Waisbord 2020a, 3). As technical means to produce and distribute media content to mass audiences become increasingly commonplace because of digitalization, the field of professional journalism has grown more and more reliant on symbolic boundary work for its autonomous existence. Processes related to hybridization of the media environment have altered multiple fields and their relations to each other, and journalists interviewed in the project saw these hybridization-impelled rapid context transformations as being reflected in the manifestations of external interference in their work. Therefore, if we wish to make sense of dynamics wrought by the hybridization of the media environment and of their significance for the context addressed here, we need to examine the concept and various aspects of hybridization.

Hybridity as a theoretical and conceptual construct has been adapted and used in a broad spectrum of scientific disciplines, ranging from cultural studies (e.g., Hutnyk 2005; Kraidy 2002; Pieterse 2001) and political sociology (e.g., Boege et al. 2009; Gilbert and Mohseni 2011) to engineering (e.g., Husain 2021; Tummuru et al. 2015), and it is used to refer both to transformation processes and to their outcomes (Gulyas 2017, 885–886). Its Latin root, *hibrida*, originally meant “mongrel” and was also used to denote someone born of a Roman father and a foreign mother or of a freeman and a slave (Streng 2006). The origins of the hybridity concept, therefore, encompass the idea of antecedent elements combining to form something novel.

Chadwick (2017) distinguishes between two basic modes of approaching hybridity. In one, hybrids may be seen simply as “diluted” versions of their

antecedents. The second way is to approach them as particulate hybrids, wherein the antecedent elements are constantly engaged in processes of competition and recombination, producing novel amalgamations that, while recognizable, are not reversible to their earlier forms. The understanding of media-hybridization processes represented by this dissertation relies largely on the notion of particulate hybridization as described by Chadwick (2017, 18):

[This is] a process of simultaneous integration and fragmentation. Competing and contradictory elements may constitute a meaningful whole, but their meaning is never reducible to, nor ever fully resolved by, the whole. Particulate hybridity is the outcome of power struggles and competition for preeminence during periods of unusual transition, contingency, and negotiability. Over time, these hybrid practices start to fix and freeze; they become sedimentary, and what was once considered unusual and transitional comes to be seen as part of a new settlement, but that new settlement is never entirely fixed.

This approach emphasizes that hybridization should be seen as a continuous process in which the defining dynamic is the constant interplay between older and newer, characterized by adaptation and co-dependency but also by endless competition. This process results in novel amalgamations exhibiting features that cannot be simply traced to previous constituents. Chadwick also puts forth the idea that the speed and intensity of hybridization processes are not fixed and linear but cyclical in nature. Particular contexts and conditions characterized by power struggles and transitions accelerate processes of hybridization, after which the hybrid outcomes begin to solidify, only to give way to new cycles of hybridization. I find addressing this dynamic especially apt in the context of journalism studies, since media history has been marked by alternation between relatively rapid transformations in the wake of technological innovations' social breakthrough and more stable periods, featuring slower adaptation and fragmentation (for example, see Chapman 2005; Stöber 2004). Similarly, the notion and professional ideology of journalism have developed in tandem with constant conflicting pressures and struggles that have served to both fragment and solidify the idea of what counts as journalism and what role journalism should play in society (see, for example, Waisbord 2013).

Chadwick (2017, 4) states that a hybrid media system is “built upon interactions among older and newer media logics – where logics are defined as technologies, genres, norms, behaviors, and organizational forms.” The largest contribution of adapting the hybridity construct to our understanding of a media environment is its ability to help us reject simple dichotomies and boundaries, drawing attention instead to ongoing processes, inbetweenness, the interstitial, and liminality (Chadwick 2017,



4–5). When understood in this way, media hybridization can be seen as displaying considerable similarity to the notion of **remediation**. Bolter and Grusin (1999) state that the character of a media technology is articulated through a network of formal, material, and social practices, with each new medium therefore presenting itself as supplementing or replacing what is already available, in efforts to acclimate to these networks and forge a place in them. This remediation can take many forms and transpire on multiple levels. For example, familiar cultural material is often transformed into new forms of media, apparatus for new media are created with reference to prior media practices and logics, and practitioners utilizing the new medium aim to imitate and inherit the status of those who worked with an earlier medium (Bolter and Grusin 1999, 68–69).

With this dissertation, however, I steer away from a media-system approach to hybridity (cf. Chadwick 2017), instead opting to highlight various aspects of media hybridity to illustrate how and why related social, cultural, and technological transitions have transformed various fields, relationships between fields, and hence the environment where contemporary professional journalism operates. I find that analyzing the central features of the hybrid media environment is the technique best suited to addressing the rapid changes that have transformed the way in which journalism is produced, distributed, and received and the role it plays in contemporary society (see Gulyas 2017, 885–886).

In light of prior literature (Anderson 2013; Blach-Ørsten et al. 2017; Chadwick 2017; Gulyas 2017; Laaksonen 2017), I ground my analysis in four key developments that characterize the hybrid media environment where contemporary journalism operates: increased complexity, competitive co-dependency, blurring of boundaries, and diffusion of power. These features are in many ways parallel and overlapping, so, while I examine them here as distinct facets, this separation should be seen only as a practical necessity for analysis purposes.

The pattern understood as **increased complexity** involves the proliferation of opportunities for public expression and the construction of mediated publicity. On account of digitalization, the spread of technical devices capable of both consuming and creating digital media (Boczkowski et al. 2018), and widespread adaptation of digital media platforms (Blach-Ørsten et al. 2017), the practical monopoly of traditional analog mass media has given way to a digital high-choice participatory media environment (Hermida 2019; Van Aelst et al. 2017). As Waisbord (2020a, 3) states, the analog era's opportunities for public expression were limited, and high barriers to access when combined with a dominant position secured traditional media the status of gatekeeper in the public sphere (see also Meyers et al. 2012, 191–



192). A hybrid media environment, in contrast, offers unprecedented possibilities for individuals to express themselves and relay their messages to a mass audience, bypassing traditional media and speaking to audiences and each other directly (see Pavlik 2000, 234–236). This reach can be achieved through social-media platforms, direct messaging, or establishment of one’s own media channels. Consequently, with the multiplicity of media forms, outlets, and logics, the once relatively stable common public sphere within the legacy-media landscape is fragmenting into a mosaic composed of ever-increasing numbers of smaller shards (Chadwick 2017, 25). Hermida (2019, 178) describes the contemporary digital-media diet as:

a mix of the personal, professional, public and private, with world and local news jostling for attention with celebrity stories, gossip, funny animal GIFs, opinion, rumor, and more, all powered by personal preferences, social interactions and platform algorithms.

While legacy media and professional journalism still hold considerable societal power, their position is gradually shifting from that of a dominant force and sole gatekeeper to resemble one more of a participant competing against a plethora of others in a hybrid attention economy (e.g., Hermida 2019; Laaksonen 2017).

The proliferation of communication channels and participation driving forth the complexity and fragmentation also contributes to two other, parallel processes, conceptualized jointly here as **competitive co-dependency**. The first word refers to the increasing competition among various media forms, logics, and values. In a hybrid media environment, old and new forms of communication and newsmaking coexist, compete, and influence each other in an increasingly multifaceted media ecology (Blach-Ørsten et al. 2017, 336). This multiplicity also fuels the clash of competing representations, frames, and interpretations in the public sphere (Chadwick 2017, 26). However, the competition occurs in parallel with continuous assimilation and variation. The development of blogs (Web logs) as a media format offers a highly illustrative example of this. After the social breakthrough of the blog format, numerous bloggers incorporated practices and elements adapted from journalistic reporting or dedicated themselves to commenting upon or challenging the representations produced by legacy-media journalism (Anderson 2013; Cooper 2006). At the same time, however, the blog format was quickly adjusted by purveyors of that traditional journalism, which started publishing journalistic content in blog format but also set out to hire popular bloggers and even employ them in journalistic positions (see Anderson 2013). Crystallizing the second word’s essence, transformations brought on by digitalization have intensified the constant adaptation processes as the older and newer aspects of media content and production get

mutually integrated in novel ways (e.g., Hermida 2013). These two, contradictory-seeming dynamics reflect the transformation occurring in the power relations between media forms/logics. Newer media build upon the logics, values, genres, and societal and material positions of older ones (Bolter and Grusin 1999). As newer media types gain power and space, coming to produce their own elites also, older media institutions and elites are forced to adapt and to adopt the new ones' features, thus sustaining the cycle of constant adaptation (Chadwick 2017, 25; Laaksonen 2017, 7). These processes have intensified significantly in the hybrid media environment as digitalization expands the possibilities for active participation in media production and circulation in real time, accelerating adaptation cycles and changing the traditional positions of audience and producers (Bruns 2008; Chadwick 2017; Papacharissi 2015).

The notion of **blurring of boundaries** as applied here refers to hybridization complicating and dismantling the distinctions and positions that dominated, and in many senses were products of, the analog mass-media environment. In response to greater opportunities for public expression, the traditional one-way mass media are supplemented with interactive, participatory, and self-organized forms of media and communication in ever-increasing numbers (see Ahva 2017; Anderson 2013; Matheson 2004; Wall 2015). The unprecedentedly low barriers to access and the burgeoning opportunities for participation and for addressing the public directly are rendering the previously clear-cut separations between audiences, producers, and gatekeepers increasingly ambiguous (see Bruns 2005; 2008; Singer 2014). This had led to introduction of new concepts intended to capture these interstitial positions, such as **produsage**, highlighting the blurring boundary between users and producers of media content (Bruns 2008), and **gatematching**, referring to collaborative gathering, verifying, and repurposing of news material (Bruns 2005). Moreover, the traditional boundaries of journalism are becoming increasingly porous as new types of actors, from bloggers to activists, grow able to assume journalistic functions in news ecosystems (Anderson 2013; Matheson 2004) and as media content incorporating elements of journalism becomes ever more readily published by individuals other than professional journalists (e.g., Ahva 2017; Noppari et al. 2019; Tuomola forthcoming, Wall 2015). This has sparked new debate on the nature of journalism and who is allowed to represent journalism in the current communication environment (see also Hermida 2019). Revers (2017, 5) states that, because professional journalism has sought cognitive exclusivity over its task domain (see Sarfatti Larson 1977), a participatory environment where actors in increasing numbers can take on journalistic functions questions and threatens its established

institutional authority. When striving to maintain this authority and reestablish boundaries between its insiders and outsiders, the profession has to redefine what it means to be a journalist and specify the fundamental components of professional journalism in the modern networked public sphere (Revers 2017, 5; see also Gulyas 2017, 885–886). Simultaneously, hybridity contributes to the shift in boundaries of public vs. private and professional vs. personal in that sphere. Digital media offer a multitude of spaces where these lines are perceived differentially, depending on the media space's internal logic (for instance, see Laaksonen 2017), and many platforms encourage mediated communication that crosses and merges these lines and identities (e.g., DeCamp et al. 2013; Hoffmann and Suphan 2017; Jameson 2014; Ottovordemgentschenfelde 2017; Thunman and Persson 2018).

Finally, all of the features discussed contribute to the **diffusion of power**. In the analog era, the legacy mass media held considerable sway over the agenda, representations, and frames present in the mediated public sphere, also having fairly extensive power over who obtains media access, in what role and extent. While journalism has always struggled with various institutions for interpretive authority in their specific fields, the diffusion of power and emergence of digital public spheres have together made this competition over discursive power more intense and explicit (Revers 2017, 5). While legacy media remain central, digitalization has provided many new ways for a range of actors from individuals through networked activists to institutions, corporations, and states to participate in shaping the mediated public sphere and its representations (Papacharissi 2015). In doing so, it has fragmented and diffused the representation and interpretation power in the mediated public sphere, and the number of actors taking part in these processes by creating, steering, and debating representations is unparalleled when compared to that in the analog era (Chadwick 2017). While the representations produced by legacy media can be challenged and subject to struggles in new ways in public, legacy media, in turn, often tap and recycle representations circulating in digital-media spheres (Laaksonen 2017; Papacharissi 2015). In this environment, power and representations grow ever more flexible and unstable as multitudes of voices form, steer, and fight over them in real time in constant hybrid cacophony (see Laaksonen 2017).

However, as hybridity theory predicts, new media elites seem to be rising (Chadwick 2017, 25; Laaksonen 2017, 7), this time among technology and social-media companies (e.g., Moore 2016) and the actors utilizing platforms provided by them (e.g., Dubois and Gaffney 2014; Hudders et al. 2020; Rønlev and Bengtsson 2020). It appears that, gradually, more and more power over communication is shifting to a handful of social-media platforms (e.g., Helberger 2020; Khan 2018),

such that their owners, in effect, are consolidating a gatekeeping position in massive, globalized media spheres through processes such as moderation, news aggregation, “trending” topics, and search-engine algorithms (e.g., Bro and Wallberg 2014; Pearson and Kosicki 2017; West 2017; Yang and Peng 2020). Companies such as Twitter and Facebook can, therefore, unilaterally decide who is allowed public visibility and a presence on their platforms. This represents significant gatekeeping power over the most popular global digital public media spheres. This has provoked serious debate as to their role and its political implications (e.g., see Smith 2021; The Guardian 2021). Additionally, users of digital platforms can amass personal audiences of other users in remarkable numbers (e.g., Khamis et al. 2017), potentially reaching “an audience that rivals that of television networks in size, what we might call a mass audience” and obtaining significant mediated power in the process (Marwick 2015, 150).

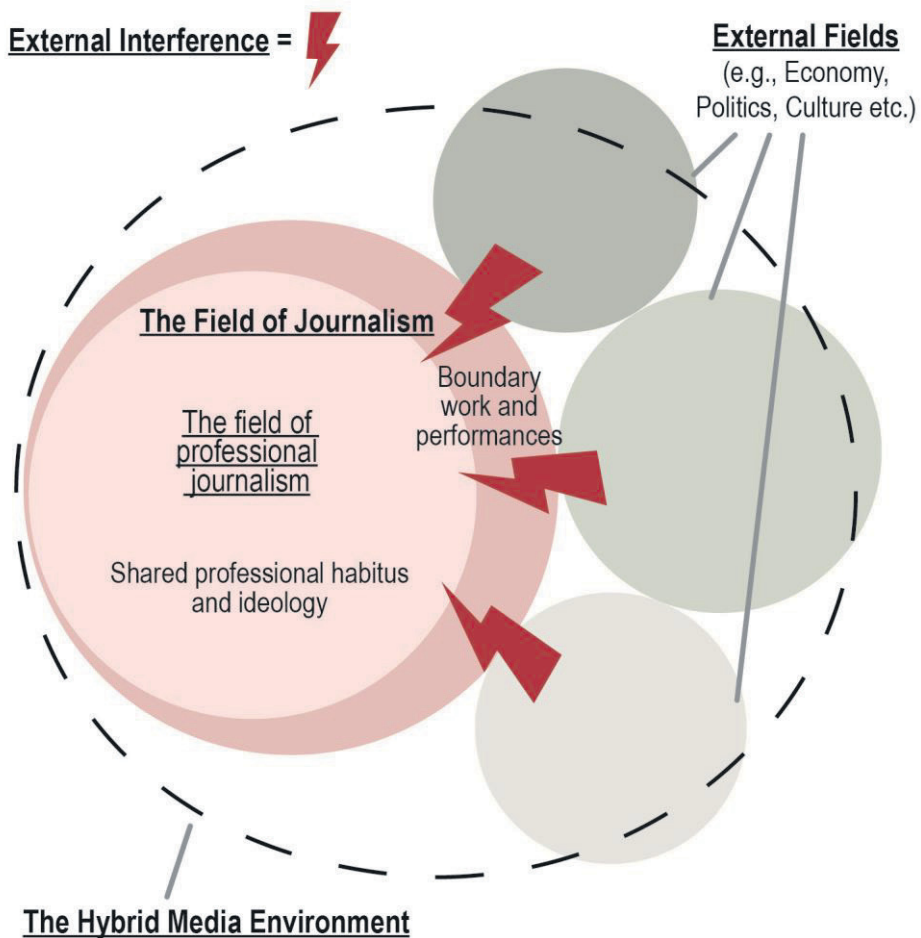
This dissertation explores how legacy-media journalists’ aspirations to maintain their external autonomy are being challenged within a contemporary hybrid media environment. While the features of hybridity are most prominently addressed in Publication IV, an understanding in which that media environment is characterized by hybridity permeates the whole dissertation. I regard hybridity as bringing fundamental change both to the internal positions and power relations in the field of journalism and to how journalism and adjacent fields interact with and relate to each other – marking a contextual structural shift in the broader media environment.

## 2.3 Synthesis: Development of an Integrated Theoretical Framework

As mentioned at the start of the chapter, this dissertation works with theoretical standpoints and concepts from diverse social sciences, employed to construct the best possible theory-grounded understanding for outlining and studying the phenomenon of external interference and its significance both for professional journalism and, more broadly, on societal level. This section concludes the chapter by rearticulating and clarifying how the concepts and theoretical constructs applied link together and can mesh in a unified theoretical framework, also summarized below in Figure 1.

Through the lens of field theory, the society appears as an assemblage of various fields, formed between an autonomous and heteronomous pole (the former, again, signifying logics and capital unique to the relevant field and the latter marking forces

and logics with external origins, in other fields). Actors positioned within a professional field maintain it as they (re)produce the structures of that field in their actions and practices. In the process, professional habitus forms as individual agents in the field internalize and come to embody the ideology, logic, and practices of a particular professional field. The fields' limits are determined by constant struggles over the socially constructed boundaries as the actors in the various fields engage in boundary work related to defining, upholding, and guarding the boundaries of their respective fields. In the case of journalism, professionalism can be understood as aspirations to construct a distinct (sub)field of professional journalism within the broader field of journalism and, once this status is achieved, to implement the shared professional ideology and exercise control over that area while simultaneously protecting it from intrusions and encroachment by external actors. Here, the professional ideology can be seen as formalized content of the embodied professional habitus of the field (which, in turn, mirrors the *nomos* of the field), characterizing the vision of the professional field. Boundary performances, in their turn, are performative manifestations of professionalism that actors in the field utilize as symbolic resources in interactions with agents of other fields, giving material form to the boundary work. Finally, the surrounding material communication context is a hybrid media environment, affecting each field and impelling both internal transformation and shifts related to how various fields interact with each other. Figure 1 draws together these key concepts, diagrammatically illustrating how they are situated in relation to each other.



**Figure 1.** Illustration of the integrated theoretical framework

Expressed in these terms, my interest with the dissertation project lay in how agents of external fields strive to interfere with the functioning of the field of professional journalism, how professional journalists seek to resist the incursion attempts so as to maintain their autonomy in the face of said external interference, and how these conflicts get reflected in the journalistic field and in society. The next chapter is devoted to how I operationalized these questions for systematic study and analysis and to introducing the research data and methods used.

## 3 METHODS AND DATA

This chapter documents the research methods and data used in the research and elaborates on how the research questions addressing the phenomenon of external interference in Finnish professional journalism were operationalized for systematic study and analysis. The chapter begins with justification for choosing a sequential mixed-methods approach. The data collection and analysis conducted for the study are presented next, with focus on the quantitative component and then the qualitative component. Contributions and limitations connected with the samples, data, and methods are discussed alongside the respective research components.

### 3.1 The Research Approach: The Choice of Mixed Methods

Creswell and Plano Clark (2018, 8–9) state that a mixed-methods technique is best suited to research problems for which any one data source may be insufficient and when the results need to be explained and exploratory findings generalized. I decided on the use of mixed methods for this dissertation early on for these very reasons. On account of lack of previous empirical work on the subject, I felt that mixing methods and using multiple datasets offered the best possible match to my three dovetailed research interests, in documentation, contextualization, and production of practical knowledge via this project (see Section 1.1).

As a research approach, a mixed-methods design is aimed at organic combination of various modes of research. Quantitative research on its own is very suitable for answering questions regarding frequency of occurrences and various relationships among variables (Bullock et al. 1992; Creamer 2017, 45–46; Fowler 2013). Qualitative research excels when we are interested in significance and context, because this form of research foregrounds informants' observations and interpretations, thereby helping the researcher to take elements such as perceptions, sensemaking, personal background, and past experiences into account (Bullock et al. 1992; Creamer 2017, 45–46; Creswell and Plano Clark 2018, 8). Mixing quantitative



and qualitative methods is an intuitive way of doing research in that it mimics the multiple ways of collecting, analyzing, and presenting information we apply in our professional and personal undertakings every day (Creswell and Plano Clark 2018, 1). For example, a physician considers both quantitative lab results and the patient's life history and qualitative descriptions of symptoms when making a diagnosis (Creswell and Plano Clark 2018, 1). Contemporary media stories often cover societal phenomena by presenting both statistical information and interviews, thus supplementing the numbers with perspectives of individuals whose life has been affected by the phenomenon in question (De Swert and Kuypers 2020, 1048). When we see something that catches our attention, we instinctively ask questions about **why this has happened** and **whether this is an isolated incident or, rather, a larger pattern exists behind it**.

As the empirical data discussed in this dissertation were obtained through surveying and interviewing, the epistemological standpoint of the dissertation reflects social constructionist epistemology, wherein the knowledge is produced through social processes (e.g., Berger and Luckmann 2011 [1966]; Ruusuvuori and Tiittula 2005a, 10–11). Both interaction with the researcher and the research questions posed are seen as active influences in these processes (Ruusuvuori and Tiittula 2005a, 10–11). External interference, its implications, and experiences related to it are inherently social phenomena tied to processes of individual-level conceptualization and sensemaking. Therefore, the most sensible way for research to access them is through structured social interaction aimed at methodical knowledge-gathering (Ruusuvuori and Tiittula 2005b). Moreover, my research followed the sociological tradition of situating data obtained through research interactions as a proxy for individuals' contextualized experiences (Bernard and Ryan 1998). The dataset, therefore, is viewed as supplying information on both how external interference and its implications appear in Finnish professional journalism and how journalists socially make sense of these manifestations and their significance.

While there is ongoing debate surrounding the nature, methods, research processes, purpose, and philosophy of mixed methods (e.g., Creamer 2017; Creswell and Plano Clark 2018, 2–5), some fundamentals can be listed. The understanding of mixed methods in the present work aligns with a “composite” devised by Johnson and colleagues (2007, 123) that incorporates perspectives from diverse researchers. They define mixed-methods research thus:



The type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration.

Both qualitative and quantitative research approaches have unique perspectives and limitations. Taking a mixed-methods approach can, therefore, be seen as an endeavor to offset each method's shortcomings and blind spots via complementarity, for more robust findings (Creswell and Plano Clark 2018, 8–9; Hesse-Biber 2010, 3–4; Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2000, 38–40). Since qualitative understanding arises out of close, in-depth study of relatively few cases, qualitative research often faces an uphill battle to reliably generalize the results to larger populations (Creamer 2017, 45–46). Quantitative research, in turn, severely restricts understanding of any single case and, in consequence, often lacks evidence of motivations and the causal dynamics behind the findings (Creamer 2017, 45–46; Creswell and Plano Clark 2018, 8–9). Additionally, findings from quantitative plus qualitative data may reveal contradictions or inconsistencies that would not have been discovered had only one of the two data types been collected (Hesse-Biber 2010, 5–6). Therefore, using multiple methods permits advantages and limitations of various research approaches to mesh with one another; their amalgamation can yield fuller understanding than any one method on its own (Creswell and Plano Clark 2018, 8–9; Hesse-Biber 2010, 3–5; Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2000, 38–40).

The methods of data collection, sampling, and analysis used in the work described in publications I–IV are illustrated in Table 2, below.

Publication(s)	Data-collection method	Sampling method(s)	Data	Analysis method(s)
Publication I	Online self-reporting questionnaire	Self-selection	875 numerical responses to survey items and an array of comments from 353 respondents	Quantitative and qualitative content analysis
Publication II	Online self-reporting questionnaire	Self-selection	875 numerical responses to survey items and comments from 353 respondents	Statistical analysis and qualitative content analysis
Publications III and IV	Focused interviews	A combination of critical-case and maximum-variety sampling	31 focused interviews with Finnish journalists and four background interviews with organizational stakeholders' representatives	Inductive applied thematic analysis

**Table 2.** The sampling, data-collection, and analysis methods used for the publications

While the individual publications this dissertation comprises have a clear quantitative or qualitative emphasis, with publications I and II being predominantly quantitative and publications III and IV being qualitatively oriented, my research's progression and my aims for the final dissertation were guided by the research philosophy of mixed methods. The research process consisted of synergistic development made possible by this approach, with findings from my first, quantitatively oriented publications helping to inform and steer the research design of later publications and to explain and contextualize findings described therein (Hesse-Biber 2010, 5–6). This approach can, therefore, be characterized as a **sequential mixed research design** proceeding from quantitative to qualitative: with two consecutive research undertakings, conclusions from the first strand assisted in formulation of the second, and the final inferences were derived from the findings of both, together (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009, 137). The quantitatively based findings reported in publications I and II highlighted previously undocumented developments and trends (see Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2000, 30), making it possible to seek explanations for them

when conducting focused interviews with journalists and organizational stakeholders for publications III and IV. The methods behind publications I and II integrated quantitative and qualitative methods, in that the survey employed to collect quantitative details afforded the respondents an opportunity to expand upon and justify their answers. This gave the research team qualitative textual data that we were able to utilize when analyzing the results.

So, despite the individual publications having explicit quantitative or qualitative emphasis, I consider this dissertation to be, in essence, output of sequential mixed-methods research. The report is compiled from components informed by various (quantitative/qualitative) approaches, data, and methods (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009, 108–109). Creamer (2017, 44) cites the presence of both deductive and inductive elements as the defining feature of mixed-methods research, where “inductive” denotes approaches in which the researcher begins with as few preconceptions as possible and theory is derived from the data (O’Reilly 2009, 104). “Deductive” refers to research arrangements whereby a hypothesis is formulated on the basis of existing theory and then empirical data are collected and analyzed to test the hypothesis, refine it, or prove it false (O’Reilly 2009, 104). In the dissertation project, collection of multiple datasets provided ample empirical material for inductive analyses and theory-forming. Simultaneously, the processes of accumulating empirical data presented opportunities to assess the deductive explanatory power of prior literature and hypotheses formed in the earlier parts of the project both. Therefore, the research process behind this dissertation can be characterized as entailing constant iteration, moving back and forth between inductive theory-forming and deductive testing and refinement. Hence, more than the four articles on their own, this dissertation represents synthesis of inquiry aimed at multi-method provision of answers to the research questions posed in the introductory chapter.

### 3.2 The Quantitative Component: Self-reporting from Survey Responses

Although a host of activities can be referred to as surveys, my use of the concept adheres to the definition by Groves et al. (2009, 3). They define surveys as information-gathering with the primary means of asking informants questions, where information is collected by having either interviewers or the informants themselves record the answers and where the information is collected from only a

subset of the population, denoted as a sample, and the findings are later extrapolated if doing so is possible. The subsections below describe the survey component of the project, presenting a detailed account of the survey design and procedure, examination of its limitations, and an evaluation of the results obtained.

A self-reporting-based survey method was chosen to explore journalists' experiences of external interference and their perceptions of its implications for their work and the journalistic profession in Finland. Since experiences of this type are very rarely reported or recorded anywhere (see Clark and Grech 2017, 26), the self-reporting survey was deemed an essential instrument for documenting these incidents and their prevalence among informants. Scholars have employed self-reporting-based surveys effectively for similar purposes (e.g., Clark and Grech 2017; Kodellas et al. 2014; Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016; Parker 2015), thus illustrating their feasibility for this sort of research among journalists. Use of a self-report survey allowed me to explore both the methods and the prevalence of external interference among journalists and simultaneously supplement these qualitative findings with qualitative textual material.

Self-report surveys, especially when conducted online, have unique benefits related to flexibility, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, portability, and ease of data-processing (Del Boca and Noll 2000, 358). Flexibility and portability were deemed important for my project since the target population consisted of busy professionals with often irregular schedules (Molyneux and Zamith 2020, 8). Care was taken to make sure the survey was accessible from desktop computers, smartphones, and tablets; was open long enough (14 days); and could be completed at any time of day. This made it possible for informants to participate in the survey after working hours and outside the workplace setting if wanting to do so.

### 3.2.1 The Survey Design and Pretesting

The heterogeneity of occupational positions in contemporary professional journalism and the subject matter's complexity imposed considerable challenges for designing a comprehensible and valid survey instrument (see Molyneux and Zamith 2020, 6). To confirm the relevance of the questionnaire, selected journalists and journalism researchers, the Union of Journalists in Finland, and the Finnish Association for Investigative Journalism were consulted during the design process for the survey. The survey questions were developed and formulated on the basis of this pre-survey consultation. Eight journalists were recruited as a pilot group to

pretest the survey questionnaire, and some parts of the survey were clarified and adjusted on the basis of the feedback received (see Molyneux and Zamith 2020, 11–12). The survey form was available only in Finnish, but free-form responses in Swedish<sup>1</sup> also were accepted.

The final questionnaire (see the appendix to Publication II) consisted of seven background questions, 56 closed multiple-choice questions, and four optional fields for open-ended textual comments. The survey took approximately 20–25 minutes to complete. In the first 41 multiple-choice items, the informants were asked to estimate how often, on average, they had personally encountered a form of external interference (such as “direct or implicit threats of violence” or “threatening with or commencing legal action”) or situations (with such items as “how often have you decided to not publish journalism pieces because of external interference?” in the work within the preceding three years (between March 2014 and March 2017). To optimize the survey flow, all these questions used the same six-point frequency options (ranging from “Never” to “Once a week or more often”), with “Do not know / No opinion” as a seventh option. With the final 15 multiple-choice questions, the informants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with statements regarding the implications of interference for their work and the journalistic profession in general (e.g., “external interference increases the mental strain of my work”) by indicating their views via a standard five-point Likert scale (with options from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”).

Studies indicate that one can improve the validity and accuracy of the results in self-report surveys by providing a clear definition of the respondent’s task, increasing respondents’ motivation, and mitigating social biases (e.g., Del Boca and Noll 2000). The cover letter for the survey clearly outlined the research team’s interests and objectives, and it encouraged participation even by informants who had not personally experienced any external interference themselves. Additionally, the cover letter detailed how the information obtained was to be used and published in the research process, thus providing the details respondents needed for giving their **informed consent** to participating in the survey per standard ethics practice (see, for example, Perrault and Keating 2018). Instructions and technical advice were available on every page of the survey form, and the (email and telephone) contact

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<sup>1</sup> Finland has two national languages: Finnish and Swedish. In addition, Sámi languages hold some official status in Finland. However, Swedish- or Sámi-speaking Finns are, in their vast majority, bilingual. The fact that several survey participants submitted their comments in Swedish increases confidence that the lack of translation to Swedish did not create significant impediments to Swedish-speaking Finnish journalists’ participation.

information of the corresponding researcher was provided for the respondents in case of any queries or problems.

Researchers who use self-report surveys cannot guarantee that their questions will be interpreted as intended or adjust the set of options to accommodate unexpected responses (Molyneux and Zamith 2020, 3). Several measures were taken to alleviate the associated effects. To provide more consistent data, the survey questions regarding experiences of external interference featured sufficiently detailed descriptions, along with examples of each form of interference involved. To reduce any ambiguity of “external interference,” the contents of the survey questionnaire gave the respondents a framework of tangible methods considered external interference in the context of this study. Based on the feedback obtained in the pretesting phase, several clarifications were made to the questionnaire. For background questions, the option of selecting “Other” and specifying the details in a text box was offered. All closed multiple-choice questions gave respondents the option of “Do not know / No opinion” (see Molyneux and Zamith 2020, 11). Also, since the survey was standardized, with no personalized elements, the informants were instructed to select the latter option if they found a question not applicable to their professional work; thus, they could skip questions they did not consider relevant (see Molyneux and Zamith 2020, 6–7). Finally, informants were encouraged to clarify or explain their reasoning via text boxes for open-ended comments if they felt a need to do so.

Survey-related methodology is, by nature, susceptible to multiple biases. Myriads of decisions, on everything from the wording of the questions to the frequency scales and reference periods used and even the questions’ order, can influence the results (e.g., Schwarz 1999; Sudman et al. 1996). Several steps were taken to minimize these biases in preparation of the questionnaire. Instead of using highly interpretive scales (e.g., “Never—Sometimes—Often”), we decided on more exact frequency scales (ranging from “Never” to “Once a week or more often”; see the appendix to Publication II for details). While the answers may still be largely rooted in fragmented recall and frequency estimates (see Schwarz 1999, 97), they leave less room for individual-to-individual variations in interpretation of the scales. The reference period for the questionnaire consisted of the preceding three years (2014–2017), which was considered sufficiently long to yield a consistent overview while mitigating possible reliability issues (see also Clark and Grech 2017). The wording of the survey questions was examined during the pretesting process, for dealing with unclear or ambiguous formulations.

Personal experiences of external interference and their ramifications for one's professional conduct can be considered a sensitive topic. This is especially noteworthy because Finnish professional journalists have previously demonstrated strong commitment to the ideal of autonomy (Pöyhtäri et al. 2014; 2016) and may, therefore, be especially hesitant to admit to any deviation from those norms (see Binns 2017, 185). For combating effects such as social-desirability bias, the informants were explicitly assured of confidentiality of the responses and informed that the information would be published in such a way that no individual respondent could be identified via direct or indirect identifiers (Nederhof 1985). Del Boca and Noll (2000, 351) suggest that computer-assisted surveys may mitigate some such effects by design, providing a greater sense of anonymity and letting the respondents reflect on their answers at their own pace. In addition, the respondents were given the option of leaving their contact information at the end of the survey if they wished to participate in a follow-up interview nonetheless.

### 3.2.2 Sampling and Administration

Molyneux and Zamith (2020, 4) state that professional journalists represent an occupation group that is especially hard to survey because the researcher must navigate challenges created by the profession's porous boundaries, precarious work conditions that lead to transience in the occupation, temporal pressures that reduce availability, and other factors. The sampling for the survey was guided by an effort to reach as many members of the target population as possible and to obtain a large enough sample to allow conducting reliable statistical analysis of the data. Attention was directed to active professional journalists in Finland. As practitioners of a specific profession, this group can be considered a special population for sampling purposes (Sudman and Kalton 1986). When sampling special populations, researchers should rely on a readily available list wherever possible (Sudman and Kalton 1986, 402–405). The union-membership registry was considered suitable in this regard: since journalists' rate of union membership in Finland is very high, estimated at 90% (see Pöyhtäri et al. 2014, 4), this provided the most up-to-date list covering the target population (see Molyneux and Zamith 2020, 5). Since journalists whose principal work responsibilities include overseeing company financial benefits and who exercise significant power over employment decisions were barred from union membership at the time (Union of Journalists in Finland 2017), we utilized other sources also. Journalists in managing and editorial positions typically seek



membership in editors' associations, so, for the widest possible reach of the profession's population, we contacted the Union of Journalists in Finland and three Finnish editors' associations (see Sudman and Kalton 1986, 405).

The Union of Journalists in Finland, the Finnish Association of Editors, the Finnish Association of Magazine Editors-in-Chief, and the Finnish Association of Local Paper Editors agreed to handle technical administration of the survey to their members. Retired members and members whose self-declared job description was deemed not to fit the scope of the study (e.g., technical personnel) were excluded from its administration. The definition of "journalist" used in the survey was, therefore, consistent with the membership requirements of the union or editors' association. Among the union-membership criteria for journalists was employment by a media outlet or news/photo agency that serves media outlets or working as a freelancer or in a similar position wherein most of one's income is derived from journalistic work (Union of Journalists in Finland 2017). The membership criteria for all editors' associations required holding a managerial position with a media outlet. Using these definitions is in line with the theories of professionalism as discussed in the context of the dissertation project's theoretical framework: the criteria were chosen and supervised by the members of the profession themselves.

The data were collected between March 13 and 26, 2017. An email invitation containing the cover letter and a universal resource locator (URL) for the survey, hosted on a University of Tampere Web server, was sent to 7,944 members of the Union of Journalists in Finland, 113 members of the Finnish Association of Editors, 120 members of the Finnish Association of Magazine Editors-in-Chief, and 98 members of the Finnish Association of Local Paper Editors. Pöyhkäri and colleagues (2014) have estimated that working journalists in Finland number approximately 8,000, so the total of 8,275 survey recipients can be regarded as approaching the national population. Two reminders were sent via email to all recipients. No additional incentives for participation were offered; they were deemed inappropriate in light of the theme of the survey and could be seen as questionable from the perspective of the occupational ideology of journalism (Molyneux and Zamith 2020, 8). While the survey questionnaire was available online only, respondents were given the opportunity to contact the researcher via email or phone if needing assistance in filling out the form.

In total, 875 journalists participated in the survey, representing a participation rate of 10.6%. Of the respondents, 353 (40%) provided one or more text comments to supplement the responses, thus supplying a sizeable corpus of textual data. The sample is considered a non-probability sample since the self-selection sampling



method entailed not informants chosen at random but people who chose to take part in the research of their own accord (Bethlehem 2010). While the absolute number of responses is reasonably high, the participation rate can be considered objectively low even for a Web-based survey (see Poynton et al. 2019; Shih and Fan 2008). Nonresponse can manifest itself in two forms: total nonresponse, seen when individuals do not respond to the survey at all, and item nonresponse, visible when forms are returned partially completed (Sax et al. 2003, 411). The technical construction of this online survey form necessitated responding to every closed question, with the system saving only complete questionnaire forms. While these measures may have discouraged some participants, they eliminated any item nonresponse.

Multiple explanations can be posited for the low participation rate. In general, response rates of surveys have been steadily declining in recent decades (e.g., Kreuter 2013; Stedman et al. 2019). Secondly, because issue salience typically has a strong impact on response rates (Cook et al. 2000, 832), this figure might suggest that some recipients did not consider the topic personally important. Also, the length of the survey may have discouraged some people (see Crawford et al. 2001), and some may have had concerns about cyber-security issues and the confidentiality of online survey (Molyneux and Zamith 2020, 8; Sax et al. 2003, 410).

With regard to professional journalists, one can point to some additional explanations for low participation, related to the nature and conditions of the profession. The busy nature of newsroom work has been identified as a challenge to surveying journalists (e.g., Binns 2017, 186), and the number of email messages, invitations, etc. that professional journalists receive may lead to oversaturation, thereby negatively affecting their willingness to participate (Manfreda et al. 2008, 79; Molyneux and Zamith 2020, 8). Survey invitations may go unseen amid a flood of messages, or mail filters may consign them to less visible secondary folders (Molyneux and Zamith 2020, 8). It should be noted also that several recent online-only surveys of journalists have produced somewhat similar response rates (e.g., Hermans 2016; Post and Kepplinger 2019) or even lower ones (e.g., Lewis et al. 2020; Mellado and Örnebring 2016; Obermaier et al. 2018; Splendore 2016; Stahel and Schoen 2020; Thurman and Kunert 2016). This highlights the difficulty of achieving high participation within this population through Web-based surveying. As Molyneux and Zamith (2020, 14) point out, in Western countries it is sometimes difficult for surveys of journalists to exceed single-digit response rates.

### 3.2.3 Composition of the Sample

Kreuter (2013) states that low response rates indicate strong potential for the existence of nonresponse bias but do not guarantee it. Therefore, response rates should not be considered automatic proof of a biased sample. In reasoning that echoes this, Krosnick (1999, 539–541) argues that surveys with low response rates can yield useful and accurate results, similarly highlighting the importance of sample composition. Molyneux and Zamith (2020, 14) state that a low response rate may be acceptable if the researcher can demonstrate that the final sample is unlikely to differ systematically from the target population.

Details of the breakdown of the survey sample are available in the appendix to Publication II. To assess the representativeness of our sample, we compared it to previously used samples and lists, taking them as proxies for the entire population of Finnish journalists (Molyneux and Zamith 2020, 5–6; Sudman and Kalton 1986, 406–407). Comparisons to the representative sample constructed for the Finnish component of the *Worlds of Journalism* study (Pöyhtäri et al. 2014; for the broader research project, see Hanitzsch et al. 2019) and to detailed membership statistics of the Union of Journalists in Finland showed that the survey sample matches the proportions of the estimated target population reasonably well with regard to factors such as gender, age, position, type of employment, and employing media outlet. This is illustrated below, in Table 3.

	Survey sample	WJS sample (Finland)	Union of Journalists in Finland members <sup>2</sup>
Gender distribution (female/male)	57/43%	55/45%	57/43%
Membership of the dominant age group (ages 36–55)	54%	61%	55%
Proportion of salaried employees	81%	82%	81%
Freelancer or entrepreneur status	15%	17%	18%
Working for newspapers or magazines	65%	69%	67%
Working in broadcasting (including public broadcasting)	23%	23%	32%
Holding a position of reporter, special reporter, or visual journalist	68%	72%	76%
Holding a management position (managing editor, producer, or editor-in-chief)	28%	24%	15% <sup>3</sup>

**Table 3.** Representativeness of the sample

This comparison does point to some slants and biases in the sample, though. The overrepresentation of managing editors, producers, and editors-in-chief might be explained by the inclusion of three separate editors’ associations in the survey. Also, respondents aged 25 years or below were underrepresented; they accounted for six percent of the union members but only three percent of the survey sample. However, it is fair to assume that many union members in that age band were students engaged in full-time study. They may be hesitant to answer survey questions about journalistic work because of that current status and limited work experience.

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<sup>2</sup> Based on detailed membership statistics from 2015. For control over the age bracket, employment type, reporting medium, and occupational position, a limited sample was used, omitting those members (technical personnel etc.) whose profession description was deemed irrelevant with regard to the scope of the study.

<sup>3</sup> As noted above, journalists whose principal work responsibilities include overseeing company financial benefits and who exercise significant power over employment decisions were barred from union membership at the time. This provides a potential explanation for the low representation of journalists with managerial positions among union members.

While the similarities in proportions do not make the sample representative of the population of Finnish journalists (see Bethlehem 2010, 169), they do increase confidence that no one group dominated the sample or skewed the results significantly. In addition, the breakdown shows that the sample produced a sizeable number of responses from members of such typically hard-to-reach occupations as editors-in-chief and special reporters. This increased the validity of the results in exploring variations in experiences and perceived implications connected with various individual- and organization-level factors.

### 3.2.4 Analysis of the Survey Results

Because of the scarcity of contemporary empirical research on the subject and the position of my quantitative studies as initial components of the dissertation project, the analysis and presentation of the survey results in publications I and II reflect descriptive and comparative inquiries (Edmonds and Kennedy 2017). Dulock (1993, 155) states the following:

Descriptive designs are most useful for describing phenomena or events about which little is known or for identifying new or emerging phenomena. In addition, the results of descriptive studies are usually used as the basis for further research.

Descriptive approaches are valuable for describing what exists, categorizing information, and finding the frequency with which something occurs (Dulock 1993, 154). Descriptive research can be considered especially crucial when the phenomena examined are not static but continuously evolving (Dulock 1993, 157), as is the case with external interference targeted at journalists (Luostarinen 1994, 73). A comparative perspective is necessary for exploring associations between variables and distinct groups (Edmonds and Kennedy 2017, 21–23).

To describe the empirical basis for the phenomenon, Publication I presents the reported occurrences of external interference and their perceived implications by means of frequency distributions. In the preparation of Publication II, these quantitative findings were enriched with relational and comparative perspectives (see Edmonds and Kennedy 2017, 21–23). To identify differences in reported experiences of external interference that stem from individual-level attributes (age or gender) and from organization-level ones (employment type, the medium of reporting, or occupation/position), Publication II features extensive cross-tabulation with chi-squared tests of the survey data. The perceived implications of external interference were analyzed by means of non-parametric versions of

Student's *t*-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests, for reason of the non-normally distributed data and a lack of appropriate interval- or ratio-scale variables. The Mann–Whitney *U* test was used to identify differences between two groups (genders) and the Kruskal–Wallis *H* test to identify differences between groups where there were three or more classes: age, employment type, medium used for reporting, and occupational position. For all tests reported in Publication II, the most commonplace statistical significance threshold was used,  $p < 0.05$  (with a 95% confidence level).

For publications I and II, the respondents' comments were subjected to computer-assisted qualitative content analysis conducted by means of the software ATLAS.ti 8. Content analysis is a useful instrument in descriptive research and excels when the research questions are descriptive in nature (Schreier 2012, 42–43). Textual comments were coded for categories reflecting the broader themes of the survey (interview situations and access to information, pre-publication screening of journalistic content, non-physical forms of external interference, physical forms of external interference, institutional forms of external interference, and economic forms of external interference). Comments in the survey that fell outside these themes' lines were categorized as "Other," and comments discussing the design of the survey were labeled "Feedback." If a comment exhibited elements that were deemed relevant for two or more categories, the comment was assigned to all of these. This categorization represents structural coding, in that the data were labeled and indexed in the process such that the researcher could access all data relevant for a particular topic of inquiry from a larger dataset (Namey et al. 2008, 141).

Finally, the numerical data and the free-form comments were analyzed in tandem (Riffe et al. 2014; Schreier 2012). In addition, interpretation and contextualizing of the findings made use of the literature and previous research. This integrative approach elevated the level of analysis presented in publications I and II from mere description of empirical findings, since the integration of material enriched the data via contextual and descriptive depth (see Neuendorf and Kumar 2016, 3–4). The quantitative results were supplemented later by the qualitative findings presented in publications III and IV. Chapter 4, the findings section of the dissertation, presents the project's final synthesis.

### 3.2.5 Limitations and Evaluation

Survey methodology as applied for the dissertation has several limitations and shortcomings. This section discusses these and their potential effects that should be kept in mind in the course of examining and interpreting the results.

The sample was drawn from union and association rolls. Non-unionized professional journalists and those who do not belong to editor associations were, therefore, not able to participate in the survey. This restriction may have reduced the number of freelancers and journalists working in precarious conditions who participated in the survey and might, in turn, also contribute to explaining the underrepresentation of younger journalists in the sample – the latter are more likely to work in precarious positions than more experienced journalists (e.g., Örnebring 2018; Örnebring and Möller 2018).

The non-probability self-selection sampling method introduces noteworthy potential for biases derived from issues of salience (Cook et al. 2000, 832). It is very likely that informants with a personal investment in the subject, or an extreme opinions on it, are overrepresented in the sample relative to the whole population of interest. The potential for biases related to issue salience is heightened by the low response rate. Therefore, the prevalence of external interference experienced by the journalists in the sample may be higher than that among all Finnish professional journalists. This factor weakens the ability to generalize and extrapolate to the larger population on the basis of the sample (Bethlehem 2010; Sivo et al. 2006).

Data collected through self-report surveys are prone to perception differences and variations between individuals in interpretation of questions and deciding what to report (Molyneux and Zamith 2020, 3). These problems are exacerbated in our case since, except for the comments, the questionnaire did not distinguish among the sources, contexts, or locales of interference. Therefore, subjective variation may exist in connection with whether an informant personally defined certain incidents as external interference or not and reported them in the study. This issue is especially problematic in dealing with more elusive methods of interference where social interaction and context play a major role. Whereas, for instance, we could assume the informants to share a fairly similar notion of what counts as physical violence and to be able to report these occasions quite reliably and straightforwardly, subtler methods of interference leave much more room for subjective interpretation. Since the data collection relied on self-reporting, it was not possible to determine whether the incidents reported actually took place and to what extent they were reported accurately and truthfully (see Del Boca and Noll 2000).

Additionally, it bears noting that logic dictates that the presence of certain elements of journalistic work increases the likelihood of journalists encountering certain types of interference. For example, a journalist reporting frequently from the field is more likely to encounter physical interference in the work than one who very rarely leaves the desk. The study did not control for this. Because the occurrence of various methods of external interference was reported as an estimated average, the reporting scales highlighted the mean values. Hence, it was hard for respondents to accurately report the frequency of interference for cases of experiencing shorter spans of continuous interference followed by long stretches during which they did not experience any. Moreover, since the survey's questionnaire was not personalized in any way, some of the questions were inapplicable for certain informant groups; e.g., not all were relevant for photographers or editorial-writers (see Molyneux and Zamith 2020, 7). Although instructions to, in effect, skip inapplicable items went some way toward addressing this issue, context-sensitive or personalized survey forms could have done so more elegantly while also reducing the survey's length.

A similar issue, raised in the free-form comments, is that questions exploring external interference with regard to interview situations and the pre-screening of journalistic content did not consider the differences in interview practices between textual and broadcast media. Furthermore, the lack of previous longitudinal data makes it impossible to identify any possible shifts or changes over a longer time.

Some further limitations surfaced during the statistical analysis. Internally valid chi-squared testing requires that the expected frequencies within cross-tabulated cells be above 5 in at least 80% of cases, and there should be no cells containing a value of 0 (Greenwood and Nikulin 1996). Any deviations in this regard can be considered problematic for the internal validity of the chi-squared test, and the associated results should be reviewed carefully (Greenwood and Nikulin 1996). These constraints required combining some subsamples so as to enable valid statistical testing, so the results' level of detail suffered accordingly. In some testing patterns, several subsamples had to be discarded entirely, since there were not enough responses to allow valid chi-squared testing. For example, when we were examining the employing media outlets, the small absolute number of responses left us unable to analyze the results for journalists working in commercial broadcasting. Additionally, we had to condense the response categories to a three-point scale ("Never," "Once a year or less," and "Every six months or more often") for Publication II to facilitate reliable statistical testing. Irrespective of these efforts, experiences that were very rarely reported still led to unreliable results because cells with a value of 0 were present. This was the case, for example, for experiences of physical violence. Furthermore,

the requirements of valid chi-squared testing did not allow further division into subgroups (for example, to permit comparison between male and female editors-in-chief working at local newspapers), since, again, the low numbers of observations in various categories within the breakdowns typically rendered the test unreliable. To produce reliable results, this sort of analysis would have required the use of different statistical methods or significantly larger quantities of data.

These various limitations related to the method and sampling render the findings illustrative and indicative, rather than representative and definitive in relation to the population of Finnish journalists as a whole. In retrospect, the survey still managed to fulfill its purpose, though. Its limitations notwithstanding, the results provided a rough overview of the previously uncharted terrain that interested me. The findings demonstrated to me that the members of the profession recognized the constellation of phenomena at issue and illustrated that external interference was not something marginal – it was encountered at least occasionally by journalists across a very wide spectrum of occupational positions and media outlets. These findings and the feedback I received from the journalism community confirmed that this subject indeed is worthy of in-depth research attention. In addition, the further statistical analysis revealed connections and correlations of which we were not previously aware. Once aware of them, I was able to pursue explanations via the interview component of the project. Therefore, having the “lay of the land” provided by the survey component proved immensely useful, informing the further research’s design and serving to shape and validate the ultimate conclusions presented in this dissertation (see Hesse-Biber 2010, 4–6; Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009, 137).

### 3.3 The Qualitative Component: Thematically Oriented Focused Interviews

Instead of using the classic model for focused interviews (Merton and Kendall 1946; Merton et al. 1990), the research project utilized a thematically oriented variant introduced by Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000, 47–48). While this variant shares its fundamentals with the classic focused interview, there are two noteworthy differences. Firstly, it does not require informants’ participation in a controlled or observed concrete situation (Merton and Kendall 1946, 541); it assumes that each individual experience, belief, thought, and feeling can be studied through focused interviewing (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2000, 48). Secondly, while the interview guide in both versions is designed to capture subjective experiences of individuals (Merton



and Kendall 1946, 541), the variant introduced by Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000, 48) emphasizes focus on broader themes instead of predetermined detailed questions, hence the Finnish denotation of this variant as *teemahaastattelu* (the “thematic interview”). The thematic interview represents an intermediate form occupying the space between structured and unstructured interviews, usually referred to as semi-structured. The focus on themes offers a compromise between flexibility and reliability: individual questions can be adapted to the informant while the array of themes addressed in the interview remains the same (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2000). This made it possible to emphasize those aspects of external interference relevant to each one of the informants without compromising the reliability of the interviews.

### 3.3.1 The Sampling and Procedure

For the qualitative component of the work, a combination of critical-case sampling ( $n=15$ ) and maximum-variety sampling from a predetermined pool of informants ( $n=16$ ) was used (Patton 1990, 172–175). In addition, there was a set of background interviews ( $n=4$ ) with stakeholder organizations’ representatives at a later stage in the research, to contextualize the findings further. All the interviews were conducted between January 2018 and December 2019. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed verbatim.

The critical-case sample was made up of 15 high-profile Finnish journalists dealing with topics expected to be prone to external interference, such as politics, business, crime, immigration, and investigative reporting (see Publication I; Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016, 886; Marttinen 2016; Parker 2015; Pietiläinen 2007; see also Hiltunen and Suuronen 2019, 109–114). The aim was to find those informants who would be most likely to provide useful information and, thereby, have the greatest impact on the study’s development of knowledge (Patton 1990, 174–175). Critical cases can make a point quite dramatically, and scholars often are able to make logical generalizations solely on the basis of evidence obtained from studying critical cases (Patton 1990, 174–175). In this part of the study’s sampling, one journalist contacted declined to participate for personal reasons.

The maximum-variety sample of 16 journalists was drawn from those respondents to the project’s earlier survey (see publications I and II) who had expressed interest in a follow-up interview. The goal was to obtain as variety-rich a sample as possible from this predetermined pool of informants. All journalists contacted agreed to participate in an interview.

Both sampling processes were guided by the aim of maximizing variety among the interviewees – the final sample featured journalists with diverse demographics (age, gender, and career length), types of employment (salaried employees and freelancers), occupational positions (special reporters, other reporters, managing editors, and editors-in-chief), media outlets (newspapers, magazines, and broadcast media), geographical regions of focus, and areas of specialization. However, the interview sample did not include photographers, camera operators, and other visual journalists. Combining two sampling methods contributed a rich set of data (Patton 1990, 184–186), conveying multiple, highly varied positions and perspectives on the phenomenon examined. All informants were contacted directly by email or phone. Tables 4 and 5, below, present the key demographic features of the journalists interviewed and of the media outlets employing the sample’s salaried journalists.

<b>Gender</b>	<i>n</i>	<b>Education</b>	<i>n</i>	<b>Occupation</b>	<i>n</i>
Female	18	Master's degree or other advanced degree	14	Editor-in-chief	3
Male	13	Bachelor's degree	3	Managing editor	4
		Degree from a university of applied sciences	4	Producer	1
		University studies not leading to a degree	4	Special reporter	9
		Upper-secondary-school diploma	4	Other reporter	14
		Vocational qualification	2		

**Table 4.** Key demographic features of the 31 interviewees

Media outlet	<i>n</i>
National newspaper	3
Public broadcasting	3
Tabloid newspaper	3
Semi-local newspaper	3
Local newspaper	3
Magazine	3
Regional newspaper	2
Commercial-broadcasting entity	1
News agency	1

**Table 5.** The media outlets employing the 22 salaried journalists

The organizational stakeholders for background interviews were selected for their relevance to the area under study. I interviewed one representative<sup>4</sup> from each of four organizations. The Union of Journalists in Finland is the largest labor union representing the country’s journalists and has often taken a public stance of defending journalists targeted with interference, harassment, or abuse and offered them support (e.g., Union of Journalists in Finland 2020; Uusi Suomi 2016). The membership of the Finnish Association of Editors encompasses editors-in-chief, editorial-writers, and managing editors from nearly all major Finnish news outlets. Therefore, this association has a vantage point over what is happening on journalistic organizations from the managerial perspective, and it has expressed public concern, accordingly, about intimidation of journalists (see PTY 2016). The third body, the Council for Mass Media, is a self-regulation committee established by Finnish

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<sup>4</sup> Chairperson **Hanne Aho** (Union of Journalists in Finland), Chairperson **Arno Aho** (Finnish Association for Editors), Chairperson **Elina Grundström** (Council for Mass Media), and Head of Journalistic Standards and Ethics **Timo Huovinen** (Finnish Broadcasting Company, YLE).

publishers and journalists. The council's functions include outlining and interpreting good professional conduct in journalism and defending freedom of speech and publication. This entity has issued statements regarding external interference (CMM 2013; 2016; 2017a; 2018; 2020) and occasionally has had to rule on cases wherein editorial power allegedly has been surrendered to external actors (e.g., CMM 2017b). In 2014, public broadcaster YLE, which is the largest employer of journalists in Finland, established the position Head of Journalistic Standards and Ethics (Luukka 2014), with responsibilities that extend also to reinforcing the autonomy of YLE journalism against external interference. This position is unique among Finnish media outlets.

### 3.3.2 Interview-Guide Design

The interview guide for the focused interviews (see the appendices to publications III and IV) was devised in line with the findings from the quantitative component of the research (reported upon in publications I and II). The guide addressed three topic areas: 1) personal experiences of external interference, 2) reactions to external interference, and 3) perceptions of how external interference affects journalistic work and the profession in Finland. Several journalism researchers were consulted in the drafting of the interview guide. In addition, the research's first two interviews served as pilot interviews and were followed by a feedback session with the informants. I made minor adjustments to the interview guide on the basis of this feedback. Also, all informants were given an opportunity to suggest and discuss relevant themes that the interview guide did not cover, at the end of the interview, to make sure the data reflected all experiences and notions they deemed important.

All prospective interviewees were given an overview of the research objectives and guiding principles related to the study's use of data, and they had an opportunity to ask about these before agreeing to participate in the interviews. This guaranteed informed consent. Additionally, they were informed that they could clarify or expand on their answers at any time after the interview by contacting the researcher later. Several informants took this opportunity, supplementing the interview via email afterward. They provided, for example, updates on how events described in the interview had progressed.

The interview guides for the background interviews with organizational stakeholders were devised stakeholder-specifically, taking into account the findings

from the questionnaire-based survey and the interviews as well as the organization's societal role and ability to further contextualize the findings.

The semi-structured nature of the focused interviews rendered it possible to focus on multiple aspects of external interference and adjust the degree of emphasis on the various themes interview-specifically on the basis of individual informants' experiences (Ryan et al. 2009). This approach produced an information-rich tapestry of experiences and perspectives, contributing to fulfilling the aims behind the dissertation.

### 3.3.3 The Interview Process

In total, 35 qualitative research interviews were conducted for the dissertation project. Of these, nine were done in person and 26 were carried out remotely, by means of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology. The video connection for the latter utilized programs such as Skype. In this section, I use the term "remote interview" to refer to interviews conducted via a real-time audio and video connection over the Internet.

The informants were asked about their willingness to participate in a remote interview and could opt for an in-person one instead if preferring that option. The in-person interview has traditionally been positioned as the "gold standard" for qualitative interviews, while other modes of interviewing have been considered inherently inferior (e.g., Holt 2010; Johnson et al. 2019, 1–3). It may be argued that it indeed offers the most natural conversation setting and the best opportunity to observe contextual and non-verbal details, emotional response cues, etc. (e.g., Irvine et al. 2013). A lack of these might exert a negative influence on conversational logic and the depth of the interview material. (e.g., Johnson et al. 2019; Krouwel et al. 2019).

While the remote interviews made use of an audio and video connection, only the audio was recorded for research purposes. This decision was related to the study's sociological approach, in which text serves as a proxy for experience and is analyzed as a *de facto* representation of individuals' perceptions, feelings, and behavior (see Bernard and Ryan 1998). In line with this, the visual cues and visible aspects of interaction were not deemed significant for the research's core aim. Holt (2010, 115–116) states that, on account of their lack of contextual information, interviews conducted remotely may help the researcher to "stay at the level of text" and avoid mixing observed contextual information in with the data. While this might also be

considered a hindrance, one could argue that the transparency of the research data improves when influences of interpretation (or misinterpretation) stemming from unrecorded context are reduced.

I find two aspects of the remote and in-person modes of interviewing as combined for my research worth highlighting: convenience and spatiality. Also, I argue that much of the criticism directed at remote interviews stems from the shortcomings of audio-only telephone interviews; many decades of availability of telephone interviewing (Holt 2010) have provided more time for criticisms to accumulate, relative to online remote methods utilizing video feeds. The latter mimic the in-person interview experience much more closely and offer better opportunities to pick up visual and non-verbal cues related to personal interaction (Hanna 2012, 241). Secondly, I find that analyses focusing solely on such technical aspects of interview data as word count; length; and number-coded topics, turns in conversation, etc. (see Johnson et al. 2019; Krouwel et al. 2019) sideline the several advantages of remote interviewing that together can make up for the drawbacks. While most of these advantages are practically oriented and related to setting up the interviews and the context in which they are conducted, they can also extend to the research material – for example, to the exploration of personal and sensitive topics (e.g., Hanna 2012; Oates 2015).

With regard to the first factor, convenience, Archibald and colleagues (2019, 2) state that research participants may find remote interviews preferable to in-person ones for their efficiency and expediency. This factor was accentuated in this project's case since the informants were professionals who were often busy and had an irregular schedule (see also Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2000, 65). Remote interviewing saved both the informants and the interviewer the time otherwise necessary for traveling to the venue (see Oates 2015, 16). That time could be devoted to the interview itself instead. The informants had the choice of whether to be interviewed during office hours vs. after and also could flexibly reschedule or postpone the interview if doing so proved necessary. This approach to both the medium through which the interviews were conducted and the scheduling of the interviews offered the participants a greater degree of control over their participation in the research process (Hanna 2012, 239–240). I strongly feel that this contributed to the participation rate for the interviews, with only one person contacted declining to participate in this part of the study.

Secondly, spatial aspects of remote interviewing influenced both the project's sampling and the conducting of interviews. Favoring remote interviews allowed me to construct my sample without having to worry about geographical distance (see

Hanna 2012; Oates 2015). This contributed to the geographical representativeness of my study. Secondly, remote video interviews offer the informant and the interviewer an opportunity to share a virtual conversation space while physically staying in the place of their own choosing. This creates “neutral ground” for the interview (see also Bertrand and Bourdeau 2010). Hanna (2012, 241) elaborates:

[T]he researched can remain in the comfortable location of their home while being interviewed without the sense the researcher is encroaching on their personal space, while the researcher avoids the feeling of imposing themselves physically within the participant’s personal space. Thus, a neutral yet personal location is maintained for both parties throughout the process.

For the remote interviews, I instructed the informants to pick a place where they felt comfortable and that had little to no distraction or presence of third parties. That choice gave the interviewees additional control over their participation in the research process (Hanna 2012, 239–240). This factor can, however, prove disadvantageous, since the researcher’s lack of control over the participant’s physical environment during the interview can compromise the undisturbed flow or anonymity of the interview (Lo Iacono et al. 2016, 10). For my research, the majority of the participants chose a space at home or a private office, and few opted for their workspace or a café. Because remote interviewing eliminated the need for me to occupy the same physical space as the informant, there was less risk of the informant’s anonymity being compromised through third parties being aware of the interactions taking place or overhearing what was discussed (see Oates 2015, 16).

Oates (2015, 16) argues that, by providing virtual conversation space while the participants physically remain in a comfortable setting, remote interviewing can offer a safe yet intimate environment especially for those research interviews dealing with sensitive topics. Among the explicit advantages Oates cites for this setting are a greater sense of privacy and the ability to take breaks or easily withdraw from the interview situation should the need arise. I considered these relevant advantages since the topic of my research can be considered sensitive and recalling the associated experiences caused emotional distress to some interviewees. However, such scholars as Seitz (2016, 232–233) remark that remote interviews may be characterized by “an emotional barrier” that makes establishing a personal connection and intimacy harder and that renders it more difficult to elicit detailed answers to sensitive questions than with in-person interviews. From my personal experiences, I tend to agree more with Oates: I see the “detachment” provided by remote interviews as a positive feature making it easier for informants to open up about personal matters. However, I did not explicitly query the participants in the remote interviews about

their experiences and perceptions of emotional distance related to the medium used, and the few who brought these matters up unprompted had had a positive experience. Still, I concur with Seitz (2016) that the subject matter, familiarity with mediated communication, and the personalities of both the interviewer and the informant all play a role in shaping the interaction in remote interviews. I would suggest that, in this research, the informants' familiarity with interview situations/practices and with various forms of mediated communication fostered beneficial interaction and helped overcome any difficulties related to the sensitive subject matter.

Still, remote interviewing had its share of problems and disadvantages. The major ones arose in relation to informants not having software that enables video calls and to incompatible or outdated version of software (see Krouwel et al. 2019, 2). These difficulties were easy enough to overcome with some advance preparation and through taking some time to guide novice users through the associated services (see Lo Iacono et al. 2016, 5; Oates 2015, 17). Another factor is connectivity problems suffered in some interviews because of lagging video or audio, freezing frames, inconsistent audio or video quality, disconnection of calls, etc. (see Krouwel et al. 2019, 2; Seitz 2016). Seitz (2016, 231–233) points out that technical difficulties disturb the interview flow and are especially detrimental when one is trying to establish intimacy and an emotional connection. I whole-heartedly agree. However, since these problems are typically caused by a poor Internet connection or technical glitching of the software, there are indications that technical advances and greater penetration of high-speed Internet connections are continuously decreasing these problems (see also Archibald et al. 2019, 7).

The in-person interviews for the dissertation closely mirrored the practices employed in the remote interviews, to guarantee consistency of the data. All interviews were conducted in a location chosen by the informant, and only audio was captured for analysis. Also, the length of the in-person interviews did not diverge from that of the remote ones. One difference that did arise is the aforementioned location aspect: since the latter interviews took place in workspaces, offices, bars, and restaurants (in line with the informant's choices), it was more difficult to keep third parties such as their co-workers or other customers at the venue unaware that a research interview was taking place, because of my physical presence (cf. Oates 2015, 16). However, I made sure that no third parties could overhear what was being discussed in these interviews. In the analysis phase, the only qualitative differences that could be attributed to whether the interview was conducted remotely or in person were related to occasional connection problems present in a handful of



remote interviews. This increased confidence that mixing interview methods did not have significant consequences for the interactions during the research process or for the data obtained.

Considering the interviews conducted for this dissertation, I echo Hanna's (2012) view that offering the participants alternative ways of handling interviews is a good way to promote participation, especially with busy professional informants. Additionally, giving participants more extensive control over the interview situation can foster trust/rapport and help them feel more relaxed (Hanna 2015, 239; Seitz 2016, 232–233). Therefore, I argue that mixing interview modes can have a beneficial effect on research outcomes by reducing non-participation and allowing informants to interact with the researcher in the way they feel is most comfortable (see also Seitz 2016, 232–233). Together with the efficacy and economy of remote interviewing, these benefits provide a counterweight to potential shortcomings relative to in-person interviewing (cf. Johnson et al. 2019; Krouwel et al. 2019).

Later, in response to the outbreak of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, social researchers have needed to pivot quickly toward remote interviewing to replace face-to-face interviews and focus groups (e.g., Melis et al. 2021; Self 2021; Sy et al. 2020). Since one can expect remote interviews to become more common in social research, thanks to heightened familiarity with VoIP technology among researchers and the general population, one of the methodological contributions of this dissertation is to enrich the literature discussing the interview mode's influence on the interview situation and on the qualitative material obtained.

### 3.3.4 Analysis of the Interview Data

My project's qualitative analysis is in line with the sociological tradition, situating the text as representations of and proxies for informants' perceptions, feelings, knowledge, and behavior (Bernard and Ryan 1998). In keeping with the semi-structured nature of the interviews and the analysis method used, this dissertation focuses on analysis of themes, thus highlighting the content of the informants' discourse instead of communicational aspects (Bernard and Ryan 1998; Guest et al. 2012, 8–11).

The interview data were analyzed by means of an inductive variant of applied thematic analysis (ATA). The aim of thematic analysis is to identify both implicit and explicit ideas within the material and to group together interrelated ideas to form themes (Guest et al. 2012). As an analysis method, ATA is designed to “present the

stories and experiences voiced by study participants as accurately and comprehensively as possible” while simultaneously seeking preserve the transparency and credibility of the analysis process (Guest et al. 2012, 16). Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti 8 was used as an aid to the coding and analysis processes.

For publications III and IV, the coding was conducted in two rounds. Per the inductive variant of ATA, the first round employed a descriptive coding strategy examining and cataloguing elements present in the data and constructing an initial classification and coding schema based on them (Saldaña 2013, 87–91). In the second round, pattern coding facilitated exploring the similarities, differences, and connections between the codes and aided in assessing them critically (Saldaña 2013, 209–213). This process entailed combining and merging interrelated elements, for the material’s refinement into broader themes. The pattern coding was guided by the aims behind each of the publications, with Publication III focusing on categorizing methods of external interference and countermeasures to them and Publication IV exploring how the media environment’s hybridization manifested itself in journalists’ experiences of that interference and articulating categories of factors that supported the participating journalists’ professional autonomy in the face of interference.

The value of ATA as an analysis method lies in its ability to reliably describe large bodies of empirical qualitative data via distillation into themes while simultaneously allowing in-depth analysis of the material (Guest et al. 2012). I argue that ATA is a highly suitable analysis method for work such as that presented in publications III and IV, in that it is ideal for presenting and analyzing large amounts of qualitative interview material within the word-count constraints set by scientific journals. Additionally, the interview data’s refinement into themes affords easier synthesis of the qualitative and quantitative findings in the next chapter.

### 3.3.5 Limitations and Evaluation

There are several limitations related to the sampling and analysis of the focused interviews that one should bear in mind when considering the results.

The informants were recruited by means of critical-case sampling and contacting of survey respondents who had expressed interest in a follow-up interview. Both groups can be considered specific subsets of the population: the former presumably overlaps strongly with the set of journalists who experience external interference the most, and the latter comprises journalists eager to discuss the issues and pressures

that they were dealing with. Therefore, the sample is very likely to be skewed toward journalists encountering external interference more often than average and should not be regarded as representative of the population of Finnish professional journalists. Rather, the findings serve in an illustrative capacity, highlighting phenomena that might gradually become more commonplace among all Finnish journalists.

The subject matter of the research can be considered sensitive – the interviews included detailed description of informants’ personal experiences, perceptions, and feelings. In general, journalists may be reluctant to express or discuss their emotions or the emotional strain of their work publicly (e.g., Carter and Kodrich 2013; Chen et al. 2020), since values of toughness and indomitability have deep roots in the journalistic field (Binns 2017, 185). To minimize social-desirability bias and other factors with potentially detrimental effects (see Nederhof 1985; Yanos and Hopper 2008), I present the material in anonymized form and with minimal identifying features. This aim was communicated to the informants in advance. All the interview material was stored securely, and only I as the researcher have had access to it. Likewise, only I know the informants’ identity. The background interviews constitute an exception – because they were focused more on institutional perspectives, they did not warrant anonymity.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) state that the validity and reliability of qualitative research depend on the procedures undertaken by the researcher. I took several steps suggested by Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012) to enhance ATA’s validity and reliability when designing and conducting the research and when analyzing the results: The design of the interview guide benefited from data produced from the first component of the research, making comparisons and triangulation of findings possible. In addition, collegial feedback and pretesting informed devising of the interview guide. Furthermore, as noted above, all informants had the opportunity to provide feedback and to clarify or extend their answers at any time by contacting the researcher. Also, the research material was transcribed verbatim in line with a common transcription protocol, and the reporting of the results uses quotations to support the themes and interpretations derived from the code list I developed in the analysis phase.

Still, because I was the only person involved in the coding and no external reviews were conducted during the coding process, no external measurement of stability, accuracy, or intercoder agreement was possible (Campbell et al. 2013). Therefore, there is greater potential for biases derived from the individual coder than there might otherwise be. To mitigate possible biases, I reviewed the coded data and the

consistency of coding twice for each article, acting first as primary and then as secondary coder, with revising and recoding as necessary (Guest et al. 2012, 92; Saldaña 2013, 10–12). Additionally, contradictions and cases of deviation were brought up and discussed in the publications when pertinent, illustrating the data's complexity and the multiple perspectives represented by the material.

While the qualitative research findings cannot be considered representative of the population of Finnish professional journalists as a whole, they provide a valuable complement to the output from the first component of the dissertation project. The interview-based component illustrates how social and technological transitions in a contemporary hybrid media environment have transformed the status and position of professional journalism and the conducting of journalistic work, contributing to the manifestation of external interference and its current prevalence. The qualitative element, thereby, contextualizes and provides analytical explanations for the quantitative endeavor's findings, rendering the arguments presented in the dissertation more robust and reliable.

Following the ethos of a sequential mixed-methods approach, the two components of the research project ultimately were integrated, with the final conclusions being drawn on the basis of the combination of the research's components (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009, 137). This enabled providing answers to the research questions through amalgamation of diverse data and application of multiple methods so as to overcome biases that could arise from reliance on any single method or dataset and making it possible to obtain and present more robust findings related to complex social phenomena (Noble and Heale 2019). The findings arrived at and their final synthesis are presented and discussed in the next chapter.

## 4 KEY FINDINGS

The discussion in this chapter constitutes the final synthesis of the research results, integrating the key findings presented in the original publications in order to offer answers to the research questions posed in Chapter 1. The chapter is structured on the basis of the research questions: I begin by examining the methods and prevalence of external interference among Finnish professional journalists, answering RQ1. Then I move on to present various ways in which Finnish professional journalists perceive external interference as affecting their work and the professional field, providing answers to RQ2. Lastly, I explore factors that journalists identify as supporting their efforts to protect their external autonomy against interference, thus answering RQ3. The broader implications of these findings for the field of professional journalism and their societal significance are further expanded upon and contemplated in Chapter 5, which presents the conclusions from the dissertation project.

### 4.1 Prevalence and Methods of External Interference

RQ1: What kind of external interference do Finnish professional journalists encounter in their work? How prevalent is external interference for Finnish professional journalists?

The results illustrate several important tendencies in the methods and prevalence of external interference experienced by Finnish professional journalists in their contemporary hybrid media environment. The findings related to the methods of external interference employed echo the notions of Luostarinen (1994, 73), who states that the methods and tactics of interference are constantly changing and that new methods are frequently introduced. While this makes comprehensive cataloging of how external interference manifests itself in Finnish journalists' work challenging, Publication III presents a novel typology that may offer guidance amid these shifts: I categorize methods of interference on the basis of their principal target area and mechanism of influence. Under this categorization, the methods of external

interference identified in the dissertation project can be classified into six categories: 1) methods targeting information acquisition, 2) psychological methods, 3) physical methods, 4) institutional methods, 5) economic methods, and 6) methods using information technology.

Methods targeting information acquisition cover activities aimed at interfering with journalists' ability to obtain information. These zero in on work processes such as interviewing and gaining access to public documents. Psychological methods, in turn, are employed to interfere mainly through exposing journalists to psychological pressure, harm, or other negative psychological effects. Physical methods involve disruptive and violent behavior in physical space that is aimed at interfering with journalistic work. Those applying institutional methods seek to interfere by taking advantage of other societal institutions, such as the legal system, law enforcement, or media self-regulation. Economic methods encompass both positive and negative economic sanctions. Finally, methods using information technology target the technological work equipment of journalists and function primarily through information networks. This category includes activities such as hacking and surveillance of communication activities. While most forms of interference in all these categories were present in professional journalists' work also in the analog mass-media era, the findings indicate that certain features of today's hybrid media environment have in many cases transformed or intensified them, altering their manifestations and significance. For example, a common notion among the study participants was that, while journalists have received verbal abuse and harassment from the audience before, the sheer intensity, volume, and public nature of contemporary online harassment, along with the possibility of singling out and targeting an individual journalist, make it very different from harassment in the analog era (see also Waisbord 2020a, 3). However, this also means that the findings presented in the dissertation should be understood only as a freeze-frame of current manifestations of external interference in Finland – they highlight important patterns but must be reexamined as time passes and subjected to constant reassessment and updating.

Additionally, the qualitative element of the research provide insight on the contexts and perpetrators of external interference. Parker (2015) states that interference may emanate from actors positioned variously as sources, subjects, and audiences in relation to journalism. Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro (2018, 1095–1100) introduce another distinction, a temporal separation between interference that occurs before publication of a story (*a priori*) and after its publication (*post hoc*). Both typologies can function as aids to classifying methods of external interference and

the actors involved in them. Sources and subjects of stories typically aim to interfere with the conduct and outcome of journalistic work before publication and in this way either prevent the publication of stories deemed counter to their interests or mitigate the effects (Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2018, 1095–1100; Parker 2015, 2). Interference originating from the audience typically takes place after publication of the story and is aimed at compelling withdrawal of the story, reducing the piece’s impact, and/or preventing further publication of such stories through psychological pressure (Waisbord 2020a; see also Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2018, 1095–1100). However, as publications III and IV illustrate, the complex and multifaceted nature of external interference frustrates efforts at proposing clearly defined categories also in this sense. For example, legal threats to journalists may be applied by sources, subjects, and/or audiences and can occur either before or after publication of the story in question (cf. Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2018, 1096).

The findings also illustrate how new methods of interference are introduced in tandem with technological and social developments. For example, proliferation of information technology and media outlets’ digitalization of their information-processing have ushered in such novel types of interference as hacking and phishing attacks targeted at journalists (e.g., Bradshaw 2017). The findings suggest that rapid and widespread adoption of social-media and other digital-domain media platforms has been the most radical recent change to exert transformative effects on the media landscape and intensify the external interference that Finnish professional journalists experience in their work. Publication IV discusses in detail how techno-social transformations brought on by hybridization of the modern media environment get reflected in external interference directed at journalists. Proceeding from the findings, I can outline four central developments in this regard: 1) proliferation of publicity control, 2) an increasingly contested public sphere, 3) societal and political polarization, and 4) the personalization of journalism. The implications of these developments for the field of professional journalism and for the shared professional ideology and habitus of journalists are elaborated upon further in the concluding chapter of the dissertation. At this juncture, it suffices to state that, taken as a whole, the findings support the notion that methods of external interference are heavily influenced by the social, cultural, and technological possibilities available in any given context. Therefore, one should consider these contextual factors carefully whenever examining the phenomenon of external interference and exploring its effects on the journalistic field.



The second part of RQ1 focuses on the prevalence of various activities that are considered external interference in the framework of this dissertation. The project produced several findings that are significant in connection with this.

Firstly, as publications I and II attest, most of the methods considered to involve external interference are encountered only rarely and sporadically by the majority of Finnish professional journalists. The most commonly reported types of interference were related to interviewing, source relations, pre-screening of journalistic content, and access to public documents. Therefore, the set of methods is closely tied to everyday journalistic practices. More than a third of respondents reported having encountered every one of the methods of external interference listed in connection with interview situations and access to information and also each of the methods listed with regard to pre-screening of journalistic content during the time span considered – with only one exception: withholding cooperation with certain journalists, which had been experienced by 29% of respondents (see Publication I). In the typology introduced in Publication III, all these methods would fall under the category of external interference applied to information acquisition.

These findings are confirmed by the work behind publications III and IV. The Finnish journalists interviewed were extremely familiar with situations wherein interviewees, sources, or subjects of stories had tried to interfere with their professional activities and conduct in the course of journalistic processes. Journalists also reported being quite used to tactics of this sort and feeling capable of dealing with such interference and nullifying its effects easily. This did, however, require their superiors' and the journalistic and media organization' support for their efforts to do so. As noted in Publication I, 22% of the journalists reported incidents wherein editors above them and/or owners of the media outlet had altered their work in response to external interference, and 8% reported instances of stories not being published at all because editors and/or owners had succumbed to its effects. Of all respondents, 30% considered the editors and owners of their media outlet more susceptible to external interference than the respondent was. The interview accounts in publications III and IV illustrate that situations featuring perceived lack of internal support can have long-term harmful effects on media outlets' internal confidence and notions of shared professionalism, leading to distrust within them and to chilling effects.

Publication I shows that, behind methods targeting information acquisition, mediated verbal abuse is the second-most prevalent method of interference reported. Verbal abuse channeled through various means of mediated communication was occasionally encountered by most respondents (60%), with 9%



of them stating that they had experienced it at least monthly, on average. The typology in Publication III labels verbal abuse as a method of psychological interference since it is aimed principally at applying psychological pressure and at discouraging and harming the target individual. As interviewees' reflections presented in Publication IV illustrate, several features of the present-day hybrid media environment potentially expose professional journalists more than before to phenomena such as verbal abuse, defamation, and crowdsourced harassment – especially online. According to the findings, both socio-technological developments and their adaptation to suit the contemporary field of professional journalism contribute to this. Publication IV points to such possible aspects of this as the rising importance of publicity control, the increasingly contested public sphere, and societal and political polarization that affects various types of interference applied to journalists and journalism. As noted in publications III and IV, developments in the professional field should be taken into account also, among them the push for personalization of journalism (e.g., Koljonen and Reunanen 2014, 115–122; Lehtonen 2013), journalists' increased personal visibility and accessibility (e.g., Finneman et al. 2019; Lewis et al. 2020, 5–6; Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016, 881; Waisbord 2020a, 3–4), and their presence on multiple social-media platforms (Waisbord 2020a, 3–4; 2020b).

More aggressive forms of external interference, such as explicit threats or violence, were rare in the Finnish context, per publications I and II (see also Hiltunen and Suuronen 2019). This finding is in line with global press-freedom indices indicating that physical threats to journalists' health and safety are extremely uncommon in Finland (see Freedom House 2021; RSF 2021b). However, it should be noted that several interviewees in the work for publications III and IV reported concerns about growing anti-press hostility and some had personally experienced threatening situations or violence related to their work. A pattern of differentiation and concentration of interference may be at play here, as discussed later in this chapter.

The findings point to considerable differences in the prevalence and methods of external interference, depending on one's occupational position and the reporting media outlet (as Publication II attests). In contrast to the individual-level factors of gender and age, which seem to have only very limited effects on the frequency and methods of external interference at larger scale (as Publication II indicates; see also Binns 2017; Landsverk-Hagen 2015; Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016; Parker 2015; Stahel and Schoen 2020), occupational position and media outlet seem to show a strong correlation with specific methods of interference and their levels of

frequency (Publication II; see also Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016, 884). Similar findings pertaining to the significance of occupational position and gender emerged in an internal survey exploring experiences of external interference and pressure among YLE's journalists and media workers (Hiltunen and Suuronen 2019). This corroborates my findings, speaking to reliability in the Finnish context. However, it should be noted that large-scale statistical analysis of this sort ignores the potential qualitative differences in interference. Discussion in the dissertation's final chapter elaborates on differences between instrumental and identity-based harassment among journalists.

Examining the significance of occupational position, Publication II shows that editors-in-chief encounter most forms of external interference more frequently than journalists in other positions. Editors-in-chief wield the greatest journalistic authority at media outlets and represent their media through their person in public. They typically also have responsibilities related to the media outlet's financial matters. On account of their occupational position, editors-in-chief often must become involved when reporters working for them are targeted with external interference (see Kuutti 1995, 246–248; Revers 2017, 162–165). Therefore, it is understandable that editors-in-chief reported encountering most methods of interference examined in Publication II more frequently than other journalists did. Levels of managerial and editorial responsibility are reflected to some extent also in the responses given by journalists working as managing editors or producers during the dissertation project. In addition, special reporters often have heightened personal visibility and status relative to regular reporters and typically practice investigative journalism, report on controversial topics, and write stories that publicly cast actors in a negative light more frequently. Prior studies have identified all these attributes as risk factors for occupational intimidation and interference (Kuutti 1995; Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016; Parker 2015; Stetka and Örnebring 2013), possibly explaining the higher levels of interference seen among special reporters as compared to other reporters.

The interviews done for publications III and IV support these conclusions. Editors-in-chief reported regularly dealing with various types of external interference that stem from their occupational position. Interviewees described having encountered methods of external interference most often when working on stories featuring investigative elements and in relation to pieces including facts that reflect negatively on various societal actors. This is logical. After all, investigative journalism typically deals with negative matters, uncovering and bringing to light wrongdoing/injustices and foregrounding other information that particular actors

would like to keep out of the public eye (see Kuutti 1995; Stetka and Örnebring 2013). Therefore, the incentive for such external actors to influence or manipulate the outcome of investigative journalism is greater than that connected with neutral or positive stories.

The media outlet publishing the reporting proved to be a strong predictor of the frequency and types of external interference visible. Those journalists employed by or working for national and regional newspapers experienced most of the types of interference identified most frequently, while journalists employed by or working for magazines encountered external interference less frequently than those with other media outlets. In most cases, journalists associated with national public broadcasting or a local or semi-local newspaper fall between the two for the frequency of interference. The prestige, visibility, topics, and nature of the journalistic coverage all can be offered as explanatory factors here (Kuutti 1995, 249; Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016, 883–884; Stahel and Schoen 2020). Magazines typically display a specialist orientation and target smaller, limited audiences, while public broadcasting produces journalism on diverse topics at both national and regional level while also serving some special audiences – e.g., language minorities. Those media outlets considered most prestigious and boasting a large national or regional audience are typically seen as more socially significant and influential than are local or specialist outlets; hence, they more readily attract interference (Kuutti 1995, 249). This pattern is reflected in journalists who work with national or large regional media outlets being more visible personally to larger audiences than their colleagues at smaller media outlets or those serving more limited local or special audiences (see also Lewis et al. 2020, 6). These interpretations find support from informants quoted in publications III and IV discussing the expanding visibility of journalism and journalists, along with the implications this has had for their work. Additionally, professional journalists in the contemporary media environment may personally boast a significant following by dint of digital media channels (see also Lewis et al. 2020; Post and Kepplinger 2019; Waisbord 2020a; 2020b). This and the personalization of journalism also increase the prestige and visibility associated with individual journalists.

Lastly, this dissertation offers evidence that the topics reported upon seem to play a role in determining the methods and frequency of external interference that journalism attracts. The findings are in line with literature focusing on how the topic of reporting affects the abuse, harassment, and intimidation targeted at journalists. Parker (2015) discovered that journalists reporting on politics, war and international affairs, and human rights encountered larger amounts of occupational intimidation.

Likewise, Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring (2016) found that certain controversial topics regarded as “trigger subjects” (such as immigration, gender issues, crime, and racism etc.) were disproportionately likely to attract verbal harassment and threats directed at the journalist responsible for the associated story. Waisbord (2020a, 4–5) states that in the US today, journalists covering topics such as national politics, the Presidency, immigration, right-wing extremism, guns, race, human rights, sexual abuse, and the intelligence services are likely to be targeted with online harassment. Specifically, the dissertation project highlighted that the themes generating increased amounts of external interference in the contemporary Finnish media environment are numerous and diverse, encompassing topics such as immigration, politics, the economy, populism, local affairs, gender and gender equality, foreign affairs, and the environment (see also Hiltunen and Suuronen 2019, 109–114). These are typically connected to current hot-button issues in Finnish society and often are bound up with fundamental values and norms of human society. In addition, they are themes typically exhibiting strong polarization (see Hautakangas and Ahva 2018, 732) and that receive attention from coalitions of actors engaged in **reflexive political action** (Häyhtiö 2010; Rinne 2011). This means that networks of actors and individuals are in place that have collective motivation to influence the representation and public perception of certain topics and a clear interest in doing so (see Häyhtiö 2010; Häyhtiö and Rinne 2009; Rinne 2011). Echoing Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring (2016, 881) and Waisbord (2020a; 2020b), I claim that this type of interference can be considered deeply political, even though the individuals participating are not politically organized in the conventional sense. The interference here stems from political ambitions and manifests itself in actions aimed at dictating how certain topics or themes “ought to be” represented in the journalistic public sphere: in a manner aligned with the political interests or ambitions of certain ideological groups (see also Nerone 1994).

Through the lens of field theory, the results suggest that one’s position and capital in the field of professional journalism (as manifested in factors such as occupational position, visibility, prestige, perceived societal influence, and managerial authority) have a significant effect on how likely a journalist is to be targeted with various forms of external interference. These effects seem to greatly exceed that of factors related to one’s person (such as age or gender).

For reason of the lack of previous academic work and statistical data on the subject, it is not possible to demonstrate reliably whether the total amount of external interference that Finnish professional journalists encounter in their work increased or decreased in the 2010s. However, the insight the publications do allow permits

formulation of hypotheses regarding changes in prevalence of external interference. The question about whether the amount of external interference personally encountered by respondents in their work had increased in the last three years was a polarizing one, with 33% of respondents indicating that it had (8% agreed strongly with the statement cited in Publication I) and 39% stating that it had not (with 20% of them disagreeing strongly). Delving into this, Publication II reveals that the following groups especially tended to agree with this statement: female journalists (43% agreeing), journalists employed by or working for national newspapers (47% agreeing), journalists with the public broadcaster (40% agreeing), and those at regional newspapers (39% agreeing). The qualitative findings indicate that journalists reporting on politics, business, and crime; those engaged in investigative reporting; and those specializing in controversial topics felt that the amount of external interference in their work had increased recently in response to the expansion of publicity control, an increasingly contested public sphere, societal and political polarization, and personalization of journalism (see Publication IV). Publications I and II illustrate that a small segment of the sample encountered various methods of interference much more frequently than did the majority of the respondents.

Together, these empirical findings hint at **differentiation** and **concentration** of external interference. While socio-technological developments related to today's media environment affect the work of all professional journalists in one way or another, they affect a small minority of them significantly more than others. Certain features of the current media environment place an additional burden related to external interference on journalists holding particular positions and capital in the field of professional journalism but also ones publicly exhibiting certain personal attributes. This finding and its diverse implications are explored further in the conclusion to this dissertation.

## 4.2 Effects of External Interference on Journalists' Work

RQ2: How does external interference affect the work of Finnish professional journalists?

The most significant effect of external interference on journalistic work from the angle of society is self-censorship, since it denies the audience and society more broadly access to information (e.g., Clark and Grech 2017; Grøndahl Larsen et al. 2020; Walulya and Nassanga 2020). This goes directly against the *nomos* of the

journalistic field and the professional ideology of modern journalism outlined in Chapter 2, and it represents failure of the profession's most important democratic function. The survey questions posed for publications I and II measured concrete incidents both of self-censorship ("How often have you decided not to publish journalism pieces for reason of external interference?") and of editorial censorship ("How often has your editor or employer decided not to publish your journalism pieces, against your will, for reason of external interference?"). In addition, the Likert-scale questions examined journalists' perceptions of passive self-censorship ("I prefer not to report about certain topics or present certain viewpoints for reason of external interference") and self-identified active censorship ("I have altered or removed something from my journalism pieces because I feared external interference"). The results indicate that incidents of active self-censorship and editorial censorship are somewhat rare, with 11% of respondents reporting having engaged in self-censorship and 8% having experienced editorial censorship during the observation period. Additionally, 17% of respondents preferred not to report on certain topics or opinions in light of interference issues and 14% admitted to having altered or removed something from their reporting out of fear of external interference. The proportion of Finnish professional journalists reporting experiences of editorial censorship can be compared to findings of Reunanen and Koljonen (2014, 149), whose 2013 research discovered that 8% of reporters in Finnish daily newspapers had at least one story altered or not published within the preceding 12 months because of opinions or values featured in it.

The findings from the dissertation project, therefore, confirm that external interference can lead to self-censorship, editorial censorship, and chilling effects among professional journalists even in stable democratic contexts such as Finnish society (see also Landsverk-Hagen 2015; Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016). However, these effects are somewhat rare and are mediated by several factors – related, for example, to journalists' personal resilience and commitment to the profession's ideology, the resources available, and perceived organizational support.

The interviews conducted for publications III and IV illustrate this overall finding in that few of the journalists interviewed reported having engaged in active self-censorship due to external interference. That said, accounts of increased mental strain and occupational stress were much more common. Publication I notes that 47% of respondents agreed with the statement "External interference increases the mental strain of my work." The journalists interviewed later in the project reported, for example, consciously taking breaks, reporting on "lighter" topics, and choosing their assignments more carefully after stories involving or generating significant

amounts of external interference. Additionally, journalists found stories that featured or generated external interference more laborious and time-consuming to report upon and to deal with after publication. As accounts in Publication III show, methods such as tying journalists up in legal battles or using crowdsourced harassment and intimidation to put strain on their mental wellbeing can be effective tools to disrupt their work, especially if their work environment and organization do not provide adequate resources and support. The effects are often cumulative, and constant interference can lead to continuous pressure, increasing the long-term risk of exhaustion and burnout (see Clark and Grech 2017).

Methods of external interference targeting information acquisition (in areas such as interviews and access to public information) add further friction to journalistic routines, slowing down the processes and making them more laborious. In particular, manipulation of interview situations, such as unwarranted presence of PR persons or demanding to see the questions beforehand as a prerequisite, are aimed at shifting control over conducting the interview from journalists to its sources (see Luostarinen 1994, 81–82). The journalists interviewed for this dissertation saw the proliferation of these efforts as a symptom of growing importance of publicity control, as discussed in Publication IV. While these methods of interference were perceived not so much as threatening as bothersome and strenuous, they nevertheless increased the quantity of effort and resources required for conducting the work as the journalists wished. Giving in to external demands in these cases would entail compromising decision-making power over how the professional journalistic work is to be conducted, an issue addressed directly in Publication III. Friction and conflicts stemming from these methods' application can be considered yet another stressor in journalistic work.

Hence, though the findings indicate that external interference does not lead to large-scale self-censorship materializing among Finnish professional journalists, it can have tangible effects on the stressfulness of journalistic work and on the resources needed to maintain its autonomy. As Publication III points out, rather than to completely suppress coverage of certain topics or opinions, one perceived strategic goal behind external interference is to make covering them so difficult and exhausting that journalists decide of their own accord to reduce and otherwise limit their reporting. This may happen consciously or unconsciously.

As the material in Publication IV illustrates, additional stressors in professional journalists' work can prove especially problematic in today's media environment characterized by increased competition, dwindling resources, increasing production-related pressure of various kinds (Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2018, 1088–1092;



Waisbord 2019), and “precarization” of journalistic work (Örnebring 2018; Örnebring and Möller 2018). Journalism has always been a stressful profession marked by competition; deadlines; and long, irregular hours, with the added pressure of one’s labor having important societal significance and being scrutinized in public (Kalter 1999, 30; Monteiro et al. 2016). Digitalization has brought with it requirements of multitasking, adaptation to multiple platforms and formats of publishing, and a shift from fixed deadlines to a “continuous deadline” online (Nikunen 2011). The final chapter elaborates on the implications of such intersection of production pressures, dwindling resources, precariousness of journalistic work, and the various mechanisms through which external interference affects the job performance of professional journalists.

The increasing personalization of journalism, increased access to journalists, and new social-media spaces that further obscure the separation between public and private roles of journalists also contribute to increased mental strain. These developments, discussed in Publication IV, have blurred the lines between professionally oriented interference and personal harassment/attacks (see Holton et al. 2021, 6). The findings from the dissertation project indicate that external interference increasingly affects individual journalists personally and often has knock-on effects on their private life too. The findings attest that, on the Web and especially via social media, methods such as verbal abuse, defamation, and intimidation can acquire unprecedented public visibility. According to the interviewees, being personally targeted by highly public defamation and abuse also increase one’s risk of facing hostility and violence when reporting in the field. This creates an added challenge when journalists are assessing whether they can conduct their work safely in certain situations. In the same connection, some interviewees reported entirely avoiding certain public settings in their personal life on account of past experience involving hostility and risks of impulsive violence upon being recognized in public. Several journalists mentioned having withdrawn from or severely limited their audience interaction in response to these risks and having taken such measures as making sure their personal details and contact information are not publicly available. As Publication III highlights, these measures were perceived as a double-edged sword since they also limit potential sources’ ability to contact journalists, restrict journalists’ opportunities to promote their work, and reduce their chances of engaging in meaningful audience interaction. Since employers often encourage such interaction, journalists in an awkward situation may have to choose between exposing themselves to potential interference and experiencing negative effects related to their job performance and employers’ expectations by limiting their



public exposure (see Chen et al. 2020). On a more fundamental level, the personalization of journalism and the increased visibility of journalists have together forced professional journalists to consider in a new way where to draw the line separating their professional work and their private roles (see also Chen et al. 2020; Finneman et al. 2019).

Notwithstanding the finding that external interference occurs only to a limited extent and fairly rarely among most Finnish journalists, several broader implications for the field of professional journalism in general deserve consideration. Lewis and colleagues (2020, 15–16) point out that the **ripple effects**, defined as journalists considering the risks not so much on the basis of what has happened to them personally as in line with what they have seen happen to their colleagues or publicly to high-profile journalists, can play a role here. The findings are consistent with this notion: the journalists interviewed and the questionnaire respondents often cited cases of other journalists having been subjected to aggressive interference and/or harassment, and they described how these incidents had affected their perceptions of the risks involved in journalistic work. Publication II points out that female journalists are consistently more worried about external interference and have more negative general perceptions of its extent and effects. One possible explanation is that verbal abuse and harassment of journalists has often been publicly framed as a phenomenon that disproportionately affects women, with the most prominent cases of harassment in Finland indeed having involved targeting of female journalists. In light of the ripple effects, then, such actions as defamation, harassment, and intimidation in public can be seen as strategic actions that are intended to send a message not only to the target journalists but to the whole profession and the field at large. Thus, they can foster a culture of anxiety, chilling effects, and self-censorship among professional journalists, which can also in the long run get reflected in the field's shared professional habitus.

At the same time, the findings shed light on some positive consequences and empowering aspects of external interference. Several interviewees stated that having been targeted with interference had strengthened their commitment to professionalism and concretized the significance of their work for them personally. Encroachment attempts left them more aware of the professional ideology, more committed to it, and more determined to uphold the autonomy of the field of professional journalism. As publications III and IV highlight, realizing how badly some actors wanted to disrupt or suppress their reporting made some journalists more convinced that what they did was societally important and bolstered their will to continue working despite external interference. They reported, for example,

having felt encouraged to research their stories more thoroughly than before and developing more solid arguments in their reporting. Additionally, interviewees described how exposure to external interference rendered them more adept at preventing it and dealing with its effects in their work and personal life. My project's findings thus dovetail with prior work documenting and exploring the resilience that can emerge as a result of interference and harassment among journalists (Clark and Grech 2017, 43–44; Clark and Horsley 2020). The dissertation project further confirms that exposure to interference can breed increased determination and resilience to it, also supporting competence to deal with its effects among both individual journalists and their organizations. Therefore, it is feasible to suggest, as Post and Kepplinger (2019, 2437) do, that negative effects of relatively novel phenomena such as online and/or crowdsourced harassment decrease as journalists and journalistic and media organizations develop resilience to them and cultivate effective ways of dealing with them. In terms of field theory, exposure to external interference, can, therefore, also renew the professional habitus of the field's agents in a manner that renders them more resistant to external forces (see Penttilä 2021). Various possible associated scenarios are contemplated further in the concluding chapter.

### 4.3 Factors Supporting External Autonomy of Journalists

RQ3: What factors in Finnish professional journalists' work environment support their efforts to preserve their external autonomy despite interference?

The dissertation project studied a variety-rich group of Finnish professional journalists through the survey and the interviews. Therefore, it is noteworthy that these revealed patterns of remarkably similar notions and views as to the factors supporting journalists' efforts to preserve their professional autonomy. The individual-level commitment to professionalism; journalistic organizations; and the cultural, legal, and institutional safeguards provided by the societal environment are important resources for all Finnish journalists in their efforts to resist the effects of external interference, this research shows. Furthermore, journalists' views on factors supporting their efforts to preserve their professional autonomy were very similar irrespective of their type of employment. Since salaried journalists and the journalists working as freelancers or entrepreneurs expressed nearly identical perspectives, this section addresses the two simultaneously, and the language “journalistic and media

organizations” is used here to refer to both media outlets employing salaried journalists and outlets buying stories from freelancers and entrepreneurs.

The project identified three shared key factors that journalists saw as crucial for their ability to preserve their external autonomy. These are 1) journalistic professionalism, 2) internal confidence within journalistic and media organizations, and 3) communication and support measures. In many respects, these factors are intertwined and build upon each other. Therefore, it is more enlightening to regard them as an assemblage rather than detached or purely hierarchical factors, and the examination of each separately here is only for the sake of analytical clarity. The entwined nature of these factors highlights the interplay of multiple elements at the levels of the individual, organization, and society in practice, and it calls attention to their combined significance for the autonomy of the professional field and for its resilience to external interference.

### 4.3.1 Journalistic Professionalism

As discussed in Chapter 2, journalistic professionalism can be understood as journalists’ desire and strivings to uphold the boundaries of professional journalism and force their professional logics to hold sway over this social field (Waisbord 2013, 10–13). Overall, the questionnaire respondents and the interviewees conceptualized professionalism, as a factor supporting external autonomy of journalism, as possession of a sufficiently similar shared professional ideology, comprising commensurate notions and ideals related to objectives, ethics, and practices of journalism and manifesting itself as willingness to adhere to these and defend them collectively against any intrusions. Professionalism is, therefore, firmly connected to the shared professional habitus and *nomos* of the field, and it fosters a sense of collective vision, missions, and ideals through the field of professional journalism. Previous research has shown that strong commitment to professionalism, journalistic ethics, and the role of a detached and objective observer are essential features of the field of professional journalism in Finland (e.g., Pöyhtäri et al. 2014; 2016; Reunanen and Koljonen 2014). The shared notions of professionalism among Finnish journalists are bolstered by factors such as high standards of journalism education, numerous organizations’ enrollment in the independent media council that outlines ethics of journalism, and the high union-membership rate (e.g., Ala-Fossi et al. 2021; Väliverronen et al. 2016). Because the features that the project identified as supporting professionalism in the field of Finnish professional

journalism extend across multiple levels, I briefly examine, in turn, their manifestation on the level of individuals, organizations, and larger society.

On the **level of the individual**, journalistic professionalism is deeply rooted in each journalist's professional identity and professional habitus. These function as resources supporting the aspirations for autonomy. All questionnaire and interview participants expressed strong personal commitment to upholding the ideals of autonomous journalism and saw resisting external interference as a very significant aspect of this. In the survey, nearly half of the respondents (44%) stated that they had consciously developed methods and strategies to ward off external interference, thus illustrating their practical commitment to maintaining the external autonomy of their journalism against interference. Female journalists (52%) reported having developed these methods and strategies more often than their male colleagues (42%). The qualitative findings showcase these individual-level strategies' and methods' inclusion of both proactive and reactive measures (see Publication III). Among the proactive methods were such preventive measures as internalizing practical strategies and arguments that one can utilize when faced with interference during information-gathering. These can be seen as props for boundary performances pointed at actors hailing from external fields (Revers 2014, 43–44). Other proactive strategies mentioned focus on one's personal safety and security, such as making one's physical address and other contact information private, enhancing the security of one's email and other communications, and performing personal risk assessments before departing to report from the field. Among the reactive methods and strategies were actions such as discussing the situation with colleagues to obtain peer support, reporting interference to the editors and organization, and going public with interference or reporting it to the police (see Publication III).

The importance of the field's shared professional ideology and habitus was evidenced also by accounts of several interviewees who had continued their journalistic work despite facing aggressive pressure, harassment, and intimidation. Since giving in to interference would have contradicted their professional ideology and the field's *nomos*, attempts at interference have led to increased defiance, resilience, and determination among such journalists (e.g., Clark and Grech 2017, 43–44; Clark and Horsley 2020; Post and Kepplinger 2019). They expressed commitment to the field's professional ideology even when it meant subjecting oneself to aggressive interference, thereby demonstrating prioritization of this professional commitment over their individual-level comfort and wellbeing (see also Clark and Horsley 2020, 82–84, 107–108).

The **level of journalistic organizations** is equally important for professionalism. For the vast majority of Finland's professional journalists, the employers and/or the publishers of the work are organized media outlets. Most journalists participating in the study seemed highly confident in their organization's level of external autonomy, with 68% of them agreeing that their media outlet does not hand over control of journalistic decisions to external actors under any circumstances. Nearly half of all journalists (43%) strongly agreed with this statement, with only 4% disagreeing strongly. Editors-in-chief and managers exhibited the greatest confidence, with 92% of the former and 76% of the latter agreeing. This extremely positive perception of external autonomy was not shared so strongly, though, by special reporters (69% agreeing) or other reporters (70% agreeing), who also indicated more frequently that advertisers, sponsors, and politicians are able to influence the journalism produced within their media outlet, relative to participants holding management positions.

These results indicate prevailing but not unwavering confidence in shared professionalism within journalistic organizations. The research interviews conducted for this dissertation demonstrate how disagreements as to journalistic professionalism typically manifested itself in situations wherein organizations had to weigh their professional ideology against other considerations. Kuutti's work too (1995, 250) addresses how the democratic function of journalism as disseminator of information and such private interests of a media outlet as economic benefits or comfortable relations with powerful forces can conflict with each other in these situations. This puts the level of professionalism in a media outlet to the test. Publications III and IV delve into these tensions. On one hand, journalists at media outlets with high perceived levels of professionalism felt that if they adhered to the profession's ideology, they could rely on the editors and the owners of their media outlet to support them and side with them should any conflict with external parties arise (see Revers 2017, 162–163). Additionally, they indicated that they could count on their organization to respect and uphold the firewall between editorial and advertising content (cf. Duffy and Cheng 2020). On the other hand, accounts of journalists who had doubts about the professionalism within their outlet highlight constant distrust and unpredictability, since stories could be altered or shelved in light of either actual or expected reactions of advertisers or socially powerful actors (see also Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2018; Goyanes et al. 2020).

For journalists, professionalism at organization level is actualized in predictability and clarity of decision-making and provision of support for journalists' aspirations to resist any external interference. However, this also points to a need for the professionalism to be shared sufficiently across all levels of the organization if it is

to offer effective support against interference. As illustrated in Publication III, weak links in the organizational chain of command can lead to external interference cascading through the organization and undermine every journalist's hopes of developing/maintaining autonomy and sufficient resilience to external interference (see also Goyanes et al. 2020). The findings indicate nonetheless that most Finnish journalists have a generally optimistic outlook with regard to their organization's ability to resist interference originating from the economic and political field. Only 33% of the journalists saw advertisers as able to influence their media outlet's journalism, and under a quarter (24%) felt that politicians can do so. However, the participants did not paint this picture without reservations; emerging threats and challenges to journalistic professionalism have their place in it. These are discussed in detail in the final chapter.

At **societal level**, Finland boasts several conditions that support autonomous status for the field of professional journalism, with the most notable of these being the high societal legitimacy of journalism. This legitimacy has many direct and indirect manifestations that showcase how journalistic autonomy is perceived and acknowledged on broader societal level in Finland. As discussed in Chapter 1, public trust in legacy-media journalism has remained relatively high in Finland (Hanhivaara 2020; KAKS 2019; Matikainen et al. 2020; Reuters Institute 2021), and the trust gap between legacy-media journalism and other types of digital media is significant (Reunanen et al. 2021, 47–48). The expectations of the Finnish audience are in line with the prevailing professional ideology in the field of Finnish professional journalism: previous research indicates that the vast majority of the audience in Finland prefers neutral news-media sources to partisan ones and considers independent journalism to be very/extremely important for a well-functioning society (Reunanen 2020, 33–34).

Finnish legislation provides journalists with relative security and offers extensive access to government documents, and the state generally refrains from interfering in journalism (Manninen and Hjerppe 2021). More often than not, the public rhetoric and actions of the country's government (e.g., Häkkinen and Mankkinen 2021; Union of Journalists in Finland 2019; Valtioneuvosto 2020; Valtioneuvoston kanslia 2021) have expressed support for journalism and media in Finland, demonstrating the political legitimacy journalism enjoys. The legitimacy of journalism is evident also in relations between professional journalists and political sources – these relationships are described as generally good and characterized by a high degree of direct access to sources (Niemi et al. 2019; see also Kunelius et al. 2010).

As Luostarinen (1994, 91) notes, strong public legitimacy supports the professional autonomy of journalism and bolsters journalists' ability to challenge socially powerful actors in other fields. However, some interviewees pointed out that Finland's legal protection of journalists against harassment and intimidation has been inadequate in practice and were disappointed at the political responses and low willingness to improve the situation. Additionally, several reported concern over negative tones emerging in the public political rhetoric surrounding journalists and journalism. These may be indicative of waning political consensus on the importance of independent journalism. As Publication IV points out, populist politics, society's polarization, and encroachment by other societal fields may decrease the perceived legitimacy of journalism in the long run, also weakening societal support for journalistic autonomy. The implications of this are explored further in the concluding chapter.

#### 4.3.2 Confidence within Journalistic and Media Organizations

The significance of internal confidence is highlighted in the current environment as professional journalists potentially face external pressure and interference from multiple sources. The trust relationships in journalistic and media organizations are manifold and exist in several layers, involving trust between reporters and the middle management (managing editors etc.), between the middle management and editors-in-chief, and between editors-in-chief and the board and owners of the media outlet (see Publication II).

Publications III and IV indicate that high internal confidence makes it possible for journalists to report external interference to the upper levels of the chain of command, thus conveying information on the issue and freeing their time and resources for conducting journalistic work. This confidence level suggests that the journalists could rely on their editors and superiors to take the matter seriously and side with them in conflicts with external actors, thereby allowing them to continue their work uninterrupted. At the same time, internal confidence attests that editors can rest assured that the reporters have done their work meticulously and in accordance with professional guidelines, thus rendering that work easy to back up. This **editorial defense shield** (Revers 2017, 162–163), defined as editors stepping up to defend journalists and their work against external actors, makes it possible for journalists to continue their reporting while the editors and organization work to mitigate any disruptions caused by interference (see also Kuutti 1995, 246).



Interviewees often stressed the usefulness of this practice, with both reporters and managers/editors-in-chief describing how internal confidence makes it possible to work efficiently under heightened external pressure. Also, Publication I cites 77% of respondents as feeling confident that their editor or employer would support them against external interference, and nearly half (46%) agreed strongly with the relevant statement.

Internal confidence was also considered crucial for resisting external actors' efforts to sow distrust and drive wedges between members of the relevant organization. These efforts, often pursued via, for example, false claims that journalists had made mistakes, acted unethically, reported in a biased way, or lost their perspective (see also Kuutti 1995, 242–250; Pietiläinen 2007, 96–97; Revers 2017, 162–165), frequently target managing editors, editors-in-chief, and owners of media outlets, in aims of cultivating mistrust within higher levels of the organizational hierarchy (Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2018, 1097–1100; Goyanes et al. 2020, 9–10). Moreover, false allegations or defamatory claims may be spread publicly at the same time, to tarnish the professional and personal reputation of individual journalists and provoke the audience to question their professionalism and morals (see Mundy 1992; Post and Kepplinger 2019, 2426). From journalists' perspective, the objective of defamation was often to damage their status among their colleagues and the audience and to label them as unprofessional, untrustworthy, and problematic persons (see Publication III). Some efforts to arouse internal mistrust or defame journalists target all levels of organizations simultaneously, putting the overall level of internal confidence relations to the test. That confidence being high acts as a mitigating factor here, reducing the effectiveness of these tactics and decreasing the friction they cause inside the organizations. Internal confidence shows strong overlap with open communication in journalistic and media organizations, with both being seen as important factors supporting the external autonomy of journalism.

### 4.3.3 Communication and Support Measures

From journalists' perspective, a culture of open communication and provision of support measures form the third important factor sustaining both shared professionalism and internal confidence within journalistic organizations. Open communication increases willingness to discuss matters related to organization-internal professionalism/confidence and to report attempted external interference.



In the survey responses, 71% of participants stated that they had told their colleagues about incidents of external interference and 66% indicated having reported these to their editor or employer. This implies general willingness to discuss interference internally in journalistic organizations. As for the qualitative findings, journalists working in organizations with high perceived levels of internal confidence and a culture of open communication described reporting their concerns more frequently and being more accepting of organizational support when faced with external interference. Interviewees who had experienced organizational indifference or mistrust often felt that they had no choice but to deal with the interference themselves and, in consequence, experienced greater reservations and more detrimental effects such as mental strain and self-censorship (see also Holton et al. 2021).

A culture of open communication was identified as another important tool to alleviate the friction external interference causes to journalistic processes. As discussed above in relation to internal confidence, external actors often attempt to sow discord and distrust within journalistic and media organizations and to contest stories' claims so as to lead journalists to question their facts and delay publication. All these tactics may potentially slow down journalistic processes, sometimes even bringing them to a complete halt. Several journalists interviewed identified open communication as a remedy for this, since it has made exchanging information between levels of the organizations easier and lowered the threshold for reporting interference attempts and discussing them with colleagues and superiors. When experiencing an open and encouraging internal communication culture and seeing internal confidence as being high, journalists found it easy to demonstrate the factual basis of their stories to their editors, even openly discussing sources and confidential elements. This was often considered crucial to convincing the editors to run the story despite external pressure intended to prevent or delay its publication. An atmosphere of open communication and confidence also encouraged the journalists to share their personal perceptions and feelings, and it made asking for support measures easier when they felt that they needed them.

Organizations' preparedness and willingness to provide support mechanisms was considered vital for those facing aggressive interference, harassment, or intimidation. The qualitative findings (see publications III and IV) attest that these support measures can cover a broad range, from simple communicational and collegial support to willingness to provide financial resources for legal support, safety measures, and health services (see also Holton et al. 2021). The accounts of journalists who had requested and/or received support from their respective

organizations varied significantly. Some interviewees had obtained plenty of collegial and material support, both publicly and internally, sometimes without needing to ask for it specifically. Others expressed being demoralized and encountering non-empathetic attitudes, lackluster responses, and insufficient support within their organization, despite continuous requests for support (see also Holton et al. 2021). Just as the ripple effects can spread the influence of external interference beyond the journalist targeted (see Lewis et al. 2020, 15–16), providing support in journalistic and media organizations can be seen as action reflecting the organization's stance to the wellbeing and safety of its journalists. The interviewees often saw lack of support or insufficient measures as a sign that journalists are expected to deal with these things mostly on their own (see Holton et al. 2021). A strong culture of support, on the other hand, bolstered interviewees' sense that their organization and work community takes the matter seriously; cares about its journalists' ability to work autonomously and safely; and wants to actively mitigate any harmful effect of external interference, on journalism and individual journalists alike.

In the quantitative component of the research, journalists working as freelancers or entrepreneurs expressed a sense of greater organizational distrust than their salaried counterparts, implying that the combination of their more detached, precarious position and their looser organizational ties may be detrimental to establishing open communication and mutual trust (see publications II and IV). However, the qualitative data feature accounts of both salaried employees and freelancers occasionally experiencing insufficient organizational support. This indicates that, while freelancers and entrepreneurs' detachment from organizational structure might bring greater challenges in this respect, the organizational culture's level of communication and openness has more significance for one's sense of organizational support than does the employment type of the journalist in question (see Publication III).

## 5 CONCLUSION

With this chapter, I present five major conclusions from the dissertation project. These conclusions further contextualize the key findings by addressing their broader significance and implications for the field of professional journalism in Finland and its relationship with other fields in society. These conclusions are related to 1) the status of professional journalism and its challenges, 2) multiple facets of external interference, 3) the growing role of the audience as a source of interference, 4) the rise of polarization and anti-press hostility, and 5) effects of external interference on the field of professional journalism.

### 5.1 The Status of Professional Journalism and the Challenges Facing It

The findings from the project imply that external interference targeting professional journalists and journalism seems to have increased rather than decreased amid transition from a mass-media environment to the contemporary hybrid one. One can consider this somewhat paradoxical since it suggests that, irrespective of societal actors now having numerous digital channels at their disposal for direct communication with the audience, they still consider legacy media journalism and its representations extremely significant. While the hybrid media environment is characterized by a host of voices competing in an increasingly fragmented public sphere, the field of professional journalism seems to be continuing to enjoy legitimacy and epistemic authority derived from its status, practices, and perceived autonomy (see Deuze 2019).

This enduring position of legacy-media journalism is evident in many ways in the Finnish context. Professional journalism continues to heavily determine the news agenda and strongly influences the topics of conversation also in digital domains such as social media (e.g., Reunanen et al. 2021, 15–18). Additionally, topics gaining traction on digital platforms are often picked up by the legacy media, “legitimizing” their status, enhancing their visibility, and bringing the subject into wider societal discussion. For example, it has been proposed that, while campaigns such as

#MeToo featured a prominent element of digital activism, they were propelled to the status of global cultural phenomenon through interplay of activists and various legacy media working to gather, verify, and publish information – in the #MeToo case, related to sexual harassment and violence perpetrated by powerful societal figures (e.g., De Benedictis et al. 2019; Lee 2019). Therefore, the steadily decreasing audiences of traditional mass media such as physical newspapers and broadcast television notwithstanding, journalism as an institution seems to have largely managed to retain its societal significance in the contemporary media environment (see Deuze 2019). In the nomenclature of field theory, the field's *nomos*, the elements of the autonomous pole of professional journalism (such as veracity, independence, and impartiality), and the democratic aspiration to create a shared and neutral public arena for debate make journalism retain relevance in the contemporary media environment. It seems that professional journalism continues to wield the epistemic power to legitimize accounts and label them as verified and important for society (see Tong 2018). Because of this enduring status, professional journalism remains an attractive target of manipulation or control for any actor in society wishing to influence public discussion (see Luostarinen 1994, 67–68).

However, the hurdles in the way of legacy-media journalism's efforts to establish commercially sustainable business models in a hybrid media environment may threaten its status and societal significance in at least three ways. Firstly, a decrease in subscription revenues and increased competition in an advertising market intensified by digital platforms has caused protracted financial hemorrhaging for legacy-media outlets (e.g., Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2018, 1088–1092). This may well have increased the power of advertisers in relation to media outlets (see, for example, Atal 2018; Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2018; Hanusch et al. 2020; Pöyhtäri et al. 2016, 10) and rendered journalism more accepting of practices that blur the line between advertising and editorial content such as native advertising and sponsored content (see Amazeen and Muddiman 2018; Drew and Thomas 2018; Duffy and Cheng 2020). These practices bring a risk of muddying the waters between journalism and advertising in the eyes of the audience (e.g., Amazeen and Muddiman 2018; Carlson 2015; Iversen and Knudsen 2019) and could lead to dismantling of the firewall between media entities' advertising and editorial departments (Drew and Thomas 2018; Duffy and Cheng 2020). If professional journalism's degree of autonomy decreases through relations to economic actors and advertisers, it risks becoming just another form of commercial media production and getting, in effect, absorbed by the economic field.

Secondly, more restrictive political attitudes to professional journalism, when combined with the financial difficulties facing legacy media, can drive media outlets toward political control. This can come about through politicians or actors with political ambitions either buying out media outlets or taking practical control over them via changes in legislation or other type of arrangements. This development has been conceptualized as **media capture**, a process wherein parts of the journalistic field become subjugated by the political field (see Dragomir 2020; Milosavljević and Poler 2018; Schiffrin 2016; 2018). Also, governments and political parties can support captured media or otherwise favored outlets through legislation that caters to their interests and allocation of government funds through advertising, while simultaneously clamping down on the operating conditions of independent media (outlets under neither direct nor indirect political control). This has been characterized as **media patrimonialism**, involving politicians' conscious use of public goods and power to reward those seen as loyal and punish those deemed opponents in the media (Waisbord 2013, 155). In return, governments and politicians receive favorable coverage and support while the captured medium stays silent on sensitive and negative matters. This narrows the possibilities for developing autonomy of the professional field and leads to practical domination of certain segments of the field by the political one. It should be reiterated, however, that, as economic and political influence over media decrease the autonomy of professional journalism, they may yield diminishing gains in the long run, with the overall credibility and legitimacy of journalism in the eyes of the public gradually waning on account of perceived external control (see Luostarinen 1994, 16).

Thirdly, the credibility, legitimacy, and autonomy ascribed to professional journalism can suffer through a diminishing amount and decreasing standard of original reporting. On account of financial concerns, journalists are forced to produce more and more content for multiple channels from a smaller and smaller pool of time and other resources (e.g., Nikunen 2011). Naturally, this reduces the possibilities for information-gathering, verification, and original reporting so readily leads to so-called **churnalism**: abundant use of unverified PR material in journalism (Davies 2008; Jackson and Moloney 2016). The reduced time for fact-checking means that dubious claims, mistakes, and copied material make their way into journalism more often, thus bringing potential to reduce the reliability, credibility, and perceived autonomy of the reporting in the long run (e.g., Juntunen 2011; Manninen 2019a).

All three risks were brought up by the dissertation project's participants as potential threats to the position and status of professional journalism. While the

material demonstrated generally positive views on contemporary Finnish journalism's autonomy in relation to economic and political actors, the long-term problems and various risks and concerns were frequently mentioned too. For journalists working at small local media outlets that rely on a small set of advertisers, advertisers' economic power can lead to unwarranted caution, prior restraint, and – for some businesses – certain topics being completely off limits for reporters (see also Grönlund et al. 2021; Pöyhtäri et al. 2016, 10). Journalists at major media houses were more concerned about the blurring boundaries of journalism and advertising, because they feared that content and practices they saw as ethically questionable might become increasingly commonplace in the future. While journalists expressed sympathy with the need for commercial media to produce financial profit, they generally saw symbolically compromising the autonomy and credibility of professional journalism as an unwise and somewhat desperate move with potentially detrimental long-term results (see Amazeen and Muddiman 2018). Concerns over political control were most evident among journalists working or having worked in public broadcasting, since YLE as Finland's public broadcaster is overseen by an administrative council consisting of members of the nation's parliament. While informants saw the effects of direct political pressure as very limited, indirect pressures related to politically controlled funding and internal desires to please political parties did come up in the material (see also Koivunen 2017; Korhonen 2017; Mäenpää 2017; see also Revers 2017, 163). Several interviewees saw the situation as potentially taking a turn for the worse should the political climate shift in favor of stronger and more direct political control of public broadcasting.

Cognitive dissonance connected with the perceived requirements of professionalism and what seem to be economic and political incentives was evident in the interview material (see Duffy and Cheng 2020; Pöyhtäri et al. 2016, 10–11; see also Grönlund et al. 2021). This demonstrates journalists' professional habitus standing at odds with approaches that prioritize economic or political benefits related to journalism. Interviewees' perceptions of the risks often reflected concerns over their future possibilities to collectively maintain the boundaries of professional journalism against encroachment from the economic and political fields.

Most numerous, however, were the concerns related to the dwindling resources of professional journalism itself. Interviewees saw the need that external actors feel to manipulate or control journalism through interference waning if the importance/status of journalism declines in the eyes of the public. If journalism loses its relative autonomy and criticism potential, practically becoming subjugated by other fields and turning into a mouthpiece parroting pre-crafted messages, there is

less need for influencing or containing its work. Interviewees voiced concerns over decreasing resources for independent reporting and investigations, increased utilization of PR material, and lack of criticism applied to sources, seeing these as factors that could lead to deterioration of the public credibility and status of journalism (see also Juntunen 2011; Manninen 2019a; Nikunen 2011; Pöyhtäri et al. 2016, 9–11). This may mean that professional journalism itself needs to reconsider and rearticulate its status in the long run (see Pöyhtäri et al. 2016, 15–18). As Manninen (2019b, 267) states, if contemporary journalism cannot satisfy audience expectations and journalistic norms, both require adjustment. Credibility based on inflated expectations and unfulfilled promises does not withstand critical examination, for it is very fragile and not easily restored if shattered (Manninen 2019b, 267).

## 5.2 The Many Facets of External Interference

The second key finding is confirmation that external interference is not applied evenly and does not affect all professional journalists equally (e.g., Lewis et al. 2020, 16; Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016; Parker 2015; Waisbord 2020a, 4–5). In the framework of field theory, professional journalists occupy multiple positions in the field, possess differing amounts of capital, and exhibit various personal attributes. All these elements play a role in how external interference affects them and gets manifested in their work.

Likewise, external actors' positions and capital in their respective fields vary, and their motives for interfering can differ significantly, spanning personal, political, and ideological convictions to protection of commercial or political interests/status. External actors vary greatly in the resources and associated capital they can bring to bear and in the potential they can utilize to interfere with journalism, and they also are differently vulnerable to journalists' various counter-strategies and response methods. For example, politicians and business-owners may try to exploit their political or economic status in their efforts of interference but, in doing so, risk damage to their reputation if these attempts are made public (e.g., Koivunen 2017; Kunelius et al. 2010; Luostarinen 1994). While regular citizens do not have similar resources, they have much less to lose if their interference attempts are revealed publicly. The interviews conducted for this dissertation demonstrate that journalists dealing with multiple types of actors often are targets of multiple methods of interference, reflecting this dynamic. Hence, there are considerable differences in the



methods and implications of external interference directed at journalists in varying positions in the field of professional journalism, with their diverse capital sources, personal attributes, and backgrounds.

This fact prompts a follow-up question pertaining to whether it is journalists' position and capital in the field of professional journalism or, rather, their personal attributes that seem more influential with regard to the methods and frequency of external interference and its implications. The research provides some empirical insight related to this. Firstly, the results indicate that such individual-level personal attributes of journalists as age and gender seem very limited in their effects on the overall occurrence of external interference. Several comparative studies examining the significance of gender for the frequency of occupational intimidation, verbal abuse, and/or harassment in Western societal settings arrived at similar conclusions (Binns 2017; Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016; Parker 2015; Stahel and Schoen 2020). While journalists' gender does not seem to have a significant effect on the prevalence of external interference, female journalists have consistently displayed more negative attitudes toward interference and reported more self-censorship and mental strain, accordingly, than their male colleagues (see also Obermaier et al. 2018; Post and Kepplinger 2019; Stahel and Schoen 2020). My findings indicate also that older journalists, presumably with more work experience, seem to have an easier time dealing with the consequences of interference than younger journalists do (see also Landsverk-Hagen 2015; Post and Kepplinger 2019).

The journalist's position and capital in the journalistic field seems much more significant for the presence and frequency of external interference than personal attributes are. However, qualitative differences in external interference should be considered here. While my results indicate that male and female journalists encounter similar amounts of external interference in Finland, the project's interviews illustrate that some elements of interference differ in how they impinge on journalists, in line with their personal attributes. The qualitative analysis indicated that female journalists were more likely to encounter abuse and defamation of a gendered and sexist nature and to experience threats of sexualized violence. Qualitative differences were evident also from interviews of journalists occupying minority positions, who reported encountering discriminatory and hate-filled abuse, defamation, and threats connected with their minority status.

These observations are consistent with the thinking of Holton et al. (2021, 7–8), who found that, especially in cases of female journalists, the lines between professionally oriented harassment and personalized/gendered attacks are becoming blurred, especially in settings of digital-media platforms. Holton and colleagues state



also that female journalists seem to be more prone to chronic and escalatory harassment – i.e., continuous harassment originating from the same perpetrators and harassment that escalates over time. Similarly, Sarikakis et al. (2021), Chen et al. (2020), Koirala (2020), Lewis et al. (2020), Waisbord (2020a), Miller and Lewis (2020), Clark and Horsley (2020, 50), Pain and Chen (2019), Finneman et al. (2019), Adams (2018), and Gardiner (2018) all have pointed out that female journalists and journalists with visible markers of minority social identity, such as ethnic, sexual, and some religious minorities, are likely to face gendered and identity-based harassment and attacks. These often include sexually charged and sexist rhetoric; discriminatory, racist, and xenophobic language; and specific threats of violence or sexual violence directed against the journalists and their apparent reference group (see Gardiner 2018; Waisbord 2020a, 4). Even assuming that a journalist belongs to one of these groups by relying on such signals as physical appearance or name can be enough to activate identity-based harassment (Waisbord 2020a, 4). This pattern can be seen as echoing Nerone’s (1994) historical-account-based characterizations of violence against minorities and against groups in general. In the context considered here, interference and harassment predicated upon specific journalists’ personal qualities can be seen as expressing politically based aspirations to force their voices out of the journalistic public sphere (Nerone 1994). Similar patterns are visible in identity-based harassment of politicians, activists, scholars, and ordinary citizens (Knuutila et al. 2019; Pöyhtäri et al. 2013; Waisbord 2020a, 4).

Utilizing a typology by Neuman (2012), Parker (2015, 13) states that aggression toward journalists can be seen as either “instrumental” or “hostile.” In instrumental aggression, aggressive and damaging behavior is a means to an end; while the harm caused to the individual journalist is intentional, the ultimate goal is to exert influence over the journalistic content. Hostile aggression, on the other hand, is characterized as typically a reaction to some perceived provocation or wrongdoing, with the conscious and only goal being to hurt the target (Neuman 2012). Parker (2015, 134) concluded, on the basis of her results, that occupation-based intimidation of journalists seems to manifest itself mainly as instrumental aggression since individual-level attributes have a very limited role in its occurrence.

However, proceeding from the findings presented in this dissertation and previous research, one can question how viable the separation into hostile and instrumental aggression is, especially in the context of abuse, defamation, and intimidation directed at professional journalists. Since external interference’s effects on journalism filter through individual journalists, I claim that a clear distinction between hostile and instrumental aggression is not always possible. One could argue

also that such a separation should not be made, because personal attacks targeting journalists reflect on their work too, in multitudinous ways, and can lead to such outcomes as self-censorship and chilling effects (see Adams 2018; Chen et al. 2020; Clark and Grech 2017; Holton et al. 2021; Pain and Chen 2019). Tactics such as weaponization of gendered or discriminatory power structures as apparatus of interference illustrate how personal attributes of journalists play a role here, and these tactics draw their strength from gendered and unequal social structures, alongside related notions. In other words, gendered and discriminatory social hierarchies and power dynamics get mobilized against professional journalists who display certain personal attributes in both instrumental and hostile ways (see also Gardiner 2018). While gender does not seem predictive of increased occurrence of external interference or harassment directly, it does seem to predict the power dynamics mobilized when female journalists are targeted. This is likely to hold true also in cases of journalists with visible markers of minority identity.

Therefore, I conclude that, as the distinction between instrumental harassment and personalized attacks becomes increasingly blurred (see also Holton et al. 2021, 7), delineating any clear separation is often impossible when one examines interference targeting professional journalists. Without solid research illustrating and analyzing the motives of external actors seeking to interfere with journalism, even the journalists themselves may interpret the aggressive actions differently than intended. Accordingly, more nuanced intersectional analysis is needed if we are to disentangle these connections and ascertain the specifics of abuse, defamation, and harassment linked in some manner to one's personal attributes or identity among journalists as compared to other social groups (cf. Knuutila et al. 2019; Pöyhtäri et al. 2013).

### 5.3 The Growing Role of the Audience as a Source of Interference

Thirdly, the research behind this dissertation indicates that the role and significance of the audience as a source of external interference has increased considerably. Audience members' greater opportunities to organize their collective action and use publicity to spread their message through digital communication channels represent extremely noteworthy transformations in external interference from professional journalists' perspective. These aspects are further emphasized in that journalism has become increasingly personalized and the audience has multiple ways of directly

contacting individual journalists at its disposal (e.g., Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016, 881; Waisbord 2020b, 2–3).

As discussed above, various actors, in multiple fields, can be positioned as sources, subjects, or audiences in relation to professional journalism (Parker 2015), with each of them having its own distinct power and resources to interfere with journalistic conduct and output (Luostarinen 1994). While it was common in Finland in the 1980s and 1990s that powerful societal actors occasionally interfered in journalism to advance their interests (see Hemánus 1983; Kuutti 1995; Mörä 1999), back then the audience lacked effective tools to establish and coordinate the actions involved. With limited access to public expression and with legacy media dominating as the gatekeeper of information, protests, campaigns, and systematic harassing behavior directed at journalism were much more difficult to organize, requiring considerably more work, material resources, and time (Lee and Solomon 1990, 340–358; Waisbord 2020a, 3). While phenomena such as threats (in letters and phone calls) and physical intimidation by members of the audience did exist in the mass-media era (Kuutti 1995, 242–246; see also Nerone 1994, 199–202), they lacked the speed, intensity, and publicity of contemporary crowdsourced harassment and intimidation organized through digital channels. Therefore, although journalists were subjected to such tactics as verbal abuse, harassment, defamation, stalking, and intimidation in the analog mass-media era, the findings suggest that the new ways in which audiences and actors can coordinate/organize these actions and use digital publicity to intensify them have transformed their intensity and effects. Accordingly, Waisbord (2020a, 9–11) developed the notion of **mob censorship**, defined as bottom-up vigilante-style discursive violence with the object of exerting power over journalists practiced via “loosely coordinated actions by citizens connected through communication and ideological networks.” This is unlike forms of state/market censorship, illegal actions, or threats from para-state actors in that mob censorship is usually practiced by citizens and “individuals typically acting within the boundaries of the laws” (Waisbord 2020a, 11).

In a manner consistent with the metaphor of mobs as something irrational, incendiary, and aggressive, the journalists interviewed perceived interference and threats with origins in the audience as unpredictable and uncontrollable when compared to interference originating from sources and subjects of journalism. The journalists found it common for sources and subjects to aim to influence how they are covered and reported upon, and they have largely learned through experience how to resist and deal with this type of interference. When feeling that their journalistic organization supported these resistance efforts, they often stated that

they could quite effectively nullify the effects of this sort of interference on their reporting (see also Kuutti 1995, 246). In contrast, participants often described feeling helpless when faced with coordinated crowdsourced harassment and intimidation campaigns emanating from the audience, since these can flare up and escalate in highly unpredictable ways. Furthermore, the journalists often felt that their respective organizations were unable to shield them sufficiently from this type of interference. Post and Kepplinger (2019, 2437) note that hostility originating from a networked audience in its contemporary reach and intensity is a relatively new phenomenon. Journalists and journalistic organizations have been taken by surprise and are still in the process of devising and developing new strategies/methods for coping with interference of this kind (Post and Kepplinger 2019, 2437; Waisbord 2020a, 11). Therefore, one might predict that professional journalists and journalism will adapt to this environment and become increasingly resilient to audience interference and hostility as time goes by (Lewis et al. 2020, 15; Post and Kepplinger 2019, 2437). However, the opposite may prove true, as is discussed later in this chapter.

Despite the multitude of negative side effects, journalists interviewed for this dissertation pointed out that increased audience interaction has several positive implications for their work. They brought up positive aspects such as opportunities for personal branding, increased amounts of valuable feedback, a lower threshold for audience suggestions of topics that should be covered, and more individuals providing useful background information and acting as whistleblowers. With many employers strongly encouraging audience interaction and journalists seeing it as one way to build personal recognition and a following, active engagement via audience interaction can provide journalists with significant benefits related to their work and career. However, it should be noted that this holds potential to increase inequality among journalists in the long run. For instance, Chen and colleagues (2020) discovered that female journalists targeted with gendered harassment and abuse had to choose between continuing their public engagement (and, in consequence, weathering the harassment) and withdrawing from the audience, thereby risking negative effects on their career (see also Adams 2017; Sarikakis et al. 2021). Similar factors may discourage journalists with minority social identities from actively engaging with audiences (Waisbord 2020a). This could be detrimental to their work prospects and career, placing some journalists at a disadvantage due to their personal attributes.

## 5.4 The Rise of Polarization and Hostility to the Press

Fourthly, the findings suggest that societal polarization and the rise of anti-press hostility have become more evident in Finnish professional journalists' work environment and contribute to external interference. The journalists involved in my research perceived an increase in the number and visibility of vocal segments of the public that see legacy media as an adversary instead of a neutral mediator or positive force. In addition, social actors in growing numbers base their media strategies on direct conflict with legacy-media journalism/journalists and hostility toward them. The interviewees' accounts illustrate how these developments, combined with the new possibilities for participation in public discourse presented earlier, have contributed to verbal abuse, harassment, and threats leveled at journalists both online and in physical spaces. Furthermore, the results indicate that polarization and hostility shape the way journalism and journalists are addressed and discussed in the public sphere, as more and more actors aim to discredit and defame their work and the journalistic profession publicly. These developments are especially conspicuous in the Finnish context since trust in the news media has remained high in this country and modern Finnish journalism has been characterized by strong commitment to professionalism and non-partisanship, coupled with an underlying tendency to steer clear of radical stances in favor of societal consensus (see Hallin and Mancini 2004, 50–53, 183–197).

The contemporary media environment has been examined as both a driving force and a symptom of deepening societal and political rifts (e.g., Tewksbury and Riles 2015; Van Aelst et al. 2017). Through “mediatization,” the mediated public sphere has become an increasingly important arena for presenting and discussing questions with societal and political relevance (Hjarvard 2008). In the analog era of mass media, journalists wielded considerable gatekeeping power, deciding who could enter the public sphere formed by mass media (Luostarinen 1994; Waisbord 2020a, 3). In those days, nearly all societal actors needed to have some kind of work relationship with journalists if they wished to be featured in mass-media publicity (Luostarinen 1994, 54–55). Because the actors often needed media publicity to fulfill their objectives, this arrangement benefited both parties (see Luostarinen 1994). However, the multi-channel digital publicity made possible by today's hybrid media environment provides an opportunity for actors and individuals to circumvent all journalistic gatekeeping and communicate directly to the public (e.g., Bro and Wallberg 2014; Ferreira 2018). This enables more effective use of media strategies based on direct conflict with legacy-media journalism. While negative attitudes

toward journalism and hostility to the press are not new phenomena (e.g., George 2019; Nerone 1994), they can be exploited more successfully in the current high-choice media environment. Speaking directly to the public, institutional actors and individuals alike can deliver their messages and claims to mass audiences, without any intervention from journalistic actors (cf. Luostarinen 1994, 67–68).

Naturally, descriptions of polarization resonate somewhat differently with media contexts wherein the field of journalism exhibits greater political partisanship (cf. Fletcher et al. 2020) than with Finland, where non-partisanship and neutrality prevailed from the 1990s onward. Since the Finnish legacy media share a somewhat homogeneous worldview and common professional notions as underpinnings for their journalism, the actors behind them do not actively strive to undermine trust in each other in the fashion typifying more polarized media spheres (Reunanen et al. 2021, 47). However, the current hybrid media environment and transitions in the media economy have transformed the field of journalism, potentially making economic and cultural incentives related to stronger partisanship more appealing than before. With the audience fragmenting, competition intensifying, and the affective attention economy dominating key social-media platforms, partisanship and production of polarizing content may seem to be an effective strategy for attracting attention and the loyalty of like-minded audience members (see, for example, Reuters Institute 2021, 34–37; Luostarinen and Salokangas 2022). Therefore, the stability of the norm of Finnish media non-partisanship is not self-evident, and commercial and political incentives may drive media outlets' media-production efforts toward specific groups and social identities even without official party-political ties or affiliations (see also Reunanen et al. 2021, 47).

While relative high levels of societal respect and audience trust in journalism are still visible in the journalists' accounts, the findings point to a cultural shift having taken place in some segments of Finnish society. Instead of seeing journalism as a neutral/detached intermediary, these groups see journalism and journalists as political or ideological adversaries and have used this perception to justify targeting them with personal attacks, harassment, and threats. Per journalists' accounts, these attitudes often feature aspects of populist anti-elitism and conspiracy-oriented thinking. The underlying motivations are often similar to those for violence against ideas as described by Nerone (1994), with the main objective being to prevent "wrong" representations, ideas, or opinions entering the public sphere and gaining societal power and acknowledgment through publicity.

Prior research into audience perceptions of neutrality and partisanship illustrates interesting dynamics in this regard. While trust in Finnish journalism has remained

relatively high overall, the gap between audience members who trust “most of the news most of the time” and those trusting “news I use” has been steadily growing in Finland, potentially hinting at slow transition toward more politically differentiated media use (Reunanen 2021, 47). However, over three quarters (77%) of Finns still state that independent journalism is “extremely” or “very” important, and Finns reported in the same percentage that they prefer “neutral” news sources over ones that either support or challenge one’s opinions (Reunanen 2020, 16–17, 34–35). In international comparison, Finland had the lowest percentage of audience members preferring news sources that support their opinions (11%) (Reunanen 2020, 34–35). Research with finer granularity points out that political orientation, gender, education, income level, and age all are factors that predict mistrust in legacy media in Finland. Members and supporters of the Finns Party and those without a party orientation are the most mistrustful, relative to members and supporters of any other party (Koivula et al. 2016; Matikainen et al. 2020; Pitkänen 2016; Sivonen and Saarinen 2018), with audience members who identify with the political right being generally more distrustful of traditional media than those identifying with the left (Reunanen et al. 2021, 49–51). Per Reunanen and colleagues (2021, 49–51), women in Finland report more trust in the media than men do, and more educated citizens with a higher income trust the media more than less educated and poorer citizens; also, young Finns trust legacy-media news less than do older ones.

It can be assumed that mistrust and hostility directed at the media very often go hand in hand, since people who harbor hostile attitudes toward legacy-media journalism have almost certainly lost confidence also in journalism as an institution (e.g., Noppari et al. 2019; Schulz et al. 2020). This implies that patterns of mistrust can inform hypotheses related to anti-press hostility. In addition, previous research indicates that those audience members identifying with a populist worldview and having a strong sense that journalism does not represent their identity or opinions fairly are likely to show such mistrust (see Matikainen et al. 2020; Noppari et al. 2019; Reuters Institute 2021, 34–37; Schulz et al. 2020), and eroding the trust in legacy-media journalism has been a deliberate strategy of populism (e.g., Fawzi 2019; Hameleers 2020; Meeks 2020). Therefore, it is highly likely that these two tendencies can feed off each other, mutually strengthening their combined effect.

Populist politicians and movements have often utilized anti-elitist strands of anti-press hostility strategically, publicly labeling journalists and journalism as members of the elite and lackeys of the political establishment (e.g., van Dalen 2021). Since populist ideology is built upon juxtaposition of extremes such as the masses and the elite, populists often aim to portray themselves as representatives of the virtuous



“common people” fighting against unjust control by corrupt elites (Schulz et al. 2020). This black-and-white worldview leaves little room for journalism to defend its position as an independent, neutral, and autonomous institution (Krämer 2018). Claiming that journalists are in direct servitude to the elites, populist movements and politicians can portray journalism as a political actor and denounce any critical coverage as an elitist effort to undermine the people’s political project (Holt and Haller 2017; Krämer 2018; Meeks 2020). While there may be some connection to a desire to exploit perceived victimization by legacy-media journalism as a rhetorical device (see Hatakka 2018), the mainstreaming of populist anti-press hostility (see Waisbord 2020a, 7–8) has been very explicit, crystallizing in openly hostile rhetoric and fanning of antagonistic flames (e.g., Fawzi 2019). Accusations of “fake news,” “lügenpresse,” etc. position journalism as a direct political enemy of populism, portraying journalism as an institution that has abandoned its societal mission and professional values to serve the elites (Fawzi 2019; Holt and Haller 2017; Krämer 2018; Meeks 2020). These have led to difficulties for journalists covering populist movements and parties, with populists claiming to be treated less fairly than other political parties and with journalists claiming that populists refuse to be covered in the same manner as other parties (e.g., Niemi 2018). Also, when populists have acquired political power, they have often directed it toward undermining the autonomy of journalism, to “take the power back” from elites. This phenomenon implies that the populist disdain for autonomous journalism is something more fundamental than a rhetorical device, and it has been very evident in other European countries too, among them Hungary and Poland (e.g., Bajomi-Lázár 2013; Bátorfy and Urbán 2020; Klimkiewicz 2017; Surowiec et al. 2020).

Transformations affecting the media environment and the rising popularity of political populism both have contributed to newfound visibility of conspiracy-oriented thinking. While conspiracy theory and a conspiratorial style of politics (e.g., Hofstadter 1966) have been prevalent historically, the digital public sphere gives them an unprecedented opportunity to spread among various audiences and for the audience to produce and distribute its own conspiracy theories. Such theories often position journalism and mainstream media as part of a larger network of conspirators aiming to conceal the truth of certain events, particular phenomena, or the actual distribution of power from the citizens. The growing popularity of online counter-media Web sites that encourage both populist and conspiracy-related anti-press hostility has accentuated these views and brought them to larger audiences (e.g., Figenschou and Ihlebæk 2019; Haller and Holt 2019; Noppari and Hiltunen 2018; Noppari et al. 2019; Tuomola forthcoming). At least in Finland, there is a strong



overlap between consuming counter-media material and exhibiting decreased trust in legacy-media journalism (Reunanen et al. 2021, 49–50; see also Noppari and Hiltunen 2018; Noppari et al. 2019).

Drawing from these observations, I posit that the perceived increase in hostility to the press has to do with mediatization of politics, increased competition in the public sphere, intensification of **reflexive politics**, and anti-elitist populism, all combined with the rise of conspiracy-related thought in the contemporary media sphere. The findings presented in this dissertation articulate how polarization of politics and society exerts effects on Finnish professional journalists' work too, at the level both of individuals and of society. From individual journalists' perspective, these developments are visible in increased abuse, defamation, harassment, and threats present both online and when one is physically reporting from the field, thus increasing the stress and risk related to the journalistic occupation. On societal level, the legitimacy, status, and claim to autonomy of journalism get questioned and challenged in new ways in today's hybrid media environment. In this environment, the field of professional journalism cannot take its previous position (or the power and legitimacy conferred by it) for granted but must actively justify and defend its coverage and choices for at least some segments of the public. Therefore, a question can be posed with regard to how well professional journalism has managed to convey and communicate its principles, goals, and actions to the host society; account for itself to the public; and defend against hostile rhetoric and actors. There are documented discrepancies between journalist and audience perceptions of the influences and motivations bundled with journalism (e.g., Obermaier et al. 2021), with audiences often examining the actions of journalism through the lens of "folk theories" (Kleis Nielsen 2016). I claim that, for journalism to defend its status and trust in the current media environment, it has to seek effective means of actively and openly engaging in meta-communication with audiences to clarify its position and relevance (see also Manninen 2019a). That said, allocating resources to this type of work could take away from the already sparse resources available for actual journalistic reporting, and accounts of such measures' effectiveness are mixed (e.g., Karlsson and Clerwall 2018; Manninen 2019a; 2019b).

## 5.5 Effects of External Interference on the Field of Professional Journalism

Journalists' attitudes, expectations, and perceptions connected with external interference are shaped by the shared professional ideology and habitus in the field of professional journalism. Reciprocally, external interference, through its effects on journalists and journalistic work, can make a clear mark on the professional habitus and the field in the long run (see Penttilä 2021).

External interference can be examined as a manifestation of struggles for power between various societal fields. When, for example, a politician, government official, or corporate representative tries to interfere with journalistic activities, a conflict of power between the societal fields ensues, with individuals acting as their representatives. The objective behind external interference is to transgress the boundary of professional journalism and influence the conduct and outcome of journalistic work, thus violating the autonomy of the field. These types of conflict test the social power and financial resources of actors in the field of journalism and their ability to utilize boundary performances to mark and preserve their area of autonomy successfully. As Luostarinen (1994, 91) notes, the societal status of journalism is one of the key institution-level resources supporting journalism's autonomy in these struggles.

Therefore, evolution in how professional journalism as a field is perceived and positioned in society can have radical consequences for its ability to resist external interference originating from other societal fields. The transition in public perceptions of journalism and in political ambitions to either support or curb independent journalism should, therefore, be seen as critical factors shaping the future position and power of the journalistic field. As Waisbord (2019, 210) notes, "journalism is not equally vulnerable everywhere" and the resources that are crucial for strengthening it vary from context to context. The volatility laid bare in relation to polarizing perceptions and diminishing trust in legacy-media journalism, discussed earlier, illustrates that the societal and political environment where journalism operates can change dramatically in a brief span of time. While the situation of professional journalism in Finland seems relatively solid in this regard, possible challenges and threats should be monitored constantly – and the field of professional journalism needs to be actively prepared to defend its position in society against those fields of power aiming to limit and threaten its autonomy and the possibilities for carrying out its democratic function. Therefore, external interference and power struggles related to it force the field of professional journalism to recognize its

position in the societal structure and critically examine its relations to other institutions and actors in surrounding society (see also Luostarinen 1994, 25–34).

From the perspective of the field of professional journalism, there is utility also in examining external interference as a form of strategic action. The dissertation project showed that journalists were keenly aware of interference targeting their colleagues and of harassment and intimidation campaigns directed at high-profile journalists. These individuals have a recognized position in the field; likewise, famous actors shape the way interference is perceived in the field. This fact and the findings presented in Publication II provide clear evidence that the ripple effects play an important part in journalists' assessment of perceived threats related to their position in the field (see Lewis et al. 2020, 15–16). Journalists consider not only risks they have experienced personally in their work but also what they have experienced as occurring in their work community and in the professional field more broadly. Seeing a colleague or member of the community targeted concretizes the risks and opens one's imagination to seeing oneself in that person's place. Therefore, actions such as public abuse, defamation, harassment, and intimidation send a message not just to individual journalists but also, more widely, to the professional community and the broader field of professional journalism. The same effect is visible with perceived organizational and societal support. If journalists start to consider certain topics and opinions risky and form a sense that getting sufficient support against interference is difficult or downright impossible, large-scale chilling effects and self-censorship in the field may be encouraged. Thus, interference attempts and their handling within journalistic organizations constantly (re)build the actors' professional habitus in the field, and the outcome can turn out to be either negative or positive from the perspective of the field's autonomy. It bears reiterating that efforts at interference can highlight factors supporting journalistic autonomy and ultimately enhance the ability to withstand interference. The supporting factors identified by journalists were strongly related to professionalism, organizational culture, perceived support, and the social legitimacy of the field of journalism. By the same token, Finnish journalists who had engaged in self-censorship typically reported having received insufficient organizational support, and they frequently voiced feelings of outright rejection by their journalistic organization.

As discussed earlier in this work, most often external interference introduces friction, additional stressors, and new sources of mental strain and risk to journalistic processes. Unlike journalistic processes with no element of external interference present, those involving it may require journalists to devote additional time and resources to dealing with pre-publication threats and verbal/legal interference, then

with verbal abuse, defamation, and intimidation from members of the audience after the story breaks (see also Parker 2015). When chronic and escalatory harassment is applied, the audience members' harassing behaviors persist and may escalate over time to threats directed against individual journalists, their loved ones, and/or the media outlet (Holton et al. 2021, 7–8). Parker's work (2015, 134–135) offers a reminder that external interference may lead to decreased job performance by reducing the resources of the target journalists. Parker points to three mechanisms for this. Firstly, interference can reduce the informational and temporal resources available to journalists – for example, when public information is withheld or when journalists need to dedicate their time to dealing with subjects or sources of stories who want to subject them to pressure. Secondly, fear and anxiety surrounding external interference may affect journalists' attentional, cognitive, and emotional resources. When the bulk of these resources goes toward coping with such emotions and experiences, less is available for performing the journalistic task at hand. Finally, interference can reduce the motivation reserves of journalists, at both conscious and unconscious level. This is especially problematic because journalists' job performance is often the factor that lands them as targets of external interference in the first place. These mechanisms together make up a very plausible explanation for why external interference potentially impairs one's job performance (see Parker 2015, 104) and increases the mental strain of journalistic work. The more cognitive resources and time a journalist needs to devote to dealing with interference and its implications, the less time and resources are left to allocate to reaching the original journalistic goals (Parker 2015, 134–135).

Sustaining the factors identified in this dissertation as facilitating journalistic autonomy requires that organizational action and resources be dedicated to dealing with external interference and to providing support that mitigates its effects. Hence, journalistic organizations are still crucial structures, supporting the autonomy of the professional field by playing a significant role in the efforts to resist external interference (cf. Deuze 2019). Without these structures, the field of professional journalism would likely be more diffuse and atomistic, and journalists might be all the more vulnerable to interference and its detrimental effects. At the same time, however, being situated in a media environment characterized by concern over growing external interference requires journalistic organizations to allocate additional resources to tackling these issues and their effects. Precisely the opposite trend has been visible, though, with the journalism-production resources provided by media organizations often having declined. Simultaneously, a precarious state has become increasingly common among journalists (e.g., Örnebring 2018; Örnebring

and Möller 2018). Amid the new challenges presented by the contemporary media environment – increasing competition, the growing power of professional publicity control, threats originating from a networked audience, etc. – the decrease in resources potentially exposes journalism to the risk of becoming overwhelmed. While some scholars predict that journalists and journalistic organizations will develop new strategies of resilience to cope with audience hostility (Post and Kepplinger 2019, 2437) and effective ways to deal with external interference, the opposite could just as well come to pass: with dwindling resources, journalists may end up persuaded not to engage with topics that are likely to generate massive amounts of interference that could distract them from effective use of those resources to cover other, less risky topics. Instead of instilling direct self-censorship, external interference could have consequences such as making journalistic work on certain topics so laborious and uncomfortable that the majority of journalists will simply decide to avoid them because of the extent of the resources needed for such coverage and for dealing with the fallout effectively (as discussed Publication III; see also Pöyhkäri et al. 2013, 133–137). These developments have potential to lead to detrimental alterations in the field’s professional habitus (see Penttilä 2021). Also, a sense of declining resources and of insufficient organizational support may push journalists to pursue career paths where these problems are less common, such as commercial or PR work (see publications III and IV).

Therefore, I claim that it is more productive to examine phenomena such as chilling effects and self-censorship in journalism as a systemic failure rather than an individual-level one. While societal conditions naturally play a role here, the findings presented in this dissertation show that in the Finnish context journalistic organizations are key players responsible for establishing and maintaining the shared professionalism and autonomy of the field. They can support it in practice by steadfastly fostering the elements of professionalism, guaranteeing sufficient time and resources for the journalists’ work, taking action to grant them the possibility of being sufficiently free from risks and threats when carrying out their work, and offering diverse support measures aimed at mitigating detrimental effects such as mental strain and self-censorship (see also Parker 2015). The following observation by Goyanes et al. (2020, 6) regarding political pressure can be easily expanded to all types of external interference and pressure: “[a] crucial feature of political pressures is not their existence *per se*, but the ‘capacity’ or ‘legitimacy’ of the newsroom to manage, cope, or respond to such pressures.”

As Waisbord (2013, 5) states, recent transformations have shaken the old journalistic order, with reverberations also for the journalistic field’s position in the

societal power structure. The crucial question is whether professional journalism still possesses the will, the resources, and the public mandate needed for enforcing its borders and upholding the field's autonomy in the future. If, instead, professional journalism lacks the resources to competently protect its autonomy and fulfill its democratic mission, it risks losing its identity, legitimacy, and societal position, very likely ending up increasingly subordinate to other societal fields. This scenario would spell serious harm to its social and democratic relevance and its future potential.

## 5.6 Contributions and Limitations of the Project

This section discusses the scientific contributions and limitations of the dissertation project and offers some reflections on them in light of the research's aims and the gaps in understanding presented in the introduction.

Babbie (2006, 87–90) distinguishes among three purposes of research in the social sciences: exploration, description, and explanation. With the dissertation, I aimed to address all three, to varying degrees. The constituent publications feature an exploratory element, since there has been little up-to-date empirical research in this specific context and the subject of study has changed significantly in recent decades on account of techno-social developments (Babbie 2006, 88). I employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative material to provide a systematic overview of the prevalence, methods, and implications of external interference in Finnish journalism. This provides an empirical basis for accumulating knowledge of the phenomenon, thus contributing to the descriptive aspect of the dissertation.

By taking the concept of external interference as a key theoretical element, my work developed a well-grounded framework that is able to account for a specific group of actions undertaken by individuals and societal actors. The findings enable me to claim that the concept of external interference is a workable one and can be facilitate the operationalization of measures that external actors utilize to interfere with journalistic performance/outcomes for empirical study. By linking this concept with elements from various social theories, the theoretical framework articulated in the dissertation makes it possible to elevate the level of the findings and undertake analysis that illustrates how interference is related to societal conflicts of power between professional journalism and other fields. The sequential mixed-methods approach encouraged constant back-and-forth flow between inductive and deductive modes of reasoning in the research process (see Creamer 2017, 44). This facilitated reaching the objective of explaining the observations made via analysis of

journalists' perceptions in tandem with various factors that might contribute to the patterns identified (Babbie 2006, 91–101).

Regarding the research aims listed in the introduction, I claim that the project managed to reach the associated goals reasonably well. Firstly, the dissertation provides a convincing empirical account of how external interference manifests itself and of the ways in which professional journalists make sense of and negotiate it in Finland and, more broadly, in a context of a stable and democratic Western country with high levels of press freedom. Secondly, through analysis of transition from a mass-media environment to the current hybrid one, this dissertation enriches understanding of how the dovetailing transformations influence the external interference experienced by journalists and how these, in turn, generate new shifts and trends with potential to challenge or threaten the autonomy of professional journalism. Thirdly, while I feel that the findings could prove enlightening for journalists and help them better prepare to deal with external interference, the practical utility of the knowledge produced remains to be determined by the occupational field. Finally, I argue that this dissertation represents successful supplementation to research in this area of study and to filling the gaps discussed in the introduction. When the various components of my research are considered together as an integrated whole, I find it safe to say that the dissertation provides both an account and analysis that, with the context of Finnish professional journalism, demonstrate a holistic approach to documenting and analyzing various manifestations and implications of external interference, along with their combined effects, while successfully preserving the journalist's perspective and analysis focused on the individual.

However, there are several limitations that should be addressed. Firstly, the sampling and analysis methods render the quantitative findings unable to account for further possible intersectionality. For example, it was impossible to reliably assess whether young female journalists employed by similar media outlets and working in the same occupational position are more prone to external interference than their male colleagues (cf. Landsverk-Hagen 2015, 61–63). Demonstrating this would have required a more extensive sample and/or more advanced methods of statistical analysis. Additionally, the quantitative component fails to reliably address whether specializing in a certain topic predicts larger amounts of external interference relative to others as suggested by the qualitative component and previous research (cf. Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016, 886; Parker 2015, 94–97; Waisbord 2020a, 4–5). This is due to the sample's distribution being highly skewed in favor of general



topics (“local current affairs” and “national current affairs”) or undefined ones (“other”).

Secondly, because of the sampling methods employed, the findings from the qualitative component of the project cannot be reliably generalized. For example, conclusions from qualitative observations related to whether a given media outlet’s journalists holding different occupation positions perceive external interference similarly would require systematic study along the entire chain of command (cf. Goyanes et al. 2020; Urbániková 2019).

The lack of previous up-to-date research and longitudinal data makes it difficult to ascertain straightforwardly whether the methods of external interference that were available in the mass-media era (e.g., applying political and economic pressure) have increased in prevalence in the long term.

In a method-related limitation that could not be entirely offset, the general nature of the findings indicates loss of information pertaining to the sources, locales, and contexts of external interference, details that might be preserved in, for example, case studies examining the subject.

A fifth limitation, affecting both the quantitative and the qualitative data collection behind this dissertation, involves susceptibility to perceptual bias and individual-specific differences. Notwithstanding the aim of measuring concrete cases of interference, the measurements may be affected by differences between what journalists personally consider to be interference and what they choose to report. The risk of this divergence affecting the results is more acute with regard to more elusive methods of interference that are highly dependent on the social context. For example, incidents of explicit violence are more straightforward to report and measure, leaving less room for interpretation than incidents wherein journalists feel that they have been pressured psychologically. Additionally, some journalists might not even be aware of all attempted interference; e.g., one’s superiors or employer might not have mentioned them (see, for example, Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2018).

Finally, especially with regard to professionalism and professional habitus among Finnish journalists, participants in interviews and even questionnaires in such work may, whether consciously or unconsciously, assess and report effects of external interference differently from how these actually materialize in the work. For example, fear and engaging in self-censorship run counter to the professional ideology and *nomos* of the field, potentially producing cognitive dissonance. While these effects were mitigated through anonymity and other measures aimed at



creating a safe space for sharing one's feelings in the interview setting, this potential source of bias should be borne in mind in interpretation of the results.

## 5.7 Directions for Future Research

Because of the general nature of the findings and the dearth of up-to-date systematic research on this topic in a Finnish context, the dissertation serves as an overview of the landscape of external interference, its effects, and contributing/related factors. Therefore, the core contribution of this dissertation should be considered to lie in providing groundwork that makes more narrowly focused and multifaceted research possible. The final section is devoted to proposing some possible directions for future research into the phenomenon of external interference and various patterns related to it.

Firstly, variation in scholars' quantitative methods for examining phenomena related to external interference and its consequences presents difficulties for attempts at comparisons between various countries, professional milieux, or other contexts. For example, when one uses self-reporting-based methods, anything from the order of the questions to their exact wording can have an effect on the results obtained (see Schwartz 1999). Therefore, managing to produce results that could be reliably compared would require detail-level cooperation among researchers and careful observation and analysis of possible differences in context and culture. This can be especially tricky when one aims to conduct comparisons between journalists in very different countries, since notions of and attitudes toward external interference are strongly shaped by what is considered normal and acceptable in certain professional milieux. One possible direction for future research, therefore, would involve developing instruments and methods that could be used to obtain consistent, comparable results related to particular aspects of external interference across various national and journalistic contexts. In fact, such work is already in progress: the third iteration of the Worlds of Journalism Study focuses on the risks and uncertainty encountered by journalists globally, thus touching on multiple phenomena related to external interference and its manifestations (WJS 2021b).

To address the aforementioned need for examining intersectional positions in relation to external interference – including how the combination of one's position in the field of professional journalism and one's personal attributes may affect its presence and methods – more detailed and specialized research is required. Insight related to this could be obtained through advanced statistical analyses and qualitative

studies focusing on specific clearly defined subgroups of journalists. Researchers could utilize this knowledge to refine understanding of the nature of external interference and its overlap with phenomena such as sexualized, gendered, and identity-based harassment (e.g., Chen et al. 2020; Pain and Chen 2019; Waisbord 2020a).

While this dissertation focuses on the perspective of the journalists, I feel that we know too little about the perpetrators of external interference, their motivations, and their views on the subject. More research capturing the reasoning and motivations behind external interference perpetrated by various groups and actors in society is sorely needed. For example, while there have been several studies of crowdsourced online abuse, harassing behavior, and defamation campaigns targeting journalists, we know very little about why some members of audiences choose to engage in this type of behavior, what the objectives are from their perspective, and whether they consider the possible harm caused to individual journalists in any way. While some work has investigated general anti-press discourse (e.g., Mazzaro 2021; Shin et al. 2021; Waisbord 2020a), I regard this topic as warranting serious ethnographic examination that would allow us to analyze why various actors and individuals choose to engage in these actions and examine the societal factors encouraging this type of behavior.

Additionally, the counterstrategies and response methods that journalists and journalistic organizations apply to mitigate effects of interference and harassment remain under-studied. Academic research focusing on the various counterstrategies and boundary performances (e.g., Revers 2017) and on their effectiveness in specific contexts would very likely benefit the research field and give journalists tools for knowledge-based solutions that could support practical efforts to resist interference and alleviate its detrimental effects. One of the challenges identified in this domain is that journalistic and media organizations might be hesitant to publicly acknowledge or discuss counterstrategies and countermethods they utilize (this may be due to fear of losing strategic advantage by revealing these measures and tactics or of publicly appearing insufficiently prepared). However, this does not warrant ignoring the matter. As argued above, the organizations play a crucial role in journalists' resilience to various types of interference, so analyses focusing only on individual-level counterstrategies and response methods neglect crucial aspects of the picture, related to the interplay between individual journalists and the respective organizations. Here, methods such as action research aimed at developing more effective counterstrategies and testing their effectiveness in practice could prove beneficial.

A final research direction worthy of mention is connected with the qualitative methods utilized. My literature review revealed that recent qualitative research (e.g., Atal 2018; Chen et al. 2020; Clark and Horsley 2020; Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2018; Holton et al. 2021; Miller and Lewis 2020; Pöyhtäri et al. 2013; Sarikakis et al. 2021; Waisbord 2020a) has relied predominantly on the use of a few personal interviews. With regard to future research, I feel that several alternative qualitative methods might yield more nuanced and multifaceted results. For example, recurring interviews or various diary methods could cover journalists' experiences and feelings over time, enabling researchers to explore adjustments and other developments. Additionally, journalists' proficiency in communication, self-expression, and use of media tools renders diary methods well suited to application with this target group. Also, ethnographic methods could yield interesting insight on how matters related to external interference are discussed and dealt with inside journalistic and media organizations. In addition, case studies in which preselected incidents and situations are described and analyzed in detail (for example, see Goyanes et al. 2020; Koivunen 2017; Urbániková 2019; 2021) could bring out crucial context-linked information and demonstrate some mechanisms or power structures with implications for interference better than studies based solely on interviewing journalists. While each of these methods has its own problems and challenges, I would like to encourage researchers exploring this field to experiment with a variety of qualitative methods. Thereby, scholars can develop novel methodology to shed light on various phenomena situated under the conceptual umbrella of external interference.

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# PUBLICATION I

## **Experiences of External Interference Among Finnish Journalists: Prevalence, methods and implications**

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# Experiences of External Interference Among Finnish Journalists

## *Prevalence, methods and implications*

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the prevalence, methods and implications of external interference among Finnish journalists based on survey responses from 875 working journalists. The definition of external interference used in the study encompasses all active and invasive methods external actors use to interfere in the journalistic process with the objective to influence editorial content. The findings indicate that low-level interference in everyday journalistic practices and mediated verbal abuse are the most frequent types of external interference. While severe interference is rare, results show that the perceived risk of interference causes concern and self-censorship among the respondents. The results are in line with previous Nordic and European studies, and underline how external interference may have detrimental effects on journalistic autonomy also in countries with strong legal, institutional and cultural safeguards of press freedom.

**Keywords:** journalism, autonomy, external interference, harassment, intimidation

### **Introduction**

The democratic principles upholding the freedom of the press are being eroded in several European countries (Reporters Without Borders [RSF], 2017), and an increasingly hostile public discourse towards journalists and the media is spreading in the United States (Freedom House, 2017). These developments have raised concerns about the future of press freedom in Western countries and spurred growing research interest in emerging threats and challenges to journalism in democratic societies. Despite scholars' cautions about the deterioration of journalistic autonomy due to, for instance, increasing concentration of corporate control, commercialisation of news and competition among news organisations, Western democracies have tended to take it for granted (Reich & Hanitzsch, 2013). Previous scholarly attention to the harassment and intimidation of journalists has largely focused on authoritarian or semi-democratic states with weak safeguards for media freedom and press autonomy (see Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring,

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2016), and the literature has generally reflected the absence of anti-press violence in Western nations (Waisbord, 2002).

The contemporary hybrid media<sup>1</sup> environment has radically transformed the media landscape and the societal environment in which journalism operates by restructuring the authority, position and power of traditional media actors. In the online environment especially, journalists are more visible and accessible than ever and find their choices, credibility and integrity more often publicly contested (Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016). This exposes journalists to new detrimental phenomena like online harassment, cyberstalking and state-sponsored trolling campaigns (e.g. Luque Martinez, 2015). The techniques of external interference that journalists face are constantly shifting, and new methods are frequently introduced (Luostarinen, 1994).

Empirical research systematically assessing new threats and challenges to journalistic autonomy is therefore needed to identify these shifts and to develop effective responses. Nordic countries generally rank high in measures of media freedom and Finland topped the Press Freedom Index for seven consecutive times, from 2009 to 2016 (RSF, 2016a). Nonetheless, public concerns have arisen in Finland due to reports of rising online harassment and intimidation of journalists, and a media scandal over the prime minister's behind-the-scenes communication with public broadcaster Yleisradio Oy (YLE) regarding reporting of a potential conflict-of-interest case (see Finnish Newspapers Association, 2016; Haapalainen, 2016; Koivunen, 2017; RSF, 2016b).

The survey presented in this article represents a first attempt to provide a comprehensive empirical overview of external interference as experienced by Finnish journalists. The objective of the study is to explore the prevalence, methods and implications of external interference by measuring self-reported incidents of interference and the journalists' views of the effects of interference on their work. This type of overview is critically needed because previous research focusing on interference in the context of Finnish journalism is very scarce and limited both in scope and scale. This study also illustrates how external interference manifests itself in the context of a democratic Nordic country with strong legal, cultural and institutional safeguards for press autonomy. Since the 1960s, Finnish journalism has gradually sought to distance itself from political parties and newspapers have steadily rejected political party affiliations in favour of larger general audiences, proclaiming themselves independent (Nord, 2008). Moreover, the journalistic ideal in Finland strongly favours impartiality and objectivity. This is evident in the Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS)<sup>2</sup> investigation of Finnish journalistic culture. Asked about perceived influences on journalistic work in Finland, journalists reported that censorship had the least effect on their work (73% stated it had no effect), followed closely by various external actors, such as the military and police, advertisers and advertising considerations, advocacy groups, media outlet owners, businesspersons and politicians. The results show a strong consensus among Finnish journalists on the autonomy of the profession and that they perceive themselves as distanced from direct political, government and business influences (Pöyhtäri et al., 2014: 12, 24-28).

## **Theoretical framework and previous research**

Journalistic autonomy refers to journalists' ability to operate freely and independently and protect their work from all external influence (Deuze, 2005). Autonomy has tradi-

tionally been viewed as a cornerstone of modern journalism in Western nations (Hanitzsch, 2011), distinguishing journalism from other forms of communication (Kunelius, 2003). Deuze (2005: 446) states that:

There seems to be a consensus among scholars in the field of journalism studies that what typifies more or less universal similarities in journalism can be defined as a shared occupational ideology among news workers which functions to self-legitimise their position in society.

Other elements of this shared occupational ideology include ideals of public service, objectivity, immediacy and ethics. However, journalistic autonomy functions as a prerequisite for the other elements. To be able to act as public watchdogs, report truthfully and consider ethical issues independently, journalists must enjoy editorial autonomy and freedom (Deuze, 2005; Kunelius, 2003).

Various external sources, operating on multiple levels, may impose limits on journalists' professional autonomy (Reich & Hanitzsch, 2013). For the purposes of this study, *external interference* is defined as all active and invasive methods external actors use to interfere in the journalistic process and influence journalists with the objective of shaping editorial content (see also Luostarinen, 1994; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Incidents of *mixed interference* are also included, defined as external interference intertwined with internal interference from within the media outlet, for example through editorial censorship (Hemánus, 1983). The definition of external interference used in this study, however, excludes standard public relations (PR) activities, such as press releases and conferences, information subsidies and other similar agenda-building efforts (Weaver & Elliott, 1985).

Luostarinen (1994: 73-88) categorises three types of interference: repressive, restrictive and persuasive. Repressive methods include measures of physical, economic, political and occupational pressure. Occupational pressure refers to measures intended to publicly discredit journalists or media outlets. In addition, judicial and psychological pressure can also be categorised as repressive methods. Judicial pressure refers to using legal measures as pressure tactics, while psychological pressure can result from any of these methods but is most often associated with harassment and intimidation explicitly used to provoke negative psychological reactions (Clark & Grech, 2017). Restrictive methods include ways to hinder journalistic work such as blocking access to and withholding information. Thirdly, persuasive methods include bribery and corruption but also measures such as providing privileged access in exchange for influence over journalistic content (Luostarinen, 1994).

Studies and surveys in Nordic and European countries (Clark & Grech, 2017; Landsverk-Hagen, 2015; Löfgren Nilsson, 2016; Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016; Marttinen, 2016) indicate that verbal abuse, harassment and intimidation have the potential to cause fear, self-censorship and a chilling effect among journalists. In a 2016 survey (Marttinen, 2016) in Finland, 16 per cent of working members of the Union of Journalists reported having received threatening messages in recent years. In the Swedish Journalist Panel Survey (Löfgren Nilsson, 2016), approximately 30 per cent of Swedish journalists reported having received threats, and two out of three had been subjected to verbal abuse during the past 12 months. In a study from 2013, 26 per cent of Swedish journalists who had received threats reported that they at least occasionally avoided covering specific issues and 30 per cent avoided covering specific persons and groups

(Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016). The number was slightly lower (17%) among those who had received abusive comments. The researchers concluded that verbal abuse, intimidation and harassment somewhat effectively silence journalists and influence the journalistic public sphere even in stable, democratic societies such as Sweden (Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016: 888-890). Studying Norway, Landsverk-Hagen (2015) found that close to half (43% of men and 44% of women) of the journalists reported having experienced online harassment, defamation or verbal abuse and a quarter (27% of men and 23% of women) had received threats during the past five years. Furthermore, 21 per cent thought that harassment and threats might affect their future reporting. The number was somewhat higher (24%) among the respondents who had experienced harassment or threats. In a European study exploring experiences of unwarranted interference among 940 journalists in Council of Europe member states and Belarus, the respondents reported high rates of self-censorship and other direct effects as a result of external interference (Clark & Grech, 2017). In the same study, 37 per cent reported that unwarranted interference had affected how they performed their work (Clark & Grech, 2017: 43-44).

This survey extends the scope of previous studies by examining a wider variety of external interference used to undermine or violate journalistic autonomy. In that way, incidents of low-intensity interference, closely related to journalistic practices, can be observed alongside more aggressive methods. Therefore, the study provides a nuanced picture of the contemporary journalistic environment in which Finnish journalists conduct their work. The research questions are:

1. What kinds of external interference methods have Finnish journalists encountered?
2. How frequently do Finnish journalists encounter different methods of external interference?
3. How does external interference affect the work of Finnish journalists?

## **Methodology**

This study has an exploratory character and aims to document characteristics of a social phenomenon of which very little previous empirical research exists (Jann & Hinz, 2016). An anonymous, self-report online questionnaire was used to explore the methods, frequency and implications of external interference experienced by Finnish journalists.<sup>3</sup> Survey methodology was chosen because incidents of low-intensity interference and harassment, in particular, often go unreported and unrecorded. Self-report surveys are useful tools to uncover previously undocumented personal experiences and perceptions (Clark & Grech, 2017). The questionnaire consisted of seven background questions, 41 closed multiple-choice questions, 15 Likert scale questions and four optional fields for open-ended text comments. The reference period in the questionnaire was the past three years (2014-2017), which was considered to be sufficiently long to provide a consistent overview while mitigating possible reliability issues.

When studying special populations like employees in specific occupations, it is appropriate to utilise readily available lists of group members (Sudman & Kalton, 1986). Due to the very high organisation rate of journalists in Finland<sup>4</sup>, the exhaustive and up-to-date nature of the national registry of the Union of Journalists in Finland, and the fact that the Union of Journalists and three Finnish editors' associations (whose membership

include editors-in-chief, managing editors and other journalists who exercise significant power over terms of employment and whose main work responsibilities include overseeing the financial benefits of companies) assisted in administering the survey, it was possible to effectively reach almost the entire national population of working journalists. Pöyhtäri and colleagues (2014) estimate that working journalists in Finland number roughly 8,000, indicating that the total of 8,275 survey recipients included close to the whole national population.

Over the two-week data collection period (13-26 March, 2017), the survey was distributed by e-mail to 7,944 working members of the Union of Journalists in Finland, 113 members of the Finnish Association of Editors, 120 members of the Finnish Association of Magazine Editors-in-Chief and 98 members of the Association for Local Paper Editors-in-Chief. The definition of journalist used in this study is consistent with the union or editors' association membership requirements.<sup>5</sup> After two reminders, 875 responses in total were received, representing a participation rate of 10.6 per cent.<sup>6</sup> The response rate was objectively low even for a web-based survey (cf. Cook et al., 2000), which should be kept in mind when examining the findings. However, Krosnick (1999) states that surveys with low response rates can yield useful data, highlighting the importance of sample composition. Moreover, 353 respondents (40%) provided one or more text comments to supplement their responses.

To assess the survey sample, the representative sample constructed for the WJS study (Pöyhtäri et al., 2014) and the Union of Journalists in Finland membership statistics were used as reference points. This comparison indicated that the survey sample matched the proportions of the estimated target population reasonably well with regards to factors like gender, age, position, type of employment and employing media outlet. This is illustrated in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.** Survey sample in comparison (per cent)

	Survey sample	WJS sample (Finland)	Union of Journalists in Finland members <sup>7</sup>
Gender distribution (Female/Male)	57/43	55/45	57/43
Dominant age group	36-55 years (54%)	36-55 years (61%)	36-55 years (55%)
Salaried employees	81	82	81
Freelancers or entrepreneurs	15	17	18
Working for newspapers or magazines	65	69	67
Working for broadcasting (including public broadcasting)	23	23	32
Position as reporter, special reporter or visual journalist	68	72	76
Managerial position (Managing editor, producer, editor-in-chief, etc.)	28	24	15 <sup>8</sup>

The most noteworthy bias in the sample was the overrepresentation of managing editors and especially editors-in-chief (10% editors-in-chief in the survey sample compared to 4% in the WJS sample), largely explained by the inclusion of three editors' associations in the survey.

While the proportional similarities do not make the sample representative of the population of Finnish journalists, they increase confidence in that no one group dominated the sample or skewed the results significantly. Considering the high absolute number of respondents amounting to over one tenth of the estimated national journalist population, the sample contains substantial internal variety. This fulfils the research aim of capturing a large overview of external interference across the whole field of Finnish journalism. Nonetheless, the survey sample contains several limitations, namely due to the non-probability, self-selection sampling method and the low overall response rate. First of all, surveys are prone to biases derived from issue salience (Cook et al., 2000) and nonresponse, which can lead to more input from respondents with a personal connection to, or extreme opinions on, the subject. To minimise such effects, the cover letter explicitly encouraged participation even if the recipient had no personal experience of any external interference. It is however still possible that the amount of external interference experienced by the journalists in the survey sample might be higher than in the whole population, reducing the ability to generalise from the sample to the whole population (Sivo et al., 2006). Additionally, it should be noted that the frequency of certain elements of journalistic work logically increases the likelihood of journalists encountering certain types of interference. To improve the internal validity of the survey, respondents were given the option to answer “Don’t know/No opinion” when the question was not applicable or relevant to their work as a journalist. Still, for example, a journalist conducting interviews regularly is statistically more likely to experience interference in an interview setting than one that rarely conducts any. Because of these limitations and the lack of previous empirical research on the subject, the study results should be considered as indicative and illustrative rather than representative and definitive.

## Findings

The results are presented in three sections: 1) frequency and methods of external interference; 2) reactions to external interference; and 3) perceived implications of external interference. In the first two sections, journalists were asked to estimate how often they have on average encountered described external interference during the last three years. Responses of “once every three months”, “once every month” and “once a week or more frequently” were combined to form a merged category “regularly”. Direct extracts from open survey comments are used to illustrate how journalists reflected on the different themes.

### *1. Prevalence and methods of external interference*

This section addresses methods of low-intensity interference related to interviewing and access to sources and information (Table 2) and screening of journalistic content before publication (Table 3),<sup>9</sup> which are closely connected to the power relations between journalists and their sources. The growing role of professional PR and its increasing efforts to control journalistic content has previously attracted attention among Finnish journalists (see Pietiläinen, 2007). In the WJS study, an interesting contradiction regarding this was observed: Finnish journalists reported that the overall influence of advertisers and PR-actors in journalism has increased while simultaneously stating that



these actors had very little influence on their journalistic work (Pöyhkäri et al., 2014). Table 2 provides an overview of the frequency of various types of low-intensity external interference among the respondents.

**Table 2.** *External interference with regards to interview situations and access to information (per cent)*

	Regularly	Once every six months	Once a year or less	Never	Don't know/No opinion
Demands to see the questions as a prerequisite for interviews	21	14	30	33	3
Unwarranted presence of PR persons during interviews or phone interviews	10	13	34	41	2
Denial or obstruction of access to public information	10	11	27	46	5
Demands to exclude certain topics or questions from interviews	6	12	29	49	3
Withholding of cooperation with certain journalists	3	6	20	67	4

*Comment:* n=875. As percentages in the tables are rounded to the nearest whole per cent, the total may not always add up to 100 per cent.

The survey responses and text comments indicated that it was relatively common that interviewees required special conditions for participating in interviews. This supports previous notions of the proliferation of professional PR and strategic communications efforts in Finland (e.g. Kantola & Lounasmeri, 2014; Pietiläinen, 2007). In addition to corporations, PR professionals are employed by politicians, government institutions and organisations and make their presence felt by monitoring and controlling interviews and restricting access to information and sources. The open answers extracted below illustrate this type of interference:

Inside the Police and the Defence Forces there are interviewees who decline to provide public documents, arrive to interviews with big PR-crowds and discredit factual journalism pieces by supplying false corrections after the publication. (translation by author)

When I have covered big corporations [...], their spokesperson or chief communications officer is always present for the whole interview. You cannot even get an interview without asking the communications department first. [...] Sometimes they have insisted that the journalism piece has to be sent to them before publication. (translation by author)

Almost one third (29%) of the respondents reported having experienced explicit withholding of cooperation. This might indicate sources' efforts to pre-emptively cherry-pick journalists and provide access only to those providing positive coverage while ostracising those considered more critical.

Nearly half (48%) of the respondents had experienced withholding or obstruction of access to public information. While the question was not restricted to public govern-

mental information, it is worth pointing out that researchers (see Kuutti, 2011) having previously documented problems in government authorities' ability and willingness to provide public documents when requested, despite the Finnish Act on the Openness of Government Activities ensuring broad access to all material not specifically labelled restricted. This is noteworthy considering that in the WJS study, 40 per cent of Finnish journalists regarded access to official information as either "very" or "extremely" important to their work (Pöyhtäri et al., 2014: 27).

The next section goes on to discuss external interference in the shape of demands for pre-screening of content. The questions assessing such methods are summarised in Table 3.

**Table 3.** *External interference with regards to pre-screening of journalistic content (per cent)*

	Regularly	Once every six months	Once a year or less	Never	Don't know/No opinion
Demands to inspect whole journalism pieces as prerequisites for interviews	22	13	24	39	2
Demands for journalistically unwarranted alterations to (direct or indirect) quotations in the journalism piece after interviews	20	17	29	31	2
Demands for journalistically unwarranted alterations to other parts of journalism pieces after interviews (e.g. headline, lead paragraph, text, images and other visual elements)	13	16	33	36	2
Journalistically unwarranted demands to not publish pieces and interviews	1	4	34	60	1

*Comment:* n=875. As percentages in the tables are rounded to the nearest whole per cent, the total may not always add up to 100 per cent.

Pre-screening content before publication provides an interesting example of the blurred lines between journalism practice, ethical considerations and external interference. A significant number of respondents reflected on the ethical and societal implications of pre-screening in their open answers. They also mentioned benefits: an opportunity to correct factual mistakes and misunderstandings before publication, especially in subject matter requiring a high level of expertise, and a means to build confidence between journalists and interviewees when covering sensitive topics:

It is common that the interviewee reads a long feature piece before publication.

That way one can weed out small mistakes, correcting of which afterwards would be arduous and awkward for everyone involved. (translation by author)

Based on the survey comments, respondents typically assessed demands to alter journalistic content in some way in two steps. First, respondents considered the status of the person making the request. Politicians, celebrities and other wielders of political and economic power were treated more strictly than ordinary citizens unaccustomed to dealing with journalists and the media. Second, the respondents considered the societal importance of the subject matter. They mentioned that removing and altering some trivial

aspects, wordings and details that had little to no societal importance was regarded as standard procedure. If the merits of publishing outweighed the harm done, a story was published in the original form despite the desires of the interviewees or others involved. This evaluation process reflects the established tradition of Finnish journalism ethics setting out four levels of privacy protection based on the issue and individual status. The affairs of public figures enjoy the lowest level of protection, while private matters of private persons enjoy the highest (Mäntylä, 2008).

The next section goes on to discuss non-physical methods of external interference directed towards journalists and editors. Verbal pressure and other non-physical methods of interference often cause negative psychological effects (Clark & Grech, 2017). Table 4 summarises the degree to which the respondents were exposed to various kinds of non-physical interference.

**Table 4.** *Non-physical forms of external interference (per cent)*

	Regularly	Once every six months	Once a year or less	Never	Don't know/No opinion
Mediated verbal abuse (e.g. insults, name-calling or other verbal expressions of hate through phone calls, letters, email, online comments, social media and websites)	15	14	31	39	1
Contacting and pressuring the editor, managing editor or owner of a media outlet	7	11	36	41	5
Systematic or unusually large volumes of feedback (e.g. organised feedback campaigns)	4	5	16	74	2
Face-to-face verbal abuse (e.g. insults, name-calling and other verbal expressions of hate)	3	5	29	63	0
Threats of negative occupational consequences (e.g. loss of work or journalistic credibility, hampering of future work)	3	4	23	68	1
Public defamation through spreading false claims, rumours or publishing sensitive private information (also online)	3	2	12	79	4
Threats of negative personal consequences (e.g. loss of reputation, harm to personal life)	2	3	15	80	0
Direct or implicit threats of violence	1	1	14	83	0
Threats to destroy personal or employer property	0	0	4	94	1
Direct or implicit threats of violence or other harmful consequences for your family, loved ones and friends	0	0	4	95	0
Hacking attempts and digital security breaches (e.g. breaking into email, personal files and social media profiles)	0	0	2	87	10

*Comment:* n=875. As percentages in the tables are rounded to the nearest whole per cent, the total may not always add up to 100 per cent.

Among the various types of non-physical interference, verbal abuse through different communication channels stood out as more frequent; 60 per cent of respondents had experienced it, and 15 per cent did so regularly. Based on similarly high numbers in Sweden, Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring (2016) concluded that for many journalists, verbal abuse has become a common element of daily work, attributed to the increased online accessibility and visibility of the journalist profession. This interpretation is supported by numerous survey comments describing verbal abuse and harassment on social media and various online platforms:

I am being regularly verbally abused in online forums, Facebook groups and comment sections. The abuse targets my appearance, my supposed political commitments and often my gender. They have implied that I have sex with my superiors and interviewees, explicitly called me a whore and suggested that I will see the error of my ways when I get raped. (translation by author)

The mental strain of the work has increased exponentially over the last five years. Nowadays verbal abuse, ridicule and intimidation are weekly occurrences. Before they were rare. (translation by author)

In the comments, public defamation was often associated with the online environment. Aggressive counter-media websites and online discussion forums were typically mentioned as facilitators of crowdsourced harassment campaigns. With regards to the former, Noppari and Hiltunen (2018) describe online counter media as media websites that promote certain (often radical or fringe) political and ideological positions. These websites regularly publish commentary texts with the explicit objective of refuting and discrediting journalism pieces and journalists of “mainstream media”. Occasionally, personal information, contact details or pictures of journalists are published alongside. As discussed in the quote below, defamatory and abusive content distributed online made individual journalists the targets of verbal abuse, harassment and threats by a large online audience.

There have been organised online hate campaigns against me with the explicit aim of getting me fired [...] For example, they have distributed the contact information of my superiors accompanied with bogus claims based on which I should lose my job. Some have actually contacted my media outlet based on these claims. (translation by author)

This follows the logic of weaponised online visibility (see Trottier, 2017) and highlights how participatory networked communication infrastructure can be utilised to organise systematic harassment (e.g. Luque Martinez, 2015).

When it comes to intimidation, a combined total of 18 per cent of respondents reported receiving direct or implicit threats of violence, threats to destroy property and/or harm loved ones during the past three years.

Next, the article discusses the prevalence of different kinds of physical pressure, ranging from following journalists around while they are working to outright physical abuse.

As shown in Table 5, physical pressure against journalists may include violence, physically interfering with the performance of journalistic work and tampering with or destroying working equipment.

**Table 5.** *Physical forms of external interference (per cent)*

	Regularly	Once every six months	Once a year or less	Never	Don't know/No opinion
Monitoring and following while conducting journalistic work	1	2	14	81	1
Unwarranted denial of entry or removal while conducting journalistic work	1	2	13	83	1
Disruptions of work (e.g. heckling and disrupting interviews and other journalistic work)	1	1	13	84	0
Minor physical violence (e.g. pushing, shoving, hair pulling, grabbing or spitting)	0	0	4	96	0
Tampering with or breaking working equipment (e.g. cameras, recorders and notebooks)	0	0	3	96	0
Serious physical violence (e.g. attacking, hitting, kicking or throwing objects)	0	0	1	99	0

*Comment:* n=875. As percentages in the tables are rounded to the nearest whole percent, the total may not always add up to 100 percent

While explicit physical violence was rare, a few survey comments brought up that they experienced an increased threat when covering demonstrations. Based on these comments, hostile attitudes towards media and journalists had been manifested as pushing, shoving, tripping and verbal aggression during such protests.

Having discussed the occurrence of physical and non-physical methods of external interference, the following sections focus on institutional and economic pressure exercised against journalists. Institutional pressure refers to methods of interference operating through societal institutions, such as the legal system or media self-regulation. Table 6 summarises the survey results concerning this kind of interference.

**Table 6.** *Institutional forms of external interference (per cent)*

	Regularly	Once every six months	Once a year or less	Never	Don't know/No opinion
Threatening with or issuing a complaint to the Finnish Council for Mass Media with intent to pressure	3	5	26	65	0
Threatening with or commencing legal action	2	4	29	65	0
Threatening with or suing for damages or compensation	1	3	21	75	0

*Comment:* n=875. As percentages in the tables are rounded to the nearest whole per cent, the total may not always add up to 100 per cent.

Judicial pressure seems to be used occasionally, with 35 per cent of respondents having been threatened with court cases and 25 per cent with lawsuits for damages at least once during the reference period. The Finnish Council for Mass Media (2016) has acknowledged a rising trend in using their self-regulatory procedures to pressure and harass journalists. As a result, the Council has publicly declared that complaints made with these motives will be discarded outright.

The survey also asked respondents about experiences of different kinds of economic pressure. Table 7 shows the prevalence of economic pressure exercised towards journalists and editors, such as attempts to influence content by offering gifts or threatening to negatively affect sponsors to withdraw support for the media outlet in question.

*Table 7. Economic forms of external interference (per cent)*

	Regularly	Once every six months	Once a year or less	Never	Don't know/No opinion
Threats of loss of subscribers or audiences for media outlets	11	9	22	52	6
Threats of loss of advertisements and sponsors or other economic sanctions for media outlets	4	7	19	62	8
Offers of economically valuable benefits or gifts	2	6	18	73	1
Explicit offers of economic benefits in exchange for influence over journalistic content (bribery)	0	0	5	94	0

*Comment:* n=875. As percentages in the tables are rounded to the nearest whole per cent, the total may not always add up to 100 per cent.

Significant differences can be observed in the frequencies of explicit bribery attempts and gift-giving with implicit expectations of positive coverage. Luostarinen (1994) states that a considerable grey area exists between material corruption and normal journalistic practices involving free items, such as sample products and services and event and travel tickets. However, the comments indicated that the acceptance of even minor gifts prompted self-reflection on ethical considerations, highlighting the significance of professional ethics. In the WJS study, Finnish journalists identified taking money from a source as the most indefensible ethical violation, with 99 per cent of journalists condemning it under any circumstances (Pöyhtäri et al., 2014: 20).

Against the background of these findings on the occurrence of various types of external interference, the next section discusses respondents' strategies and routines to manage external attempts to interfere with journalistic work.

## *2. Reactions to external interference*

This section discusses how the respondents manage external interference in their daily work. As shown in Table 8, such strategies may include reporting incidences of interference to colleagues or superiors, adjusting content or making the interference publicly known by reporting or writing about it.

**Table 8.** *Reactions to external interference (per cent)*

	Regularly	Once every six months	Once a year or less	Never	Don't know/No opinion
How often have you told your colleagues about incidents of external interference?	14	15	42	28	2
How often have you let interviewees alter their citations without journalistic grounds?	11	12	27	47	3
How often have you told your editor or employer about incidents of external interference?	10	12	44	32	3
How often have you altered journalism pieces in some way due to external interference?	5	7	23	63	2
How often has your editor or employer altered your journalism pieces against your will due to external interference?	2	3	17	75	4
How often have you published accounts of the interference you have encountered (e.g. in journalism pieces)?	1	2	16	80	2
How often has your editor or employer decided not to publish your journalism pieces against your will due to external interference?	0	1	7	89	3
How often have you decided to not publish journalism pieces due to external interference?	0	0	11	88	1

*Comment:* n=875. As percentages in the tables are rounded to the nearest whole per cent, the total may not always add up to 100 per cent.

Strategies of altering journalistic content before publication are closely related to demands to pre-screen content before publication. Based on the open answers, respondents often made concessions to alter trivial details or wordings. Perhaps more worrisome were incidents of pieces not being published at all, or when editors and owners interfered (i.e. causing mixed interference). The comments concerning this issue described incidents of superiors giving in to external interference, often due to the perceived economic and political incentives or leverage wielded by the perpetrators. The quote below is one example of such a situation:

Commercialism is a huge challenge to local radio stations that are dependent on ad revenue. All programmes and interviewees are planned on the basis of who advertises on the channel. We are not allowed to let anybody else on air. I feel that the editorial staff does not have any say when it comes to choosing interviewees [...]. (translation by author)

The respondents described these as demoralising experiences, breaching ethical obligations to the public and creating a source of mistrust towards editors and management.



This indicated that even minor concessions to external actors were easily interpreted as questioning journalists' professionalism or as indicating lack of editorial or managerial support.

Some respondents stated that external actors strategically exploited the perceived weaknesses in the editorial chain of command. Instead of pressuring reporters, they directly approached editors and owners. In a study exploring the relationships and dynamics between the power elite and the media in Finland (Kunelius et al., 2010), elite interviewees described Finnish journalism as mostly autonomous but acknowledged that well-timed strategic contacts and behind-the-scenes communication with editors could be used to balance or subdue critical reporting. This was in line with the survey responses indicating that complete abandonment of stories was rare compared to making alterations, such as toning down critical stories, excluding some sensitive elements or facts and reporting in a less controversial manner.

### *3. Perceived implications of external interference*

This section focuses on journalists' perceptions of how external interference may affect their work or the journalistic profession in general, measured using a standard Likert scale. Table 9 summarises the responses to questions concerning the perceived implications of external interference.

Over one sixth (17%) of the respondents agreed that they felt uncomfortable when reporting on certain subjects and viewpoints, and 14 per cent reported performing self-censorship due to the risk of interference. More than two-thirds (69%) expressed concerns about how external interference affects the credibility of Finnish journalism, several comments attributing this to increased commercial and PR influence and perceived audience hostility towards journalists.

When reflecting on whether the audience has the right to know about attempts of external interference, the respondents stressed careful consideration, ethical discretion and a sense of proportion. The survey comments often specified that matters should be made public only in cases where interference was exceptionally aggressive, or the perpetrator had a position with substantial societal power (see Mäntylä, 2008). Ill-considered or excessive focus on interference was often seen as diverting public attention from more important issues to journalism itself. Some noted that politicians, officials and corporations naturally try to influence their media portrayal, so the respondents dismissed interference as "part of the job" or "just business". A few respondents pointed out that Finnish journalistic culture might be experiencing a cultural shift regarding this matter (see also Koivunen, 2017):

Politicians have always made angry phone calls to editors/reporters. [...] according to my observations, younger journalists do not consider these as part of normal professional interaction anymore. I think this is a healthy development. Considering this cultural change, I think that the strong emotional reaction of [prime minister] Sipilä deserved a public treatment. (translation by author)

Survey respondents were generally confident in their ability and that of their media outlets to resist and ward off external interference. However, some statements revealed distinctly polarised trends among journalists on whether the external interference

Experiences of External Interference Among Finnish Journalists

**Table 9.** *Perceived implications of external interference (per cent)*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/No opinion
I am confident that my editor or employer will support me from external interference.	46	31	5	9	6	2
My media outlet does not hand over control of journalistic decisions to external actors under any circumstances.	43	25	8	12	4	7
I am worried about the effects of external interference on the credibility of journalism in Finland.	26	43	8	14	6	3
External interference does not affect my journalistic work in any way.	26	30	13	23	4	4
The audience has a right to know about all incidents of external interference; therefore, they should always be made public.	20	34	16	21	3	6
External interference increases the mental strain of my work.	15	32	15	16	17	5
The credibility of my media outlet would decrease if all the concessions made due to external interference were made public.	15	18	16	21	16	15
I have consciously developed methods and strategies to ward off external interference.	10	34	21	12	14	9
Advertisers and sponsors are able to influence the journalism my media outlet produces.	9	24	11	24	24	8
Warding off external interference is part of journalistic professionalism; therefore, incidents of interference should not be made public.	9	31	18	27	7	7
The amount of external interference I encounter in my work has increased during the past three years.	8	25	18	19	20	9
My managing editor, editor or supervisor gives in to external interference more easily than I do.	8	22	15	15	21	18
Politicians are able to influence the journalism my media outlet produces.	5	19	9	31	30	6
I prefer not to report about certain topics or present certain viewpoints due to external interference.	4	13	11	25	44	3
I have altered or removed something from my journalism pieces as I feared external interference.	2	12	9	24	51	3

*Comment:* n=875. As percentages in the tables are rounded to the nearest whole per cent, the total may not always add up to 100 per cent.

personally encountered by journalists has increased during the past three years (33% agree, 39% disagree) and whether external interference increases the mental strain of journalists' work (47% agree, 33% disagree). These results might indicate a division among journalists between those who are encountering increasing levels of interference and those who hardly encounter it at all. Previous studies in Western countries have suggested a connection between certain topics, labelled "trigger subjects" (Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016), and news as being associated with higher levels of interference, intimidation and harassment (Parker, 2015). This was supported by several survey respondents listing subjects and themes prone to generate external interference. In a 2016 survey, almost 40 per cent of threats received by members of the Union of Journalists in Finland were connected to coverage of immigration or multiculturalism. However, nearly half of the reported threats were connected to subjects other than the pre-given options, such as sexual minorities, religion, equality issues, healthcare, social security and Russia. The findings therefore highlight the wide range of seemingly random topics that generate threats (Marttinen, 2016).

## Discussion and conclusion

According to the survey, the most common types of external interference were low-level interference in relation to source relations and access to information, and mediated verbal abuse. Overall, the majority of the various types of external interference were encountered only rarely and sporadically by Finnish journalists.

Despite the relative rarity of interference, we need to look beyond the immediate and direct effects. The consequences of interference are highly complex and mediated by factors such as societal climate, journalistic culture, perceived organisational support, professional identity and various individual-level factors (Parker, 2015). In particular acts of public harassment, defamation and intimidation can be seen as strategic communicational actions intended to send a message not only to the victim but to other journalists as well. (e.g. Kodellas et al., 2014; Nerone, 1994). The indirect consequences of interference and harassment can have a cumulative effect, fostering a culture of anxiety and self-censorship and producing a chilling effect on public discourse (see Clark & Grech, 2017; Landsverk-Hagen, 2015; Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring, 2016). This type of dynamic was also reflected in some of the survey comments, as demonstrated below:

There is not that much external interference, but because of the general polarisation of the societal atmosphere I am not that keen to tell anybody that I am a journalist [...] It has become clearer that your occupation can be a threat to your safety. This is a psychological shift that has taken place over recent years [...]  
(translation by author)

This study has a number of limitations. Data collected through self-report surveys are prone to perceptual bias and individual differences when interpreting questions and deciding what to report. Excluding the comments, the survey did not distinguish between different sources, contexts or locales of interference. More elusive methods of influence that might be defined as interference in some contexts but not in others are especially difficult to measure. Whereas, for instance, incidents of explicit violence can be measured quite straightforwardly, the lines between maintaining good source relations and

giving in to external interference and between ethical considerations and self-censorship can be blurry (e.g. Berkowitz, 2009). In addition, the lack of longitudinal data makes it impossible to identify any possible shifts or changes.

Further research is needed to explore the patterns and mechanisms revealed by the results. The next phase ought to focus on connections between various individual- and organisational-level factors and the degree to which journalists experience different types of external interference. In addition, future research should be conducted to account for the lack of qualitative understanding of external interference especially in the context of Western democratic countries.

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## Notes

1. As defined by Chadwick (2017: 3-5), a hybrid media system is characterised by complex interdependence and a constant adaptation process between old and new forms of media. The proliferation of online communication and social media has blurred the lines between media producers and audiences, making it possible for new kinds of actors to participate in creating, steering and manipulating information flows.
2. For detailed account of study methodology, see WJS (2018).
3. The processing of quantitative survey data was conducted by research assistant, doctoral candidate Aleksi Suuronen (M.Soc.Sc).
4. The estimated organisation rate of journalists in Finland is approximately 90 per cent (Pöyhkäri et al., 2014: 4). The membership register of the Union of Journalists in Finland is the most exhaustive and up-to-date national database of Finnish journalists.
5. “Your work involves essential journalistic features and is professional in nature. ‘Professional’ in this context means that a significant portion of your earnings derive from such work that has essential journalistic qualities” (The Union of Journalists in Finland, 2017). All editors’ associations’ membership criteria included a managing position in a media outlet.
6. It should be noted that several WJS-surveys conducted *online only* had similar or lower response rates (e.g. Netherlands 10%, UK 8% Italy 3.8%).
7. Based on the membership statistics from 2015. To determine the age structure, employment type, employing media outlet and position, a limited sample was used omitting members (e.g. technical personnel, etc.) whose professional description was deemed not relevant to the scope of the study.
8. As stated before, some journalists in management positions cannot be accepted as union members, which largely explains their low share in union membership.
9. Pre-publication screening of journalistic content follows the Finnish Council for Mass Media’s (2017) ethical guidelines: “It is worthwhile consenting to interviewees’ requests to read their statements prior to publication, if the editorial deadline permits. This right only concerns the personal statements of the interviewee, and the final journalistic decision cannot be surrendered to any party outside the editorial office”. In practice, this is often done by emailing the citations or the whole piece to allow interviewees to correct or clarify their statements. In this article, pre-screening refers to this practice.

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# Differences Based on Individual- and Organizational-level Factors in Experiences of External Interference among Finnish Journalists

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores the degree to which journalists in Finland experience different types of external interference and how they perceive the implications of interference. For this study, external interference is defined as all active and invasive methods that external actors use to influence journalists and interfere in the journalistic processes to influence editorial content. By using Finland as a case example, this article provides new empirical evidence on how external interference manifests in the contemporary journalistic environment in a democratic Western country with strong safeguards for press autonomy. Based on the statistical analysis of survey responses from 875 Finnish journalists, the results indicate that individual-level factors of age and gender have only a marginal relation to the prevalence of external interference. Of analyzed organizational-level factors—employment type, occupational position, and media outlet used for reporting—the latter two were most significant. This article offers three important empirical contributions: (1) it highlights the existence of editorial defense shield as journalistic practice; (2) it illustrates the complex relationship between gender and external interference; and (3) it demonstrates how journalists in national and regional newspapers are more prone to interference than their colleagues in other media outlets.


## KEYWORDS

Journalism (profession); autonomy; interference; survey; harassment; intimidation

## Introduction

Journalistic autonomy can be understood as the professional aspiration of journalists to protect their work from any attempts of manipulation or interference (Kunelius 2003, 23). As the societal environment is changing due to technological, social, political, and cultural developments, these transitions are reflected in the journalistic work and professional autonomy of journalists (Reich and Hanitzsch 2013; Waisbord 2013; Nygren, Dobek-Ostrowska, and Anikina 2015). The techniques of manipulation and interference that journalists face are also constantly shifting, and new methods are frequently introduced

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(Luostarinen 1994, 73). Empirical research systematically assessing new challenges and threats to journalistic autonomy is therefore needed to identify these shifts and develop effective responses.

In the contemporary communication environment, the authority, position, and power of traditional media actors is restructuring (Chadwick 2017), and journalistic work is transitioning from monologue to more of a dialogue with audiences (Nygren, Dobek-Ostrowska, and Anikina 2015, 79). Especially online, journalists are more visible and accessible than ever and find their choices, credibility, and integrity more often publicly contested (Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016, 881). Working in online environment exposes journalists to new detrimental phenomena like crowdsourced harassment (e.g., Binns 2017), hate speech (e.g., Obermaier, Hofbauer, and Reinemann 2018), cyberstalking and state-sponsored trolling campaigns (e.g., Luque Martinez 2015) and gendered harassment (e.g., Adams 2018; Chen et al. 2018).

Multiple organizations compile statistics on extreme intimidation of journalists, but systematic investigations or statistical monitoring of any of the less severe forms of interference and manipulation have been rare (Parker 2015, 3). The lack of previous research is especially true in the context of democratic and stable Western societies, where external pressure and threats have rarely been studied or discussed (Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016) and there has long existed a tendency to take journalistic autonomy for granted (Reich and Hanitzsch 2013, 133–134).

This research represents an exploratory attempt to empirically study external interference and its perceived implications among Finnish journalists. Nordic countries generally rank high in measures of media freedom, and Finland topped *the World Press Freedom Index* seven consecutive times, from 2009 to 2016 (Reporters Without Borders [RSF] 2016). Systemic factors supporting media autonomy and freedom in Finland include strong position of public service broadcast media, high newspaper circulation, high levels of professionalism, institutional self-regulation with independent press council and low political parallelism in media (Nord 2008). These are reflected in the journalistic culture, as Finnish journalists report a high degree of perceived professional autonomy and seem to regard themselves distant from direct political, government, and business influences (Pöyhtäri, Ahva, and Väliverronen 2014). In comparison, Finnish journalists feel less economic pressure than journalists in non-Nordic countries where press freedom is high, indicating that the influence of commercialization and growing competitiveness are moderated by the traditions and structural particularities of the Nordic media system (Ahva et al. 2017, 607). However, new concerns have arisen in Finland due to perceived increase in anti-media rhetoric, and harassment, intimidation, and public defamation targeting journalists (see e.g., Haapalainen 2016). These concerns highlight new challenges and threats to journalistic autonomy brought on by the contemporary communication environment.

By using Finland as a case example, this research seeks to demonstrate how external interference manifests in the contemporary journalistic environment within a democratic Western country that has strong legal, cultural, and institutional safeguards for press autonomy. Expanding on previous research (Hiltunen 2019), this article uses statistical analysis to explore differences in experiences of external interference and its implications based on individual- and organizational-level factors. This approach provides valuable new

empirical insights to the contemporary journalistic environment and pinpoints developments that deserve further attention.

The research questions are as follows:

- (1) What kind of differences, based on individual-level factors (age or gender) and organizational-level factors (employment type, medium used for reporting or occupational position), can be observed in **experiences** of external interference among Finnish journalists?
- (2) What kind of differences, based on individual-level factors (age or gender) and organizational-level factors (employment type, medium used for reporting or occupational position), can be observed in **perceived implications** of external interference on journalistic work and the journalistic profession?

By answering these research questions, this article explores the connections that can be identified between experiences of external interference and its perceived implications among different groups and seeks to recognize factors that contribute to these connections. This article contributes to an ongoing discussion surrounding journalistic autonomy in the contemporary communication environment and threats to press freedom in Europe and Western democracies.

The article is structured as follows: We begin by outlining the theoretical framework of the study and the concept of external interference, and present previous research conducted on the subject. This segment is followed by an introduction to our methodology, the research sample, and an analysis of our findings.

## **Theoretical Framework: External Interference**

Journalistic autonomy acts as a fundamental building block of the shared professional ideology of modern journalism that, besides autonomy, consists of public service, objectivity, immediacy, and ethics (Deuze 2005). Of these elements, objectivity especially is considered problematic and there are ongoing debates regarding the prospect of objectivity and whether it should be replaced by ideals such as “neutrality”, “fairness”, “professional detachment” or “impartiality” (Deuze 2005, 448; Boudana 2011). However, both objectivity and the proposed alternatives share similar underlying notion that highlights the importance of independent decision-making based on autonomous journalistic deliberation. Autonomy can, therefore, be understood as a necessary prerequisite that makes ethical consideration, independent reporting, and serving shared public interests instead of private ones possible, thus enabling features that separate journalism from other forms of mass communication (Kunelius 2003, 23–25).

The professional ideology of journalism and its ability to create a collective public forum for diverse interests makes it an attractive target for interference (Luostarinen 1994, 28–29). The audience expectations for journalism are radically different compared, for example, to advertising or political communication that are fundamentally recognized as partisan and persuasive forms of communication (Kunelius 2003, 23–25). Therefore, the benefits of being able to steer or influence journalism to one’s benefit or strategically silence it can be significant (Luostarinen 1994, 53–56).

Studies typically separate two analytical dimensions of journalistic autonomy—external and internal. The external dimension is related to societal and political autonomy of journalism and how protected journalists are from coercive forces external to journalistic organizations. The internal dimension highlights the extent to which journalists can make their decisions free from management pressures and other forces inside media outlets (Reich and Hanitzsch 2013, 135; Nygren, Dobek-Ostrowska, and Anikina 2015, 80–81).

This study focuses on the external dimension of autonomy and explores methods that external actors use while trying to transgress the boundaries of journalistic autonomy. For this purpose, external interference is defined broadly as all active and invasive methods actors external to journalistic organizations use to interfere in the journalistic process and/or influence journalists and/or editorial content (see also Luostarinen 1994; Shoemaker and Reese 1996). Mixed interference, defined as situations in which external interference is transmitted internally through media organization's chain of command, is also included within the scope of the study (Hemánus 1983, 192). Typical example of mixed interference would be a situation in which an editor after being subjected to external pressure orders reporters to stop investigating certain case or topic (Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2018; see also Kuutti 1995, 248). Methods of external interference can also be used pre-emptively to induce chilling effect and self-censorship among journalists with the aim of influencing journalism in the future (Nerone 1994; Clark and Grech 2017).

The definition of external interference used in this study emphasizes the individual experience and perspective of the journalist, thus rendering the social phenomenon of external interference accessible to the researcher (c.f. Reich and Hanitzsch 2013, 136). By using this type of a broad definition of external interference, it is possible to simultaneously study low-intensity interference alongside more intrusive and aggressive methods. This allows for a more balanced overall picture of different aspects of the phenomenon in the contemporary journalistic environment. This definition, however, excludes standard supply-side public relations (PR) activities, such as press releases and conferences, information subsidies, and other similar agenda-building efforts. While one can argue that these practices can have significant impact on journalistic content, standard PR-activities do not actively aim to limit or violate external autonomy of journalism and are therefore not included in the scope of this study.

## Previous Research

Urbániková (2019, 4–5) states that studies of journalistic autonomy have typically examined general perceptions of freedom instead of the occurrence and incidence of concrete types of interference or its implications for journalistic work. This is especially true for stable and democratic Western countries, as very few studies have explored the prevalence or effects of external interference in this context. In the following, we will highlight the key findings of previous studies on external interference in the Western context.

Parker (2015) studied 286 working journalists from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and found that 63 percent (60 percent of women and 68 percent of men) reported experiencing occupational intimidation, defined as “behaviors that pressure or threaten individuals with harm or sanctions in order to discourage the carrying out of certain job duties”. No connections were discovered between



individual-level factors like age, gender or ethnic background, and occupational intimidation, but male journalists reported more physical intimidation, suggesting that gender might be a risk factor for high-intensity intimidation behaviors. Employment type did not affect occupational intimidation. Type of story covered was a strong risk factor, as journalists covering politics, war/international affairs, human rights, and investigative reporting reported increased levels of occupational intimidation. Experiences of occupational intimidation were negatively related to job performance. Based on the findings, Parker concludes that, among journalists, occupational intimidation is mainly instrumental aggression used to achieve some desired objectives or goals related to journalism, and therefore is not primarily motivated by the demographic characteristics of journalists.

Clark and Grech (2017) studied experiences of unwarranted interference among 940 journalists in Council of Europe member states and Belarus. Clark and Grech found that respondents from Western European EU and non-EU countries reported a high prevalence of threats of violence, psychological violence, cyber bullying and sexual harassment during the past three years. Although this region had the second-lowest levels of self-censorship and other direct effects on journalistic work, a considerable share of journalists admitted to, for example, toning down critical stories, and being selective about reporting because of interference. Among all respondents, male journalists were significantly more likely to be threatened with force, intimidated by police, and experience physical assault, while female journalists were more likely to experience sexual harassment and/or violence. In response to interference, male journalists were more likely than females to report in a less controversial manner, abandon sensitive, critical stories and be selective about what items to report. Veteran journalists with over ten years of work experience were more likely to report physical assault, threats with force and intimidation by police during the reference period than their less-experienced colleagues.

A study comprising almost 1500 Swedish journalists (Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016) found that 80 percent of male journalists and 72 percent of female journalists had received abusive comments, and 31 percent had received threats during the 12-month reference period. No gender-based differences were found in the frequency of the threats. Journalists working in tabloids and metropolitan morning dailies were more likely to receive threats, with 71 percent of journalists working in the former and 48 percent in the latter having received at least one threat during the reference period. Freelancers and journalists working in different kinds of magazines were less likely to receive threats, with 20 percent having been threatened. The same patterns applied to abusive comments. The occupational position was a significant factor, as columnists and op-ed writers, followed closely by managers, reported more threats and abusive comments. The results indicate that high-profile journalists with increased visibility are more likely to be verbally abused and threatened.

Studying Norwegian journalists, Landsverk-Hagen (2015) found that close to half (43 percent of men and 44 percent of women) of the 1341 studied journalists reported having experienced online harassment, defamation or verbal abuse, and a quarter (27 percent of men and 23 percent of women) had received threats during the past five years. Regarding self-censorship and chilling effects, 44 percent of Norwegian journalists answered that harassment and threats do not affect their journalism in any way, while 20 percent reported that they would think twice before publishing because of harassment, and 14 percent reported they had felt directly or indirectly silenced by reactions from the public.

Studying contemporary journalism in US and Germany, Revers (2017) observed journalists using resistance tactic conceptualized as editorial defense shield against external pressure. Journalists with strong confidence in their editors' and organization's professional integrity and support were able to utilize this as an asset when faced with external interference. When threatened by external actors, editors sprung to their defense and bore the brunt of the consequences, shielding journalists working for them from external pressure. Similar practice in the context of Finnish journalism has been previously discussed by Kuutti (1995, 246).

As the previous research on the relations between individual- and organizational-level factors and external interference is inconclusive, this article seeks to provide new empirical evidence strengthening the understanding of these connections and their impact on the working conditions of journalists.

## Methodology

The detailed account of our study design, comprehensive breakdown of the survey sample, complete survey questionnaire, and data that support the findings are openly available in the institutional repository of Tampere University (Hiltunen and Suuronen 2019). In this article, we examine differences in experiences of external interference in four thematic categories: non-physical interference (questions 10–20 in the questionnaire), physical interference (questions 21–26), institutional interference (questions 27–29), and economic interference (questions 30–33) (*ibid.*, 83–84). Journalists' perceptions of how external interference may affect their work or the journalistic profession in general (questions 42–56), were measured using a standard Likert scale (*ibid.*, 86).

The survey was conducted using an anonymous online self-report questionnaire in Finnish, consisting of 56 closed multiple-choice questions and four optional fields for open-ended comments. The survey method was chosen because incidents of low-intensity interference and harassment, in particular, often go unreported and unrecorded, and self-report surveys are useful tools to uncover previously undocumented personal experiences and perceptions (Clark and Grech 2017, 26).

The data were collected between 13 and 26 March 2017. The reference period in the questionnaire was the past three years (2014–2017), which was considered sufficiently long to provide a consistent overview while mitigating possible reliability issues. As the Union of Journalists in Finland and three Finnish editors' associations technically administered the survey, the definition of journalist used in this study was consistent with the union's or editors' association membership requirements.<sup>1</sup> Pöyhkäri, Ahva, and Väliiveronen (2014) estimated that working journalists in Finland number roughly 8000, indicating that the total of 8275 survey recipients included close to the whole national population.

A total of 875 responses were received, representing a participation rate of 10.6 percent. Moreover, 353 respondents (40 percent) provided one or more text comments to supplement their responses. The response rate was objectively low, even for a web-based survey (*cf.* Cook, Heath, and Thompson 2000), which should be kept in mind when examining the findings. However, Krosnick (1999) states that surveys with low response rates can yield useful data, highlighting the importance of sample composition.

The representative sample constructed for *the Worlds of Journalism* (WJS) study (Pöyhkäri, Ahva, and Väliiveronen 2014) and the Union of Journalists in Finland membership

statistics were used as reference points to assess the survey sample. This comparison indicated that the survey sample matched the proportions of the estimated target population reasonably well, with regard to factors like gender, age, occupational position, employment type, and medium used for reporting. The comparison is illustrated in Table 1.

While the proportional similarities do not make the sample representative of the population of Finnish journalists, they increase confidence in that no one group dominated the sample or skewed the results significantly. The sample contains substantial internal variety, including a significant number of responses from typically hard-to-reach groups, such as editors-in-chief. This diversity supports the research aim of exploring variations in experiences and perceived implications based on different individual- and organizational-level factors.

Nonetheless, the survey sample has several limitations due to the non-probability, self-selection sampling method, and the low overall response rate. All surveys are prone to biases derived from issue salience and nonresponse, which can lead to more input from respondents with a personal connection to, or extreme opinions on, the subject (Cook, Heath, and Thompson 2000). The cover letter explicitly encouraged participation, even if the recipient had no personal experience of any external interference, to minimize such effects. It is still possible that the amount of external interference experienced by journalists in the survey sample might be higher than in the whole population, reducing the ability to generalize from the sample to the whole population (Sivo et al. 2006).

Data collected through self-report surveys are always prone to perceptual bias and individual differences when interpreting questions and deciding what to report. To provide more consistent data and to combat biases, the survey questions regarding experiences of external interference included descriptions of methods of interference (Hiltunen and Suuronen 2019, 80–87). These questions were developed and formulated based on the pre-survey interviews, consultations and pilot test of the survey (see *ibid.* 8–9). We are confident that this helped to alleviate the problems related to individual differences in interpretation and the possible ambiguity regarding to the concept, as the survey questionnaire provided the respondents clearly defined framework of methods considered external interference in the context of this study.

**Table 1.** Survey sample in comparison.

	Survey sample	WJS sample (Finland)	Union of Journalists in Finland members <sup>a</sup>
Gender distribution (Female/Male)	57/43%	55/45%	57/43%
Dominant age group (36–55 years)	54%	61%	55%
Salaried employees	81%	82%	81%
Freelancers or entrepreneurs	15%	17%	18%
Working for newspapers or magazines	65%	69%	67%
Working for broadcasting (including public broadcasting)	23%	23%	32%
Position as reporter, special reporter, or visual journalist	68%	72%	76%
Managerial position (Managing editor, producer, editor-in-chief)	28%	24%	15% <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Based on the detailed membership statistics from 2015. To determine the age structure, employment type, medium used for reporting and occupational position, a limited sample was used omitting members (e.g., technical personnel, etc.) whose professional description was deemed not relevant to the scope of the study.

<sup>b</sup>Journalists who exercise significant power over terms of employment cannot be accepted as union members, which largely explains the low share of journalists with managerial positions in union membership.

Additionally, it should be noted that the frequency of certain elements of journalistic work logically increases the likelihood of journalists encountering certain types of interference. For example, a journalist regularly reporting from the field is more likely to experience physical interference than one that rarely leaves her or his desk. This was not controlled in the study. To improve the internal validity of the survey respondents were given the option to answer “Don’t know/No opinion” when the question was not applicable or relevant to their work as a journalist.

Because of these limitations and the lack of previous empirical research on the subject, the findings should be considered as indicative and illustrative rather than representative and definitive.

To identify differences in reported experiences of external interference based on individual- (age or gender) and organizational- (employment type, medium used for reporting or occupational position) level factors, we conducted extensive cross-tabulation with chi-square tests of the complete survey data. For the purposes of this analysis, responses of “once in six months”, “once in three months,” “once a month” and “once a week or more frequently” were combined to form a category of “every six months or more often” and responses of “Don’t know / No opinion” were removed. The perceived implications of external interference measured using standard Likert scale were analyzed using non-parametric versions of the Student’s t-test and Analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests due to non-normally distributed data and a lack of appropriate interval or ratio scale variables. Mann–Whitney U test was used to identify differences between two groups (gender) and Kruskal–Wallis H test to identify differences between groups of three or more (age, employment type, medium used for reporting, and occupational position). The most common critical value of  $p < 0.05$  was used (with a 95 percent confidence level) as a statistical significance threshold for all tests.

## Findings

The findings are presented in two sections: (1) experiences of external interference, and (2) perceived implications of external interference. The first section, exploring experiences, is further divided into four thematic subsections: (1) non-physical interference (2) physical interference, (3) institutional interference, and (4) economic interference. Selected tables are included in this article to demonstrate key findings of the analysis. As the percentages in the tables are rounded to the nearest whole, the total may not always add up to 100 percent. Direct extracts from open survey comments translated by the authors are used to illustrate how respondents reflected on the survey themes.

### *Experiences of External Interference*

#### *Non-physical Interference*

Non-physical methods of external interference included verbal pressure and abuse, intimidation, defamation, and other non-physical methods of interference directed toward journalists. Respondents most commonly reported experiences of non-physical interference.

Statistically significant difference between age groups in non-physical interference can be observed on organized feedback campaigns. However, these findings do not suggest straightforward connection between age and this method of interference, as the second-

youngest age group of 36–45 years had the largest percentage of respondents having experienced organized feedback campaigns (30 percent had experienced this at least once during observation period), but respondents in the two oldest age groups (46–55 and 56 years or over) reported experiencing them most frequently (9 percent of respondents in these groups experienced them every six months or more frequently).

No statistically significant differences were observed between genders in methods or frequency of non-physical interference. Staff journalists reported more incidences where their editors or employers had been contacted and pressured than freelancers and entrepreneurs. In addition, staff journalists experienced more organized feedback campaigns and mediated verbal abuse compared to freelancers and entrepreneurs. These differences are likely explained with staff journalists having closer ties to their working community and their superiors and more fixed and prominent position in particular media outlet, which typically increases their visibility and accessibility, both of which are indicated as risk factors for receiving abusive comments (Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016, 884).

Journalists in national and regional newspapers generally experience highest levels of non-physical interference while journalists in magazines experience them less than others. These results are presented in Table 2. When it comes to occupational position, editors-in-chief and special reporters reported highest levels of non-physical interference. These are illustrated in Table 3.

Differences in Table 3 highlight the significance of occupational position. Through their occupational role, editors-in-chief are expected to provide an editorial defense shield (Revers 2017, 162–165) that protects reporters working for them from external interference and therefore must often get involved if other journalists in the media outlet encounter interference (see also Kuutti 1995, 246). As public figures and wielders of the highest journalistic authority in media outlets, editors-in-chief represent their media through their person in public. They are typically more visible than other journalists, suggesting a higher risk of verbal abuse and intimidation.

Additionally, special reporters were more likely to experience non-physical interference than reporters. Typically, special reporters focus more often than reporters on investigative journalism, controversial topics, or stories that might cast some actors in a negative light. These are indicated as risk factors for occupational intimidation (Kuutti 1995; Parker 2015). Also, special reporters often have increased personal visibility due to their status. These factors may explain the elevated levels of non-physical interference among special reporters.

### ***Physical Interference***

In the survey, forms of physical interference included violence, monitoring, or physically interfering with the performance of journalistic work and breaking or tampering with work-related equipment.

Compared to other types of interference, forms of physical interference were reported the least as the vast majority of respondents reported not having experienced such interference at all. Therefore, no differences could be observed between different groups or the low number of observations rendered statistical analyses unreliable.

The only consistent factor producing multiple differences in physical interference was the medium used for reporting. Journalists working in national and regional newspapers reported generally more experiences of unwarranted denial of entry or removal from the

**Table 2.** Key differences in non-physical forms of external interference (medium used for reporting).

Question	Medium used for reporting	Never	Once a year or less	Every six months or more often	Pearson's Chi-squared
Contacting and pressuring the editor, managing editor, or owner of a media outlet	Magazine	51% (n = 142)	41%	8%	$\chi^2 = 33,592$ $p < 0,001$ $df = 8$ $V = 0,153$
	Regional newspaper	31% (n = 134)	38%	31%	
	Local or semi-local newspaper	41% (n = 182)	40%	19%	
	National newspaper	40% (n = 84)	33%	26%	
	YLE	51% (n = 177)	31%	18%	
Threats of negative occupational consequences (e.g., loss of work or journalistic credibility, hampering of future work)	Magazine	82% (n = 147)	14%	5%	$\chi^2 = 30,707$ $p < 0,001$ $df = 8$ $V = 0,143$
	Regional newspaper	58% (n = 138)	30%	12%	
	Local or semi-local newspaper	70% (n = 189)	26%	4%	
	National newspaper	61% (n = 88)	25%	14%	
	YLE	72% (n = 184)	19%	9%	
Face-to-face verbal abuse (e.g., insults, name-calling, and other verbal expressions of hate)	Magazine	77% (n = 148)	19%	4%	$\chi^2 = 25,783$ $p < 0,001$ $df = 8$ $V = 0,131$
	Regional newspaper	56% (n = 142)	30%	13%	
	Local or semi-local newspaper	54% (n = 189)	38%	8%	
	National newspaper	63% (n = 89)	30%	7%	
	YLE	62% (n = 186)	29%	9%	
Mediated verbal abuse (e.g., insults, name-calling, or other verbal expressions of hate through phone calls, letters, email, online comments, social media, and websites)	Magazine	55% (n = 148)	30%	15%	$\chi^2 = 59,834$ $p < 0,001$ $df = 8$ $V = 0,2$
	Regional newspaper	25% (n = 139)	34%	41%	
	Local or semi-local newspaper	38% (n = 188)	37%	26%	
	National newspaper	22% (n = 89)	25%	53%	
	YLE	39% (n = 185)	30%	31%	
Systematic or unusually large volumes of feedback (e.g., organized feedback campaigns)	Magazine	81% (n = 148)	15%	4%	$\chi^2 = 45,841$ $p < 0,001$ $df = 8$ $V = 0,176$
	Regional newspaper	71% (n = 139)	20%	9%	
	Local or semi-local newspaper	84% (n = 188)	13%	3%	
	National newspaper	56% (n = 86)	21%	23%	
	YLE	70% (n = 183)	18%	12%	

Notes: The effect sizes are reported as Cramer's V calculations (V).

**Table 3.** Key differences in non-physical forms of external interference (occupational position).

Question	Occupational position	Never	Once a year or less	Every six months or more often	Pearson's Chi-squared
Contacting and pressuring the editor, managing editor, or owner of a media outlet	Reporter (n = 466)	45%	39%	16%	$\chi^2 = 14.042$ $p = 0.029$ $df = 6$ $V = 0.094$
	Special reporter (n = 92)	39%	35%	26%	
	Manager (n = 153)	42%	40%	18%	
	Editor-in-chief (n = 86)	31%	40%	29%	
Threats of negative occupational consequences (e.g., loss of work or journalistic credibility, hampering of future work)	Reporter (n = 488)	70%	24%	6%	$\chi^2 = 18.752$ $p = 0.005$ $df = 6$ $V = 0.106$
	Special reporter (n = 97)	67%	22%	11%	
	Manager (n = 158)	71%	23%	6%	
	Editor-in-chief (n = 84)	57%	25%	18%	
Face-to-face verbal abuse (e.g., insults, name-calling, and other verbal expressions of hate)	Reporter (n = 489)	64%	29%	7%	$\chi^2 = 25.003$ $p < 0.001$ $df = 6$ $V = 0.122$
	Special reporter (n = 100)	66%	24%	10%	
	Manager (n = 159)	67%	27%	6%	
	Editor-in-chief (n = 86)	41%	41%	19%	
Mediated verbal abuse (e.g., insults, name-calling, or other verbal expressions of hate through phone calls, letters, email, online comments, social media, and websites)	Reporter (n = 484)	40%	34%	26%	$\chi^2 = 20.371$ $p = 0.002$ $df = 6$ $V = 0.111$
	Special reporter (n = 100)	38%	27%	35%	
	Manager (n = 158)	42%	29%	29%	
	Editor-in-chief (n = 86)	23%	29%	48%	
Systematic or unusually large volumes of feedback (e.g., organized feedback campaigns)	Reporter (n = 483)	78%	15%	7%	$\chi^2 = 20.729$ $p = 0.002$ $df = 6$ $V = 0.112$
	Special reporter (n = 99)	72%	14%	14%	
	Manager (n = 156)	75%	17%	8%	
	Editor-in-chief (n = 84)	58%	31%	11%	

Notes: The effect sizes are reported as Cramér's V calculations (V).



scene, monitoring and following while conducting journalistic work, disruptions of work, and physical violence. However, we were not able to reliably confirm if these observations are statistically significant due to the low number of observations.

### ***Institutional Interference***

Institutional interference included methods that operate through the legal system or media self-regulation.

Statistically significant difference between age groups was found in experiences of having been threatened with or sued for damages or compensation. More respondents in the second-oldest age group (46–55 years) reported having experienced this compared to other age groups.

No statistically significant differences based on gender were observed in institutional interference. Staff journalists experienced institutional interference more than freelancers and entrepreneurs did. These differences are likely due to their more fixed employee position, as methods of institutional interference typically target media outlets rather than individual journalists.

Reporting media outlet had a significant effect on institutional interference, with journalists working in national and regional papers generally experiencing it the most and journalists working in magazines the least.

The position in the occupational hierarchy of media outlet was strongly connected to experiences of institutional interference. As representatives of media outlets, editors-in-chief experienced more institutional interference than other journalists did. Due to their occupational role, institutional interference directed at journalists working for them has typically considered editors' responsibility, providing possible explanation for these findings.

### ***Economic Interference***

Economic interference included attempts to influence journalism with positive or negative economic sanctions.

Age seems to be connected with receiving offers of economically valuable benefits or gifts, as the youngest age group of under 36 years had the largest share of respondents (34 percent) having experienced this and most respondents (16 percent) experiencing this every six months or more often. No statistically significant differences were observed between genders in economic interference. Freelancers were less likely to be threatened with the loss of subscribers or audiences than staff journalists were, likely because of their looser affiliation with specific media outlets.

Journalists working in regional and local or semi-local newspapers had the biggest share of respondents having been threatened with loss of subscribers or sponsors and advertisers. Also, respondents from national newspapers reported higher numbers compared to journalists working in magazines and in Finland's national public broadcasting company Yleisradio Oy (YLE). National newspapers had the highest share of journalists that reported having been offered economically valuable benefits or gifts, while YLE had the lowest share of journalists reporting this.

Editors-in-chief and to lesser extent managing editors reported more threats of negative economic sanctions compared to reporters and special reporters. Through their professional role, editors-in-chief typically have responsibilities related to financial matters of

media outlets, which makes targeting them with this type of economic interference understandable. When it comes to offers of economically valuable benefits or gifts, more editors-in-chief compared to other journalists reported experiencing these. However, reporters and visual journalists encountered these offers most frequently (with 11 percent experiencing them every six months or more often).

### ***Perceived Implications of External Interference***

When perceived implications of external interference were analyzed by age groups, several questions produced statistically significant differences. The older age groups were generally more confident that external interference does not affect their journalistic work and reported less passive self-censorship and less concern about the effects of external interference on the credibility of journalism in Finland. Considering that differences between age groups in prevalence of external interference were very limited and sectional, the results indicate that experienced journalists have stronger confidence on their professional integrity and that they perceive external interference less a threat than their younger colleagues.

While no significant differences were observed in prevalence or methods of external interference between genders, female journalists held consistently more negative perceived implications of interference. These are shown in Table 4.

Multiple explanations can be offered for these findings. With history as a male-dominated industry, the journalistic profession has been associated with masculine virtues, requiring thick skin, toughness, and refusal to submit to external authority (Ross and de Bruin 2004). Male journalists may be especially reluctant to report negative emotions and effects caused by external interference or admit to self-censorship (see Binns 2017), considering this professional ethos.

In addition, external interference experienced by female journalists may have qualitative differences, not quantitatively accounted for by this study. Survey comments support this interpretation, especially regarding online verbal abuse and threats:

People who send threatening messages [...] can be described as active online racists and misogynists.  
(Special reporter, Female)

[...] At the worst, there were online discussions about raping me.  
(Reporter, Female)

Threats are usually verbal. Insinuations that your life expectancy or health will bear the consequences or calling me a whore and spouting inappropriate tits-pussy-ass-slurs.  
(Managing editor, Female)

Studies have identified gendered differences with female journalists more often targeted with sexist abuse and threats of sexualized violence, indicating the pervasiveness of sexist and misogynist discourse (Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016; Adams 2018; Chen et al. 2018). These qualitative differences can partially explain why Binns (2017) found that female journalists targeted with online abuse reported stronger emotional reactions, feeling upset, intimidated, or angry more often. Obermaier, Hofbauer, and Reinemann (2018, 515) found that German female journalists exposed to hate speech tended to

**Table 4.** Key differences in perceived implications of external interference (gender).

Question	Gender	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Mann-Whitney U
The amount of external interference I encounter in my work has increased in the last three years.	Male (n = 346)	25%	25%	22%	21%	8%	U = 65914 p < 0.001
	Female (n = 449)	20%	18%	18%	33%	10%	z = -3.76 r = 0.133
I have consciously developed methods and strategies to ward off external interference.	Male (n = 338)	18%	16%	24%	30%	12%	U = 69717 p = 0.01
	Female (n = 460)	14%	12%	22%	42%	10%	z = -2.585 r = 0.092
External interference does not affect my journalistic work in any way.	Male (n = 361)	4%	20%	10%	30%	36%	U = 101375 p < 0.001
	Female (n = 478)	4%	27%	16%	32%	21%	z = 4.499 z = 2.858 r = 0.155
I am confident that my editor or employer will support me from external interference.	Male (n = 365)	5%	8%	3%	32%	52%	U = 98311 p = 0.004
	Female (n = 487)	7%	11%	7%	32%	44%	z = 2.858 r = 0.098
External interference increases the mental strain of my work.	Male (n = 357)	21%	18%	17%	31%	13%	U = 74549 p = 0.002
	Female (n = 475)	15%	17%	15%	35%	19%	z = -3.071 r = 0.106
Advertisers and sponsors are able to influence the journalism that my media outlet produces.	Male (n = 347)	28%	30%	10%	24%	8%	U = 71520 p = 0.011
	Female (n = 459)	24%	23%	14%	27%	12%	z = -2.551 r = 0.09
I prefer not to report about certain topics or present certain viewpoints due to external interference.	Male (n = 360)	51%	24%	9%	11%	4%	U = 78581 p = 0.009
	Female (n = 484)	42%	26%	13%	15%	4%	z = -2.595 r = 0.089
I have altered or removed something from my journalism pieces as I feared external interference.	Male (n = 366)	60%	22%	6%	10%	2%	U = 76601 p < 0.001
	Female (n = 485)	46%	27%	11%	14%	2%	z = -3.732 r = 0.128
My media outlet does not hand over control of journalistic decisions to external actors under any circumstances.	Male (n = 350)	5%	11%	7%	21%	55%	U = 90119 p = 0.001
	Female (n = 458)	4%	14%	10%	31%	41%	z = 3.24 r = 0.114
I am worried about the effects of external interference on the credibility of journalism in Finland.	Male (n = 366)	8%	19%	8%	42%	23%	U = 76892 p < 0.001
	Female (n = 482)	4%	12%	9%	46%	29%	z = -3.3947 r = 0.117

Notes: The effect sizes are calculated as correlation coefficients (*r*).

use both emotionally focused, and problem focused coping strategies more than their male colleagues did, pointing out to an increased need to address hate speech on a psychological and social level.

Employment type seems to have an effect on perceived implications of interference, as journalists working as freelancers or entrepreneurs expressed consistently less confidence in their superiors and their media outlets ability to resist external interference. One possible explanation for this is that their looser connection with journalistic organizations and specific media outlets does not provide similar conditions for building reciprocal trust as staff journalists have.

Editors-in-chief and journalists in managing positions expressed high trust on their superior's support against external interference and had strong confidence in their media outlets ability to ward off interference and its effects to journalism. Differences concerning this are shown in Table 5.

These observations can be reflected against occupational ideals of journalists with managerial responsibilities. As there exists strong professional ideal of editors as safeguards of journalistic autonomy and providers of editorial defense shield, editors-in-chief, managing editors, and producers may be especially hesitant to admit external interference having any effect on them (Revers 2017, 162–165). Additionally, as indicated in previous sections, journalists in managing position may have to deal with external interference more frequently than reporters do and can, therefore, be better accustomed to it.

However, the findings indicate a discontinuity in the confidence level within the organizational command chain. Editors-in-chief expressed strong confidence in their publishers to support them from external interference and managing editors and producers had equally strong confidence on support from editors-in-chief. This strong confidence was not so widely shared by reporters and special reporters. The relationship between editors and reporters can be prone to tension and reporters may, for example, feel that their editors are reluctant or afraid to publish stories that may potentially harm media outlets' relations with advertizers or other external actors (Kuutti 1995, 248).

Journalists' perceptions of how external actors can influence journalism in their media outlets are illustrated in Table 6.

Journalists working in local, semi-local and regional newspapers felt that advertizers and sponsors could influence the journalism of their media outlet more than their colleagues in other media outlets. Kuutti (1995, 249) states that the status and size of a media outlet can have a significant effect on their ability to resist external interference. Local, semi-local, and regional papers are often dependent on a smaller number of companies for advertising than national journalism outlets, and therefore, can be more vulnerable to economic pressure. Several survey comments support this interpretation:

Especially in a local newspaper, managing editors and editors-in-chief are under great pressure from advertisers, and it has effects on journalistic work. Even to the extent, where some advertisers are totally off limits.  
(Producer, Female, Multiple employers)

The biggest threat to journalism is inside the newsroom: weak and incoherent editorial leadership, that bows to advertisers' wishes [...] Because of this, some topics, and even some



**Table 5.** Key differences in perceived implications of external interference (occupational position).

Question	Occupational position	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Kruskal-Wallis H
I have consciously developed methods and strategies to ward off external interference.	Reporter	16%	14%	21%	39%	10%	$H = 10,84$
	Special reporter	14%	18%	23%	31%	13%	$p = 0,013$
	Manager	16%	14%	28%	34%	8%	$df = 3$
	Editor-in-chief	11%	5%	23%	40%	21%	$E^2 = 0,012$
I am confident that my editor or employer will support me from external interference.	Reporter	6%	11%	5%	36%	42%	$H = 14,124$
	Special reporter	9%	10%	6%	32%	43%	$p = 0,003$
	Manager	6%	8%	3%	23%	60%	$df = 3$
	Editor-in-chief	6%	6%	11%	20%	58%	$E^2 = 0,016$
External interference increases the mental strain of my work.	Reporter	17%	17%	17%	34%	15%	$H = 9,6505$
	Special reporter	15%	20%	16%	24%	24%	$p = 0,022$
	Manager	21%	20%	14%	31%	13%	$df = 3$
	Editor-in-chief	9%	13%	12%	49%	16%	$E^2 = 0,011$
The audience has a right to know about all incidents of external interference; therefore, they should always be made public.	Reporter	3%	21%	17%	38%	22%	$H = 14,631$
	Special reporter	4%	24%	11%	36%	24%	$p = 0,002$
	Manager	4%	23%	20%	30%	23%	$df = 3$
	Editor-in-chief	6%	34%	23%	27%	11%	$E^2 = 0,017$
Advertisers and sponsors are able to influence the journalism that my media outlet produces.	Reporter	23%	24%	13%	28%	11%	$H = 8,304$
	Special reporter	28%	26%	10%	27%	10%	$p = 0,04$
	Manager	30%	32%	8%	20%	9%	$df = 3$
	Editor-in-chief	30%	25%	18%	19%	8%	$E^2 = 0,01$
Politicians are able to influence the journalism that my media outlet produces.	Reporter	26%	35%	11%	22%	6%	$H = 30,345$
	Special reporter	29%	27%	8%	28%	9%	$p < 0,001$
	Manager	39%	34%	7%	15%	5%	$df = 3$
	Editor-in-chief	52%	31%	5%	9%	4%	$E^2 = 0,035$
My managing editor, editor, or supervisor gives in to external interference more easily than I do.	Reporter	22%	18%	20%	30%	10%	$H = 16,458$
	Special reporter	16%	25%	16%	28%	15%	$p = 0,001$
	Manager	32%	20%	15%	22%	10%	$df = 3$
	Editor-in-chief	43%	12%	21%	17%	7%	$E^2 = 0,019$
I prefer not to report about certain topics or present certain viewpoints due to external interference.	Reporter	42%	24%	14%	15%	5%	$H = 15,338$
	Special reporter	54%	28%	5%	12%	1%	$p = 0,002$
	Manager	50%	24%	12%	11%	3%	$df = 3$
	Editor-in-chief	52%	35%	4%	7%	2%	$E^2 = 0,018$

I have altered or removed something from my journalism pieces, as I feared external interference.	Reporter	(n = 475)	48%	25%	11%	13%	3%	H = 7,859 p = 0,049 df = 3 E <sup>2</sup> = 0,009
	Special reporter	(n = 99)	60%	21%	5%	13%	1%	
	Manager	(n = 156)	57%	24%	7%	10%	1%	
	Editor-in-chief	(n = 86)	49%	34%	9%	8%	0%	
My media outlet does not hand over control of journalistic decisions to external actors under any circumstances.	Reporter	(n = 449)	5%	15%	9%	29%	41%	H = 42,321 p < 0,001 df = 3 E <sup>2</sup> = 0,048
	Special reporter	(n = 93)	4%	16%	11%	31%	38%	
	Manager	(n = 150)	7%	9%	9%	21%	55%	
	Editor-in-chief	(n = 85)	0%	2%	5%	16%	76%	

Notes: The effect sizes are calculated as epsilon-squared estimates (E<sup>2</sup>).

**Table 6.** Key differences in perceived implications of external interference (medium used for reporting).

Question	Medium used for reporting	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Kruskal-Wallis H
Advertisers and sponsors are able to influence the journalism that my media outlet produces.	Magazine	(n = 140) 26%	28%	15%	22%	9%	$H = 61,882$ $p < 0,001$ $df = 4$ $F^2 = 0,071$
	Regional newspaper	(n = 134) 12%	28%	13%	37%	10%	
	Local/semi-local newspaper	(n = 186) 15%	28%	13%	30%	13%	
	National newspaper	(n = 83) 20%	37%	11%	22%	10%	
Politicians are able to influence the journalism that my media outlet produces.	YLE	(n = 150) 51%	20%	9%	14%	5%	$H = 33,104$ $p < 0,001$ $df = 4$ $F^2 = 0,038$
	Magazine	(n = 138) 51%	28%	8%	12%	1%	
	Regional newspaper	(n = 132) 23%	40%	12%	23%	2%	
	Local/semi-local newspaper	(n = 186) 30%	35%	10%	22%	4%	
	National newspaper	(n = 82) 26%	38%	10%	22%	5%	$F^2 = 0,038$
	YLE	(n = 166) 25%	32%	10%	23%	10%	

Notes: The effect sizes are calculated as epsilon-squared estimates ( $F^2$ ).



segments of journalism pieces are censored.  
(Reporter, Male, Regional newspaper)

In predominantly tax-funded broadcaster YLE, respondents saw their journalism significantly less influenced by advertizers or sponsors. However, the opposite was true when examining how respondents perceived the influence of politicians on journalism. Survey comments below illustrate these concerns:

Preventive censorship has been used, and topics have been blacklisted, which has not happened before. This reflects [...] how concern over funding has effected journalism.  
(Producer, YLE)

There has been a tendency in YLE news production to avoid news topics that can cause friction regarding the funding. Especially news stories concerning members of the business or political elites have been edited and softened.  
(Special reporter, YLE)

An integral part of the management of YLE's news- and current affairs has been the practice of killing off disconcerting exposés concerning those high in the power structures.  
(Reporter, YLE)

Waisbord (2013) conceptualizes the relationship between public broadcasting and political power as essentially problematic while journalism operating under marked conditions has a similar uneasy relationship with market power. Ahva et al. (2017, 607) discovered that this phenomenon can be observed in all the Nordic countries: Journalists working for media in public ownership feel less commercial influence but more political pressure than journalists working for other media.

## Conclusions and Discussion

This research indicates that individual-level factors (age or gender) have only marginal relevance on the prevalence of external interference that journalists encounter in their work in Finland. These findings are in line with Parker's (2015) conclusions that did not establish a connection between occupational intimidation and the demographic characteristics of journalists. Concerning organizational-level factors, the differences between staff journalists and freelancers were limited and sectional. Occupational position and media outlet used for reporting produced significant differences between respondents, suggesting that these two organizational-level factors are most determining when examining the prevalence of external interference in large scale.

The findings concerning the significance of occupational position support the existence of editorial defense shield as practice. Similar to descriptions by Revers (2017, 162) and Kuutti (1995, 246), the survey comments indicated that editors-in-chief have to frequently get involved when reporters working for them encounter external interference. This practice can partly explain why they reported experiencing most types of external interference more than journalists in non-managing positions did. Editors-in-chief and managers also shared high confidence in their superiors and the view that interference does not affect journalism produced by their media outlet. This fits in the occupational perception of editors and managers as safeguards of journalistic autonomy. However, the discontinuity in the confidence levels between journalists with managing responsibilities and reporters and special reporters suggest that this relationship can be tense, and the trust to editorial

defense shield might falter at least occasionally (see Kuutti 1995, 246–248; Revers 2017, 163–164).

Similar to Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring (2016, 884) and Landsverk-Hagen (2015), this study does not support the expectation that female journalists are more exposed to intimidation, harassment, or verbal abuse than their male colleagues are. Nonetheless, female journalists held consistently more negative perceived implications of interference and reported more mental strain and less confidence in their superiors and media outlets. These differences, however, could be better explained by social structures or other aspects since only minor observable differences were made in the actual experiences of external interference. As this example suggests, the relationship between experiences of interference and perceived implications is not linear, but often complex and mediated by a plethora of factors on different levels.

Respondents in national and regional newspapers experienced external interference generally the most, while respondents in magazines encountered it the least. The differences between media outlets can be at least partially attributed to their status and visibility. Newspapers with significant regional or national visibility are typically considered more prestigious and socially influential than smaller newspapers and magazines and therefore, more publicly contested (Kuutti 1995, 249). The increased amounts of mediated verbal abuse, public defamation, and intimidation in these media outlets partly support the interpretation by Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring (2016) concerning the visibility of journalists as a risk factor. However, YLE seems to be an outlier in both respects, boasting strong status and national and regional visibility, but with respondents experiencing less external interference. This observation might be partly explained by differences in media production, as it is possible that a larger segment of journalists employed by YLE work in less prominent supporting positions and do not directly engage in daily news production.

Several limitations can be pointed out. While this study focuses on the external autonomy of journalism, it provides a very limited perspective on how the material and structural conditions affect journalists' aspirations for professional autonomy. Therefore, future research should strive to combine these findings with broader analysis of structural conditions of journalism in order to synthesize more nuanced overall picture of how the journalistic autonomy is transforming in the contemporary communication environment.

Excluding the comments, the survey did not distinguish between different sources, contexts, or locales of interference. Survey data based on self-reporting is susceptible to social desirability bias. External interference can be considered a sensitive topic, and journalists might assess its effects consciously or unconsciously to be less pronounced than they materialize in their daily work, due to professional ideals and identity. Additionally, the lack of longitudinal data makes it impossible to identify any possible shifts or changes.

One additional limitation of the study is that we were unable to account for the influence of the topic that the respondent most commonly reports on, due to highly skewed response distributions. While the respondents were asked the most common topic they covered in the questionnaire, over 60 percent of the respondents indicated working with either local (29 percent) or current national affairs (18 percent) or selecting

the “Other” category (17 percent). This skewed distribution in favor of general or undefined topics prevented us from making meaningful comparisons.

High degree of journalistic autonomy and relatively low levels of economic pressure have been identified as distinctive features of the Nordic journalistic culture (Ahva et al. 2017, 607). While Finnish journalists have previously perceived themselves autonomous and distant from direct external influences (Pöyhtäri, Ahva, and Väliverronen 2014), our findings demonstrate that this does not indicate the absence of external interference in the context of Finnish journalism. Our analysis provides more nuanced empirical account on how external interference imposes diverse challenges for journalists working in different media outlets and occupational positions. Simultaneously, the findings highlight new pressures and threats often stemming from the audience, like verbal abuse, harassment and public defamation. At least to a degree, these pressures are exacerbated by the contemporary communication environment, where online visibility and presence of journalists have increased manifold. Based on our findings, we echo Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring (2016, 889) while stating that dimension of external interference and its effects should be acknowledged and taken into account when studying journalistic autonomy also in the context of stable and democratic Western societies. Furthermore, our findings pose a methodological challenge on how to implement observed individual- and organizational-level variation and its combined effects into future studies.

## Note

1. “Your work involves essential journalistic features and is professional in nature. [...] a significant portion of your earnings derive from such work that has essential journalistic qualities” (The Union of Journalists in Finland). All editors’ associations’ membership criteria included a managing position in a media outlet.

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PUBLICATION  
III

**Ulkoinen vaikuttaminen ja sen  
vastakeinot suomalaisessa  
journalismissa**

Ilmari Hiltunen

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## Artikkeli



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# Ulkoinen vaikuttaminen ja sen vastakeinot suomalaisessa journalismissa

Journalismin autonomiaan ja journalisteihin kohdistuvat uhat ovat viime vuosina nousseet uudella tavalla näkyviksi Suomen julkisessa keskustelussa. Tutkimusta aiheesta on kuitenkin tehty vähän. Tämä artikkeli tarkastelee laadullisesti suomalaisten journalistien kokemuksia ulkoisesta vaikuttamisesta ja journalistien vaikuttamisen torjumiseen käyttämiä vastakeinoja. Ulkoiseksi vaikuttamiseksi määritellään kaikki sellaiset aktiiviset menetelmät, joilla ulkopuoliset toimijat pyrkivät puuttumaan journalismin autonomian alaan ja vaikuttamaan journalisteihin. Tutkimuksen aineisto koostuu journalistien teemahaastatteluista (n=31) ja sidosryhmien kanssa tehdyistä taustahaastatteluista (n=4). Sovelletun teema-analyysin perusteella journalistien kohtaamat ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmät luokitellaan kuuteen ryhmään: 1) tiedonsaantiin kohdistuvat, 2) psykologiset, 3) fyysiset, 4) institutionaaliset, 5) taloudelliset ja 6) tietotekniset menetelmät. Tutkimushavaintojen perustella ulkoisen vaikuttamisen nykytilaa selittävät sekä journalismiin että yhteiskuntaan liittyvät kehityskulut, kuten toimitusten resurssien heikkeneminen, viestintätoiminnan lisääntyminen, tiedotusvälineiden ongelmat taloudellisten ansaintamallien löytämisessä ja yleisön suunnasta tulevien vaikutuspyrkimysten lisääntyminen. Tiedotusvälineiden kyvyllä vastata näihin haasteisiin voikin tulevaisuudessa olla merkittäviä seurauksia suomalaisen journalismin itsenäisyydelle ja autonomialle.

**AVAINSANAT:** Ulkoinen vaikuttaminen, uhkailu, häirintä, autonomia, professionalismismi

Journalistinen autonomia voidaan määritellä journalistien pyrkimyksiksi suojella omaa toimintaansa erilaisilta manipulointi- ja vaikutusyrityksiltä ja tehdä journalismia koskevat ratkaisut ammattikunnan sisäisesti määrittelemien periaatteiden mukaisesti (Kunelius 2003, 23; Waisbord 2013, 45–46). Yhteiskunnassa ja viestintäympäristössä tapahtuvat muutokset ja kehityskulut heijastuvat journalismin



asemaan ja niihin olosuhteisiin, joissa journalismia tuotetaan (Waisbord 2013, 59–60; Pöyhtäri ym. 2016). Tämä näkyy myös journalistien kohtaamisissa manipulaation ja vaikuttamisen menetelmissä, jotka muuttuvat ja kehittyvät jatkuvasti (Luostarinen 1994, 73). Journalismin autonomian tarkastelu edellyttää siis ajantasaista käsitystä siitä, millaisin keinoin ja menetelmin erilaiset toimijat pyrkivät tätä autonomiaa horjuttamaan.

Nykyisessä viestintäympäristössä perinteisen journalismin asema ja auktoriteetti ovat muutoksessa (Chadwick 2017) ja journalismi on pyrkinyt etsimään aikaisempaa vuorovaikutteisempaa ja läheisempää suhdetta yleisöönsä (esim. Pöyhtäri ym. 2016, 8; Reunanen & Koljonen 2014, 115–117). Journalisteja on kannustettu tekemään työtään persoonallaan ja brändäämään itsensä työnsä kautta (Lehtonen 2013, 95). Eriyisesti verkkoympäristössä journalistit ovat aikaisempaa näkyvämpiä ja helpommin yleisön tavoitettavissa, ja journalismin tuotokset ja työtavat ovat myös uudella tavalla julkisesti haastettavissa ja kyseenalaistettavissa (Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring 2016, 881; Manninen 2019, 266). Viestintäympäristön ja journalistisen kulttuurin muutoksen voidaan nähdä myös altistavan journalisteja uudentyyppisille vaikuttamiskeinoille, kuten joukkoistetulle häirinnälle (esim. Binns 2017), yleistyneelle vihapuheelle (esim. Obermaier ym. 2018; Pöyhtäri ym. 2013), verkkovainoamiselle (esim. Luque Martinez 2015) ja sukupuolittuneelle verkkohäirinnälle (esim. Chen ym. 2018; Adams 2018).

Yhteiskunnallisen ja poliittisen ilmapiirin on nähty kiristyneen ja mediavastaisen retoriikan yleistyneen Euroopassa (esim. RSF 2019). Journalismin autonomiaan ja journalisteihin kohdistuvat uhat ovat viime vuosina nousseet uudella tavalla näkyviksi myös Suomen julkisessa keskustelussa. Esimerkiksi Yleisradion toimittajan Jessikka Aron kohtaama poikkeuksellisen pitkään jatkunut häirintä-, mustamaalaus- ja uhkailukampanja on saanut kansainvälistä huomiota (Aro 2019). Turun Sanomien oikeustoimittajan Rebekka Härkösen kohtaama massiivinen vihapuhe- ja uhkailukampanja puolestaan nosti julkisuudessa esiin kysymyksen siitä, edellyttääkö erittäin tärkeä yleinen etu syytteiden nostamista silloin, kun vihapuheen ja uhan kohteena on työtään tekevä journalisti (Lehtilä 2018).

Ulkoisten toimijoiden pyrkimykset vaikuttaa journalististen organisaatioiden sisäiseen integriteettiin nousivat valtakunnalliseksi puheenaiheeksi myös joulukuussa 2016, kun Yleisradiossa työskennelleet journalistit syyttivät julkisesti silloista esihenkilöään, päätoimittaja Atte Jääskeläistä taipumisesta pääministeri Juha Sipilän painostukseen. Journalistien mukaan Jääskeläinen antoi ulkojournalististen syiden vaikuttaa Ylen journalismia koskevaan päätöksentekoon. (Koivunen 2017; Eronen ym. 2017.) Julkisen sanan neuvosto antoi asiassa harvinaisen langettavan päätöksen, jossa katsoi Ylen luovuttaneen journalistista päätösvaltaansa toimituksen ulkopuolelle (JSN 2017). Tapauksen jälkeen Ylen journalistisesta päätöksenteosta laadittu riippumaton selvitys piti ongelmallisena, että poliittisten ja yhteiskunnallisten vallankäyttäjien suorat pyrkimykset vaikuttaa journalistiseen sisältöön ovat vakiintuneet yleisiksi toimintatavoiksi Suomessa (Mäenpää 2017, 21–22).

Tämä artikkeli tarkastelee empiirisesti suomalaisten journalistien kokemuksia ulkoisesta vaikuttamisesta ja journalistien ulkoisen vaikuttamisen torjumiseen käyttämiä vastakeinoja. Päämääränä on tuottaa laadulliseen haastatteluaineistoon perus-

tuva luokittelu ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmistä ja niiden vastakeinoista nykyisessä viestintäympäristössä. Luokittelun avulla on mahdollista jäsentää yhteiskunnassamme tällä hetkellä journalismin autonomiaa uhkaavia tekijöitä ja sitä, millaisiin laajempiin trendeihin nämä uhat kytkeytyvät. Artikkelin tutkimuskysymykset ovat:

- 1) Millaisia ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmiä suomalaiset journalistit kohtaavat työssään?
- 2) Millaisia vastakeinoja suomalaiset journalistit käyttävät ulkoisen vaikuttamisen torjumiseen?

Tämä artikkeli on osa laajempaa monimenetelmällistä väitöstutkimusta, joka keskittyy journalistien kohtaamaan ulkoiseen vaikuttamiseen Suomessa. Artikkelitarkastelee laadullisesti vaikutusyritysten ja vastakeinojen sisältöä täydentäen näin aikaisempia tutkimusjulkaisuja, joissa selvitettiin määrällisin menetelmin ulkoisen vaikuttamisen kokemusten yleisyyttä ja jakautumista koko suomalaisen journalistikunnan tasolla (Hiltunen 2019; Hiltunen & Suuronen 2020; Hiltunen & Suuronen 2019a).

Luon ensin katsauksen aiheesta käsittelevään tutkimukseen ja määrittelen ulkoisen vaikuttamisen käsitteen. Tämän jälkeen esittelen tutkimusaineiston ja analyysimenetelmän. Tuloksissa erittelen journalistien kohtaamat ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmät ja journalistien niiden torjumiseen käyttämät vastakeinot kuuteen luokkaan. Esitän nämä jokaisen luokan osalta myös taulukkomuodossa. Lopuksi pohdin analyysituloksiin ja aikaisempaan tutkimukseen nojautuen laajemmin sitä, millaisia viestintäympäristön ja yhteiskunnan muutoksia ulkoisen vaikuttamisen nykytilan taustalla voidaan hahmottaa.

## Aikaisempi tutkimus ja ulkoisen vaikuttamisen käsite

Journalismi on yhteiskunnallisesti keskeinen tiedon tuottaja, ja journalistinen julkisuus toimii intressijulkisuutena, jossa erilaiset diskurssit ja edunajajat kokoontuvat ja kilvoittelevat (Luostarinen 1994, 28–29). Journalismiin vaikuttaminen takaa toimijoille etuja, joita ne eivät välttämättä saavuttaisi muilla julkisuuden hallinnan menetelmillä (emt., 53). Yleisö suhtautuu mainontaan ja tiedotusmateriaaliin lähtökohtaisesti eri tavalla kuin journalismiin, jolta odotetaan itsenäisyyttä ja yleisen edun edustamista (Mäntylä 2008, 130–131; Kunelius 2003, 23–25). Mikäli vaikuttamaan pyrkivän tahon viestin välittäjäksi saadaan puolueettomana ja itsenäisenä pidetty journalismi, viestin uskottavuus ja sen myötä vaikuttavuus kasvavat merkittävästi (Luostarinen 1994, 16, 39–41; Kunelius 2003, 23–25). Journalismi voi toiminnallaan myös tuottaa erilaisille toimijoille negatiivista julkisuutta ja mainehaittoja nostamalla esille niiden kannalta kielteisiä seikkoja sekä kiinnittämällä yleisön huomiota niihin. Ulkopuolisilla toimijoilla on siis useita syitä pyrkiä puuttumaan journalistien työhön ja journalismin sisältöön.

Aikaisempi tutkimus ulkopuolisten toimijoiden puuttumisesta journalistien työhön ja journalismiin on yleensä tarkastellut ilmiötä epävakaisissa tai autoritaarisissa ja puoliautoritaarisissa yhteiskunnissa ja painottunut äärimmäisiin menetelmiin, kuten väkivaltaan ja journalistien vangitsemisiin (Clark & Grech 2017, 22; Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring 2016, 880–881; Parker 2015, 2–3). Kirjallisuuskatsauksensa perusteella Urbániková (2019, 4–5) toteaa, että vakaisissa ja demokraattisissa länsimaissa on tyypillisesti tyydytty tarkastelemaan journalistien yleisiä näkemyksiä työnsä vapaudesta ja autonomiasta, eikä erilaisia ulkoisen vaikuttamisen ja kontrollin menetelmiä, tyyppejä ja seurauksia ole tutkimuksissa usein konkretisoitu tai mitattu. Empiiriset tutkimukset vaikuttamisen menetelmistä ovat yleensä keskittyneet vain rajattuihin osa-alueisiin, esimerkiksi journalistien kohtaamaan verkkovihaan (emt.) ja useampia ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmiä samanaikaisesti tarkastelevat tutkimukset (ks. esim. Clark & Grech 2017; Parker 2015; Kodellas ym. 2014) ovat harvinaisia. Tämä artikkeli paikkaa aukkoa aikaisemmassa tutkimustiedossa esittelemällä empiriaan perustuvan luokittelun konkreettisista ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmistä Suomessa, joka lukeutuu korkean sananvapauden länsimaisten demokratioiden joukkoon.

Kirjallisuuskatsaukseen perustuvassa luokitellussaan Luostarinen (1994) jakaa journalismiin kohdistuvat vaikuttamisen menetelmät niiden pääasiallisen tavoitteen mukaan painostaviin, rajoittaviin ja suostutteleviin menetelmiin. Painostavat menetelmät kattavat fyysisen, taloudellisen, poliittisen ja ammatillisen painostuksen, jossa tarkoitus on suoraan tai erilaisten sanktioiden välityksellä vaikuttaa journalismin sisältöön. Rajoittaviin menetelmiin sisältyvät informaation saantia ja käyttöä sekä journalismin editointivaltaa kaventavat toimenpiteet, kuten tiukkojen reunaehtojen asettaminen tietojen tai haastattelujen saamiselle. Suostuttelevat menetelmät sisältävät erilaisten henkilökohtaisten suhteiden käyttämisen vaikuttamiseen sekä taloudellisten etujen tarjoamisen ja lahjonnan muodot.

Goyanes ja Rodríguez-Castro (2018) erottavat sisäisen ja ulkoisen painostuksen lisäksi painostuksen kohdentamisen (suora vai epäsuora), ajallisuuden suhteessa journalistiseen prosessiin (ennen julkaisua vai sen jälkeen) ja journalistien tulkinnat painostuksen tavoitteista. Suorassa painostuksessa toimijat ovat suoraan yhteydessä jutusta vastaavaan journalistiin. Epäsuorassa painostuksessa ulkopuolinen toimija on yhteydessä esihenkilöihin tai välineen omistajiin, ja painostus välittyy journalistille journalistisen kommentoijan välityksellä. Ajallisesti painetta voidaan kohdistaa journalistiseen prosessiin ennen jutun julkaisua (*a priori*) tavoitteena julkaisemisen estäminen, viivästyttäminen tai jutun sisältöön vaikuttaminen. Julkaisun jälkeisen (*post hoc*) paineen tavoitteena on esimerkiksi tuoda toimijan mielipide journalistin ja välineen tietoon, esittää kritiikkiä, kyseenalaistaa jutun sisältöä ja luotettavuutta, vaatia perusteita siinä tehdyille ratkaisuille tai pyrkiä vaikuttamaan aiheen mahdolliseen jatkokesittelyyn.

Suomalaisen journalismin kontekstissa ajantasaista tutkimusta ulkoisesta vaikuttamisesta on tehty erittäin vähän, eikä vaikuttamisen menetelmiä ole aikaisemmin juuri tarkasteltu laadullisesti. Yleisesti suomalaiset journalistit ovat kokeneet olevansa itsenäisiä erityisesti suhteessa erilaisiin ulkopuolisiin toimijoihin (Pöyhtäri ym. 2014,

26). Pohjoismaiset journalistit kokevat vähäisempää taloudellisten paineiden vaikutusta työhönsä muihin korkean sanavapauden maihin verrattuna, joskin suomalaiset ja tanskalaiset toimittajat raportoivat enemmän poliittista painetta kuin journalistit muissa Pohjoismaissa (Ahva ym. 2017, 607). Lisäksi esimerkiksi vihapuheen koetun yleistymisen on havaittu vaikuttavan suomalaiseseen journalistiin henkisen kuormituksen ja itesensuurin kautta (Pöyhtäri ym. 2013, 134–137).

Määrittelen tässä tutkimuksessa ulkoisen vaikuttamisen laajasti sellaisten aktiivisten, journalismin autonomian alaan vaikuttamaan pyrkivien menetelmien käyttämiseksi, joilla toimitusorganisaation ulkopuolinen taho pyrkii vaikuttamaan journalistiseen prosessiin ja/tai journalisteihin ja tätä kautta journalismin sisältöön (vrt. Clark & Grech 2017; Luostarinen 1994). Ulkoinen vaikuttaminen toimii siis tutkimuksen kattokäsitteenä, jonka alla voidaan tarkastella vaikuttamisen menetelmien kokonaiskirjoa ulottuen journalistisiin prosesseihin puuttumisesta aina aggressiiviseen ja suoraviivaiseen painostukseen asti. Näin voidaan myös tavoittaa menetelmien yhteisvaikutusta, sillä erityyppisiä vaikuttamisen menetelmiä kohdistetaan journalisteihin usein samanaikaisesti.

Tällä tavoin määriteltynä ulkoinen vaikuttaminen kattaa myös useita sellaisia toimintatapoja, jotka journalistista työtä käsittelevissä tutkimuksissa on yleensä niputettu käsitteen häirintä (engl. *harassment*) alle (vrt. esim. Pöyhtäri ym. 2013; Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring 2016; Miller & Lewis 2020). Yhdenvertaisuuslain (Finlex 2020) määritelmään nojautuen määrittelen häirinnän sellaisiksi pyrkimyksiksi luoda henkilöä halventava tai nöyryyttävä taikka häntä kohtaan uhkaava, vihamielinen tai hyökkäävä ilmapiiri, jotka kohdistetaan journalistiin nimenomaan hänen työnsä vuoksi. Käytän siis häirintää tässä artikkelissa yleiskäsitteenä kuvaamaan niitä ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmiä ja menetelmien yhdistelmiä, joiden pyrkimyksenä on vaikuttaa journalistin työhön tuottamalla edellä kuvatun kaltaisia negatiivisia psykologisia seurauksia. Kaiken häirinnän taustalla ei kuitenkaan automaattisesti ole välineellistä pyrkimystä vaikuttaa journalistin tekemään työhön. Esimerkiksi seksuaalinen häirintä ei näin ollen kuulu tämän tutkimuksen alaan, ellei uhri nimenomaisesti koe sen tavoitteena olevan hänen journalistiseen työhönsä vaikuttaminen. (vrt. Miller & Lewis 2020, 3–4.)

Lasken tutkimuksen alaan myös yhdistelmävaikuttamisen sellaisissa tapauksissa, joihin selkeästi kytkeytyy ulkoisia toimijoita tai elementtejä. Yhdistelmävaikuttamisessa ulkoinen vaikuttaminen ja toimituksellisen organisaation sisällä tapahtuva sisäinen vaikuttaminen esiintyvät toisiinsa limittyneinä. Tyypillinen esimerkki on ulkoisen vaikuttamisen eteneminen journalistisessa komentoketjussa tiedotusvälineen sisällä: Päätoimittaja päättää ulkoisen painostuksen seurauksena välittää sisäisen käskyn journalistisen prosessin keskeyttämisestä alaisilleen. (Hemánus 1983, 192; ks. myös Kuutti 1995, 248.)

Soveltamani ulkoisen vaikuttamisen määritelmän ulkopuolelle jää perinteinen viestintävaikuttaminen, kuten mediatiedotteet, infopaketit, järjestetyt mediatapahumat sekä muut vastaavat pyrkimykset median huomion kiinnittämiseen ja agendan ohjaamiseen. Journalisteihin kohdistuvan markkinointi- ja vaikuttajaviestinnän sekä

lobbauksen menetelmistä nykyisessä viestintäympäristössä löytyy ajantasaista tutkimusta niin Suomesta (Mykkänen ym. 2020) kuin muista demokraattisista länsimaista (ks. Mykkänen & Ikonen 2019). Vaikka tällaisilla menetelmillä voidaan osoittaa olevan seurauksia journalismin sisällölle (esim. Juntunen 2011), ne eivät pyri aktiivisesti puuttamaan journalismin autonomiaan. Päätösvalta esimerkiksi tiedotemateriaalin käyttämisestä, mediatapahtumasta raportoinnista tai juttuvinkkiin tarttumisesta on aina journalistisella organisaatiolla itsellään (ks. myös Luostarinen 1994, 15), eivätkä tällaiset viestintävaikuttamisen keinot siis kuulu tämän tutkimuksen alaan.

## Aineisto ja menetelmä

### Tutkimusaineisto

Tutkimusaineistoni koostuu suomalaisten journalistien puolistrukturoiduista teema-haastatteluista (n=31) ja aihepiirin kanssa tekemisissä olevien sidosryhmien kanssa tehdyistä taustahaastatteluista (n=4). Sidoryhmähaastattelut tein Julkisen sanan neuvoston, Suomen Journalistiliiton ja Päätoimittajien Yhdistyksen puheenjohtajien sekä Yleisradion journalististen standardien ja etiikan päällikön kanssa. Kaikki tutkimuksen haastattelut tehtiin yksilöhaastatteluina vuoden 2018 tammikuun ja vuoden 2019 joulukuun välisenä aikana. Haastattelut nauhoitettiin ja litteroitiin sanatarkasti.

Koostin teema-haastattelujen otoksen kriittisten tapausten otannalla (n=15), jota täydensin suurimman vaihtelun otannalla (n=16) (Patton 1990, 172–175). Kriittisten tapausten otantaan (*critical case sampling*) valikoin näkyviä suomalaisia journalisteja, jotka työskentelevät ulkoiselle vaikuttamiselle alttiiden aihepiirien, kuten talouden, politiikan, ulkomaanaiheiden, rikos- ja oikeusaiheiden sekä tutkivan journalismin parissa (ks. Hiltunen & Suuronen 2019b, 109–114; Parker 2015, 96). Suurimman vaihtelun otannan (*maximum variety sampling*) haastateltavat poimin aikaisemman aihetta käsittelevän kyselytutkimuksen (Hiltunen 2019) vastaajien joukosta. Nämä vastaajat olivat kyselyssä ilmaisseet halukkuutensa osallistua tutkimushaastatteluun. Valintaperusteena käytin pyrkimystä maksimoida tutkimusotoksen demografinen ja ammatillinen monimuotoisuus. Kahden otantamenetelmän yhdistelmällä pyrin tavoittamaan aineistoon mahdollisimman monipuolisen kokemusten kirjon (Patton 1990) ja edistämään näin tutkimuksen pyrkimystä tuottaa laaja analyttinen luokittelu erilaisista ulkoisen vaikuttamisen ilmenemismuodoista.

Sidosryhmähaastattelut toteutin tutkimuksen loppuvaiheessa, ja niissä käsiteltiin aikaisemmissa tutkimushaastatteluissa esiin nousseita teemoja. Analyysivaiheessa hyödynsin sidoryhmähaastatteluja tausta-aineistona tutkimushavaintojen laajempaan kontekstointiin.

Otin haastateltaviin yhteyttä henkilökohtaisesti sähköpostilla tai puhelimitse. Tutkimuksen teema-haastatteluista 24 tehtiin Skypen tai vastaavan etävideoyhteyden välityksellä ja 7 kasvokkain. Kiireisten ammattijournalistien haastattelemisessa etäyhteyden käyttäminen tarjosi lukuisia etuja. Haastatteluajankohta voitiin sopia joustavasti haastateltavan ehdoilla eikä järjestelyissä tarvinnut huomioida maantieteel-

lisiä etäisyyksiä. Vuorovaikutustilanteen näkökulmasta etäyhteyden käyttämistä on pidetty erityisen sopivana henkilökohtaisten ja arkaluontoisten aiheiden käsittelyyn, sillä haastateltava voi itse valita mieleisen ja turvalliseksi kokemansa haastatteluympäristön ja tilanteesta on helpompi ottaa etäisyyttä kuin kasvokkain toteutetusta tutkimushaastattelusta (ks. Oates 2015). Varjopuolena etäyhteyden käytössä olivat ajoittaiset yhteysongelmat, jotka toisinaan haittaisivat kommunikointia tai keskeyttivät hetkeksi haastattelun.

Teemahaastattelujen kesto vaihteli 43 minuutista 121 minuuttiin keskipituuden ollessa 73 minuuttia. Haastateltavilla oli mahdollisuus täydentää haastattelujaan myöhemmin. Yksi journalisteista kieltäytyi osallistumasta tutkimukseen henkilökohtaisista syistä.

Haastateltujen journalistien joukko oli heterogeeninen ja sisälsi taustoiltaan, työtehtäviltään, kokemukseltaan ja erikoistumisalaltaan hyvin erilaisia journalisteja. Tutkimusotoksen keskeiset taustatiedot on koottu taulukkoon 1.

**Taulukko 1.** Tutkimusotoksen taustatiedot (n=31).

Sukupuoli	n	Koulutus	n	Työtehtävä	n
Nainen	18	Maisterintutkinto tai korkeampi akateeminen tutkinto	14	Päätoimittaja	3
Mies	13	Kandidaatintutkinto	3	Päällikkötoimittaja	4
		Ammattikorkeakoulututkinto	4	Tuottaja	1
		Yliopisto-opintoja ilman loppututkintoa	4	Erikoistoimittaja	9
		Ylioppilastutkinto	4	Toimittaja	14
		Ammatillinen koulutus	2		

Haastateltujen journalistien ikähaarukka ulottui 27 vuodesta 65 vuoteen keski-ikä ollessa 44 vuotta. Heidän työkokemuksensa vaihteli 8 vuodesta 42 vuoteen, ja keskimääräinen työkokemus alalla oli 21 vuotta. Haastatelluista journalisteista 22 työskenteli vakituudessa työsuhteessa tiedotusvälineessä ja 7 freelancereina. Yhdellä haastatelluista oli yhdistelmä erilaisia työsuhteita, ja yksi oli hiljattain vaihtanut alaa. Vakituudessa työsuhteessa olevien journalistien tiedotusvälineet on koottu taulukkoon 2.

**Taulukko 2.** Tutkimusotoksen vakituksessa työsuhteessa työskentelevien journalistien tiedotusvälineet (n=22).

Tiedotusväline	n
Valtakunnallinen sanomalehti	3
Yleisradio	3
Iltaapäivälehti	3
Aluelehti	3
Paikallislehti tai kaupunkilehti	3
Aikakauslehti	3
Maakuntalehti	2
Kaupallinen televisiokanava	1
Uutistoimisto	1

### Teemahaastattelurunko

Tutkimuksen teemahaastattelurunko (ks. liite 1) koostui kolmesta temaattisesta osasta: 1) kokemukset ulkoisesta vaikuttamisesta, 2) ulkoisen vaikuttamisen käsittely työssä ja työyhteisössä ja 3) näkemykset ulkoisesta vaikuttamisesta. Teemahaastattelujen puolistrukturoitu rakenne mahdollisti sen, että jokaisen haastateltavan kanssa voitiin keskittyä juuri tämän oman työn näkökulmasta keskeisiin ulkoisen vaikuttamisen kokemuksiin (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 1995). Näin tuotetusta haastatteluaineistosta muodostui monipuolinen ja moniääninen. Koska ulkoiseen vaikuttamiseen liittyviä henkilökohtaisia kokemuksia ja vaikuttamisen seurauksia journalistiselle työlle voidaan pitää sensitiivisenä aihepiirinä, tutkimushaastattelut tehtiin anonyymisti ja niitä käsitellään tässä tutkimuksessa myös epäsuoria tunnisteita välttäen.

### Aineiston analyysi

Käsitelin aineistoa samanaikaisesti sekä faktuaalisena tiedonlähteenä journalisteille tapahtuneista asioista että toimittajien itsereflektiona kuvaamassa kokemuksia sekä niihin liittyviä ajatuksia ja tunteita (Bernard & Ryan 1998). Aineiston analyysimenetelmänä käytin aineistolähtöistä sovellettua teema-analyysia (Guest ym. 2012). Koodasin teemahaastatteluaineiston tietokoneavusteisesti kahteen kertaan Atlas.ti 8 -analyysiohjelmalla. Ensimmäisellä kerralla käytin aihekoodausta (Saldaña 2013, 87–91) erilaisten ulkoisen vaikuttamisen kokemusten, menetelmien ja journalistien käyttämien vastakeinojen merkitsemiseen. Toisella koodauskerralla yhdistin aihekoodatut vaikuttamisen menetelmät ja vastakeinot laajemmiksi temaattisiksi kokonaisuuksiksi (emt., 209–213).

Luokitteluprosessissa määrittelin merkitseviksi tekijöiksi (Kluge 2000) journalistien näkemykset vaikuttamisen menetelmän pääasiallisesta vaikutustavasta ja vaikuttamisen kanavasta (vrt. Luostarinen 1994; Goyanes & Rodríguez-Castro 2018; Clark & Grech 2017). Näiden tekijöiden perusteella jaoin aineistossa esiintyneet vaikuttamisen menetelmät kuuteen luokkaan. Liitin jokaisen vaikuttamisen menetelmän vastinpariksi ne journalistien käyttämät vastakeinot, jotka haastatteluaineistossa eksplisiitista yhdistettiin kyseiseen menetelmään.

## Tulokset

Luokittelin analyysissäni ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmät kuuteen luokkaan: 1) tiedonhankintaan kohdistuvat, 2) psykologiset, 3) fyysiset, 4) institutionaaliset, 5) taloudelliset ja 6) tietotekniset menetelmät.

Erilaiset vaikuttamisen menetelmät esiintyvät usein samanaikaisesti ja toisiinsa limittyneinä, ja niiden selkeä erottaminen voi käytännössä olla hyvin hankalaa. Lisäksi raja epäeettisen vaikuttamisen ja hyväksyttävän toiminnan välillä voi olla journalistien näkökulmasta häilyvä, ja toiset journalisteista saattavat suhtautua toimintaan torjumammin kuin toiset (ks. myös Pöyhtäri ym. 2016, 17). Näin ollen tässä artikkelissa esitettyä luokittelua ei ole syytä ymmärtää selvärajaiseksi ja kaikenkattavaksi, vaan analyttiseksi apuvälineeksi ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmien kirjon hahmottamiseen. Luokittelu on myös syytä käsittää dynaamisena ja täydentyvänä, sillä ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmät ja sen vastakeinot ovat jatkuvasti muutoksessa (Luostarinen 1994, 73).

Ulkoisen vaikuttaminen kohdistuu journalismiin tyypillisesti lähteiden, kohteiden tai yleisön taholta. Nykyisessä viestintäympäristössä verkon alustat ovat lisänneet yksilöiden mahdollisuuksia muodostaa löyhiä yhteenliittymiä ja toimia koordinoitusti yhdessä. Nämä samanmielisten verkostot muodostavat tyypillisesti omia intressijulkisuuksiansa ja pyrkivät usein vaikuttamaan niille keskeisten asioiden käsittelyyn myös journalistisessa julkisuudessa. (vrt. Rinne 2011.) Tällaisen toiminnan lisääntyminen nousi usein esille haastatteluissa.

Vaikutuspyrkimysten motiivit ovat moninaisia ja voivat vaihdella taloudellisten intressien suojelemisesta aina henkilökohtaisten poliittisten ja ideologisten näkemysten edistämiseen. On syytä huomioida, että erilaisilla toimijoilla on käytössään vaihtelevia resursseja ja mahdollisuuksia ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmien käyttöön, ja että myös journalistien käyttämillä vastakeinoilla voi olla erilaisia seurauksia näille toimijoille. Esimerkiksi poliitikko voi siis pyrkiä käyttämään vaikuttamisessa hyväkseen yhteiskunnallista valta-asemaansa eri tavalla kuin tavallinen kansalainen, mutta vaikutuspyrkimysten tuominen julki todennäköisesti vahingoittaa poliitikon julkisuutta ja tämän intressejä eri tavalla kuin kansalaisella. (ks. Kunelius ym. 2010; Luostarinen 1994.)



### 1) Tiedonhankintaan kohdistuvat menetelmät

Tiedonhankintaan kohdistuvaksi ulkoiseksi vaikuttamiseksi luokittelen kaikki sellaiset menetelmät, joissa pyritään aktiivisesti puuttumaan journalistien tiedonhankintaan ja työprosesseihin. Määrittelen kategoriaan kuuluviksi pyrkimykset *tiedonsaannin ja haastattelujen kontrollointiin, julkisten tietojen saannin tahallisen vaikeuttamisen tai estämisen sekä juttujen ennakkotarkastukseen* liittyvän vaikuttamisen. Nämä on kuvattu taulukossa 3.

**Taulukko 3.** Tiedonhankintaan kohdistuvat ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmät.

Vaikuttamisen menetelmä	Tyypilliset toteutustavat	Vaikuttamisen tavoitteet	Journalistin vastakeinot
<b>Tiedonsaannin ja haastattelujen kontrollointi</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erilaisten ennakkoehtojen asettaminen haastatteluille ja muulle tiedonhankinnalle.</li> <li>• Viestintäammattilaisten läsnäolo ylimääräisinä henkilöinä haastattelutilanteissa.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vaikuttaa aiheisiin, joiden yhteydessä toimija on journalistisissa esillä.</li> <li>• Kontrolloida ulospäin annettavaa tietoa.</li> <li>• Valvoa haasteltavien sanomisia ja muuttaa haastattelutilanteiden dynamiikkaa.</li> <li>• Varautua juttujen seurauksiin ja estää ennalta negatiivista julkisuutta.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kieltäytyminen haastatteluille tai tiedonhankinnalle asetetuista ehdoista.</li> <li>• Ylimääräisten henkilöiden poistaminen haastattelutilanteista.</li> <li>• Jutun tekeminen ilman kohteen yhteistyötä esim. julkisiin lähteisiin, asiakirjoihin ja vuotoihin perustuen.</li> </ul>
<b>Julkisten tietojen saamisen tahallinen vaikeuttaminen tai estäminen</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kieltäytyminen julkisten tietojen luovuttamisesta tai tietojen perusteen leimaaminen salassa pidettäväksi.</li> <li>• Huomattavan korkeiden maksujen periminen aineistosta.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tietojen julkisen käsittelyn estäminen.</li> <li>• Tietojen julkaisun viivyttäminen.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julkisuuslain tunteminen ja siihen vetoaminen.</li> <li>• Valmius valittaa päätöksistä oikeuslaitse.</li> <li>• Tietojen hankkiminen vaihtoehtoisista kanavista esim. vuotoina.</li> </ul>
<b>Vaatimukset ennakkotarkastustilanteessa</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journalistisesti perusteton puuttuminen jutun sisältöön ennakkotarkastustilanteessa ennen jutun julkaisua.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muuttaa tai poistaa toimijan näkökulmasta negatiivista sisältöä ennen julkaisua.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Haastattelujen ja muun viestinvaihdon tekninen tallentaminen ja säilyttäminen.</li> </ul>

*Tiedonsaannin ja haastattelujen kontrollointia* voidaan pitää hankalasti rajattavana ja määriteltävänä. Tässä yhteydessä viittaaan sillä toimintaan, jossa pyritään aktiivisesti puuttumaan haastatteluihin ja tiedonhankintaan liittyviin journalistisiin prosesseihin. Käytännössä nämä saattoivat olla esimerkiksi haastattelutilanteille ja haastattelujen toteutukselle ennalta asetettuja ehtoja ja rajoituksia, kuten vaatimuksia kysymysten näkemisestä etukäteen tai niihin vastaamista vain kirjallisesti ja valikoiden. Lisäksi haastattelun ehdoksi voitiin pyrkiä asettamaan viestintäammattilaisen läsnäolo ylimääräisenä henkilönä haastattelutilanteessa. Tällaista vaikuttamista vastaan journalistit käyttivät reaktiivisia vastakeinoja, kuten vaatimusten ja rajoitusten torjumista ja ylimääräisten henkilöiden poistamista haastattelutilanteista. Tiedonhankintaan kohdistuvan vaikuttamisen määrittelemisessä syntyi myös hajontaa journalistikunnan sisällä. Kaikki haastatellut eivät esimerkiksi pitäneet viestintähenkilöiden läsnäoloa haastatteluissa varsinaisena ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmänä.

*Julkisten tietojen saamisen tahallinen vaikeuttaminen tai estäminen* kattaa pyrkimykset olla luovuttamatta julkisia asiakirjoja, viivyttää niiden luovuttamista tai estää niiden käsittely perimällä aineistosta huomattavan korkeita maksuja. Näin toimittiin journalistien mukaan usein silloin, kun käsiteltävä asia oli esimerkiksi viranomaisen, kaupungin tai kunnan näkökulmasta kiusallinen tai negatiivinen. Mikäli asiakirjoja jouduttiin vastakeinona hakemaan hallinto-oikeuden kautta, usein vuosia kestävä valitusprosessi esti tietojen ajankohtaisen käsittelyn journalismissa. Alla oleva lainaus kuvaa tiedonsaantiin liittyviä ongelmia:

*[...] se on iso ongelma koska sitte, pahimmillaan käy niin että mä joudun kolme vuotta odottamaan että mä saan korkeimmasta hallinto-oikeudesta lopulta sitte, ratkasun. Et mä saan jotku asiakirjat. Sillon saattaa olla että se juttu on vanhentunu siinä välissä. [...] se hankaloittaa kyl duunii suunnattomasti, semmonen julkisuuslain noudattamatta jättäminen tavallaan. Tai et tulkitaan, tavallaan julkisuuslain hengen vastasesti että, tyydytään salata ennemminki ku pitää julkisena asiakirjoja. (H5)*

Julkisuuslain rikkominen tietoja salaamalla ei journalistien mukaan käytännössä johda sanktioihin. Tästä syystä journalistit kokivat, ettei viranomaisilla ja virkamiehillä usein ole todellista painetta noudattaa julkisuuslakia. Asiakirjoja saatettiin salata jopa ”varmuuden vuoksi” silloin, kun viranomaiset tai virkamiehet halusivat turvata selustansa päätöksen seurauksilta (ks. myös Kuutti 2011).

*Ennakkotarkastukseen* liittyväksi ulkoiseksi vaikuttamiseksi määrittelen tilanteet, joissa jutuissa siteeratut henkilöt pyrkivät saamaan läpi journalistisesti perusteettomia muutoksia tai poistoja ennakkotarkastusvaiheessa ennen jutun julkaisua. Ennakkotarkastukseen liittyvissä ristiriitatilanteissa journalistit hyötyivät usein siitä, että lainaukset voitiin todentaa oikeiksi jälkikäteen esimerkiksi haastattelunauhojen avulla. Haastattelun oikeus sitaattien tarkastamiseen on kirjattu Journalistin ohjeisiin, mutta tarkastamisen yhteydessä ei saa luovuttaa journalistista päätösvaltaa toimituksen ulkopuolelle (JSN 2020). Journalistien mukaan haastateltavat saattoivat kuitenkin kierrättää ennakkotarkastettavaksi lähetetyt sitaatit tai jutut myös viestintäammatti-

laisilla, jotka sitten pyrkivät hanakasti saamaan läpi omia vaatimuksiaan. Käytäntönä ennakkotarkastuksella nähtiin myös positiivisia seurauksia: Se mahdollisti esimerkiksi virheiden ja väärinkäsitysten korjaamisen jutusta jo ennen julkaisua (ks. Hiltunen 2019, 10–11).

## 2) Psykologiset menetelmät

Psykologiseksi ulkoiseksi vaikuttamiseksi määrittelen menetelmät, jotka pyrkivät vaikuttamaan pääasiassa psykologisen paineen välityksellä (ks. Clark & Grech 2017). Näihin menetelmiin sisältyy usein myös laajempi pyrkimys vaikuttaa negatiivisten psykologisten seurausten kautta journalistien haluun käsitellä tiettyjä aiheita tai näkökulmia (emt., 60; Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring 2016). Psykologiset vaikuttamisen menetelmät on kuvattu taulukossa 4.

**Taulukko 4.** Psykologiset ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmät.

Vaikuttamisen menetelmä	Tyypilliset toteutustavat	Vaikuttamisen tavoitteet	Journalistin vastakeinot
<b>Perusteettomat oikaisu- tai vastinevaatimukset</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vaatimusten lähettäminen journalistille tai esihenkilölle jutun julkaisun jälkeen.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vaikuttaa jo julkaistun journalismin sisältöön.</li> <li>Tuottaa henkistä painetta ja käyttää journalistin työaikaa vaatimuksiin vastaamiseen.</li> <li>Tuottaa organisaation sisäistä epäluottamusta ja epävarmuutta.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Huolellinen perehtyminen käsiteltävään aiheeseen.</li> <li>Kiistakysymysten ja vastaväitteiden ennakointi.</li> <li>Avoimuus yleisön suuntaan esim. lähteiden osalta.</li> <li>Toimiva sisäinen luottamus ja kommunikaatio organisaatiossa.</li> </ul>
<b>Sanallinen painostus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suora yhteydenotto journalistiin, esihenkilöön tai tiedotusvälineen omistajaan painostus-tarkoituksessa.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vaikuttaa journalismin sisältöön tai estää julkaisu kokonaan.</li> <li>Tuottaa jutun sisältöön ja julkaisuun kohdistuvaa henkistä painetta.</li> <li>Tuottaa organisaation sisäistä epävarmuutta ja epäluottamusta.</li> <li>Vaikuttaa jatkuttuihin ja aiheen käsittelyyn tulevaisuudessa.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ammatillisen etäisyyden säilyttäminen ulkopuolisiin toimijoihin.</li> <li>Kiistakysymysten ja vastaväitteiden ennakointi ja huomioiminen.</li> <li>Toimiva sisäinen luottamus ja kommunikaatio organisaatiossa.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Sanalliset vihanilmaukset</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suora tai media-välitteinen kontakti journalistiin.</li> <li>• Vihanilmausten levittäminen julkisesti esim. verkkoalustoilla.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loukata, kuormittaa ja tuottaa negatiivisia psykologisia seurauksia journalistille.</li> <li>• Vähentää journalistin halua käsitellä tiettyjä aiheita tai näkökulmia tulevaisuudessa.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journalistin oman julkisuuden ja yhteystietojen saatavuuden rajoittaminen.</li> <li>• Jutun julkaiseminen työryhmän tai tiedotusvälineen nimellä.</li> <li>• Altistuksen vähentäminen tietoisella välttelyllä sekä teknisesti esim. yksityisyysasetuksia ja blokkamista hyödyntäen.</li> <li>• Vihanilmausten tallentaminen ja asian vieminen eteenpäin oikeusteitse.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Julkinen mustamaalaaminen</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valheellisten väitteiden, huhujen tai yksityiselämään liittyvien tietojen levittäminen julkisesti mustamaalaus-tarkoituksessa.</li> <li>• Identiteettivarkaudet ja valeprofiilien luominen.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tuottaa journalistille henkilökohtaista maineriskiä.</li> <li>• Vähätellä julkisesti journalistin ammatitaitoa ja tämän tekemän työn uskottavuutta.</li> <li>• Tuottaa organisaation sisäistä epävarmuutta ja epäluottamusta.</li> <li>• Loukata ja kuormittaa journalistia sekä tuottaa tälle negatiivisia psykologisia seurauksia.</li> <li>• Vähentää journalistin halua käsitellä tiettyjä aiheita tai näkökulmia tulevaisuudessa.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journalistin oman julkisuuden ja yhteystietojen saatavuuden rajoittaminen.</li> <li>• Jutun julkaiseminen työryhmän tai tiedotusvälineen nimellä.</li> <li>• Altistuksen vähentäminen tietoisella välttelyllä sekä teknisesti esim. yksityisyysasetuksia ja blokkamista hyödyntäen.</li> <li>• Julkiset tuen ilmaukset, väitteisiin vastaaminen sekä omien tukiryhmien mobilisointi.</li> <li>• Materiaalin tallentaminen ja asian vieminen eteenpäin oikeusteitse.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Journalistiin tai tämän lähipiiriin kohdistuva uhkailu</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suorien uhkausten tai uhalla vihjailun välittäminen journalistin tietoon tai asettaminen esille julkisesti.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heikentää journalistin, tämän lähipiiriin ja työyhteisön turvallisuuden tunnetta.</li> <li>• Vähentää journalistin halua käsitellä tiettyjä aiheita tai näkökulmia tulevaisuudessa.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journalistin oman julkisuuden ja yhteystietojen rajoittaminen.</li> <li>• Erilaiset turvatoimet.</li> <li>• Materiaalin tallentaminen ja asian vieminen eteenpäin oikeusteitse.</li> </ul>

<b>Joukkoistettu häirintä</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pyrkimykset mobilisoida muita häiritsemään tai uhkailemaan journalistia tai tiedotusväliettä.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sisältää elementtejä sanallisesta painostuksesta, vihanilmuksista, julkisesta mustamaalaamisesta sekä uhkailusta. Tavoitteet tyypillisesti erilaisia yhdistelmiä edellä mainittujen menetelmien tavoitteista.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joukkoistetun häirinnän saamista muodoista riippuen vastakeinoina käytettiin yhdistelmiä sanallisen painostuksen, vihanilmausten, julkisen mustamaalaamisen sekä uhkailun vastakeinoista.</li> </ul>
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*Sanallisella painostuksella* tarkoitan painostustarkoituksessa tehtyjä yhteydenottoja journalisteihin, näiden esihenkilöihin tai tiedotusvälineen omistajiin. Vaikka journalistien ja yhteiskunnallisten ja taloudellisten vallankäyttäjien välisen ammatillisen etäisyyden nähtiin yleisesti kasvaneen, erityisesti päätoimittajien koettiin edelleen olevan tietyissä tapauksissa alttiita vaikutusvaltaisten tahojen kulissien takaisille yhteydenotoille ja vaikutuspyrkimyksille (ks. myös Kunelius ym. 2010, 328–329). Alle poimitussa lainauksessa tutkiva journalisti kuvaa aikaisempia negatiivisia kokemuksiaan:

*[...] kun hyvin verkostoituneiden ihmisten kanssa tai niistä ollaan tekemässä ikäviä juttuja niin sit vaan alkaa, tapahtua omituisia asioita ja projektit jotka on rullannu ihan hyvin lähiesimiehen kanssa nii ei enää rullaakaan niin hyvin ja.. Uskallan väittää että se on, et sitä tapahtuu paljonkin että noi isojen välineiden isot pomot jotka seurustelee sitte muiden isojen vallankäyttäjien kanssa niin kyl siellä kanssa näistä keskusteluu käydään. [...] Siis on päätoimittajia jotka näihin paineisiin reagoi. En tiä sitte että, tehdäkseen palveluksia kavereilleen vai aidosti uskoen sitä mitä heille kerrotaan, et toimittajat on väärillä jäljillä ja hukanneet fokuksensa ja mittasuhteet ja näin. Mutta et kyl se, se on se vaarallisin ja vaikuttavin ulkosen vaikuttamisen tapa. (H28)*

Tällaisissa yhdistelmävaikuttamiseen tähtäävissä tilanteissa haastateltavat pitivät tärkeimpänä vastakeinona koko toimitusorganisaation kattavaa sitoutumista journalistiseen professionalismiin. Waisbord (2013, 10–11) määrittelee professionalismin keskeisimmäksi piirteeksi ammattikunnan kyvyn määritellä itse toimintaansa ohjaavat periaatteet ja toimia niiden mukaisesti. Professionalismin nähtiinkin haastatteluissa käytännössä ilmenevän periaatteellisessa pitäytymisessä päätösten tekemisessä vain ja ainoastaan journalistisin perustein sekä ammatillisen etäisyyden säilyttämisessä juttujen kohteisiin, lähteisiin ja yhteiskunnallisiin vallankäyttäjiin kaikissa tilanteissa. Näin journalistiseen komentoketjuun ei muodostu heikkoja kohtia, joihin ulkoiset toimijat voisivat iskeä väliin. Professionalismiin sitoutumisen nähtiin osaltaan myös vähentävän ulkoisten toimijoiden mahdollisuuksia aiheuttaa epävarmuutta journalistisen organisaation sisällä. Journalistit pystyivät luottamaan siihen, ettei journalistisesti perusteltuja juttuja muokata tai hyllytetä esimerkiksi liiketaloudellisista, poliittisista tai yhteiskunnallisiin valta-asemiin liittyvistä syistä (vrt. Kuutti 1995, 246–247).

Joidenkin psykologisen vaikuttamisen menetelmien nähtiin kohdistuvan suoraan yksittäisiin journalisteihin ja tuottavan myös yksityiselämän puolelle ulottuvaa henkilökohtaista riskiä. Nykyisessä viestintäympäristössä esimerkiksi yksittäistä journalistia solvaavaa ja mustamaalaavaa materiaalia voidaan verkossa levittää nopeasti ja laajoille yleisöjoukoille, ja sen tuottamiseen voidaan pyrkiä mobilisoimaan erilaisia verkostoja ja yhteisöjä (ks. Rinne 2011). Merkittävä osa haastateltavista koki juuri *vihanilmausten* ja *mustamaalauksen* potentiaalisesti saaman laajan julkisuuden merkittäväksi negatiiviseksi muutokseksi. Kokenut journalisti vertaa tilannetta aikaisempaan:

*Se on erilaista kun loukkaukset ja väitteet on julkisesti näkyvillä verkossa. Yksityisesti sähköpostilla sitä sietää vaikka minkälaista puhetta, mutta kun tietää että ne tekstit on kaikkien luettavissa. (H30)*

Henkilökohtaisiin hyökkäyksiin turvaututtiin journalistien mukaan erityisesti silloin, kun jutun faktoista tai prosesseista ei löydy virheitä tai heikkoja kohtia, joihin voitaisiin julkisuudessa tarttua. Tällöin pyrittiin iskemään yksittäisen journalistin maineeseen. Alle poimittu haastattelulainaus kuvaa näitä pyrkimyksiä:

*[...] pyritään, rapauttamaan mun uskottavuuttani ja luotettavuuttani toimittajana eli siten että levitetään, yleensä se viesti on se et mä valehtelen. [...] mutta ei koskaan osoiteta että missä mä olisin valehdellut, eikä pyydetä oikaisuja ja muuta semmosta vaan se on semmost yleistä mustamaalausta, ja pyritään aiheuttaa semmost mainehaittaa. (H31)*

Vaikka psykologisen vaikuttamisen menetelmillä ei välttämättä nähty olevan suoraa ja välitöntä vaikutusta journalismin sisältöön, ne koettiin usein henkilökohtaisesti kuormittavaksi. Varsinkin jatkuvan ja systemaattisen toiminnan tavoitteena nähtiin olevan työnteon tekeminen mahdollisimman epä mukavaksi ja raskaaksi, jotta journalisti itse päätyisi vaihtamaan aiheitaan tai lähestymistapojaan (ks. Pöyhkäri ym. 2013, 133–137). Journalisti kuvaa käsitystään kokemansa psykologisen vaikuttamisen tavoitteista seuraavalla tavalla:

*Siis ehkä tällasta vähän pelottelua, uuvuttamista mä sanoisin ehkä eniten et, sellasta [...] yritetty tehdä mahdollisimman vaikeaks se työnteke ja sellain viedä mun aikaani ja sitä kautta ehkä saada mut luopumaan jostaki asioista tai ainakin saada mut turhautumaan tai väsyneeks tai, saada mulle, joku julkinen rangaistus esimerkiks vaikka että saisin langettavan julkisen sanan neuvostosta tai jotain täntyyppistä. (H11)*

Yhteistä useimmille psykologisen vaikuttamisen menetelmille oli myös pyrkimys aiheuttaa epävarmuutta, epäluottamusta ja kitkaa journalististen organisaatioiden sisällä. Esimerkiksi solvaavaa ja mustamaalaavaa materiaalia voitiin levittää esihenkilöille ja työyhteisölle tarkoituksena leimata journalisti ammattitaidottomaksi, epäpäteväksi tai motiiveiltaan epäilyttäväksi ja näin hankaloittaa tämän työntekeä vahingoittamalla mainetta työyhteisössä. Tämän torjuminen edellyttää esihenkilöiltä ja työyhteisöltä herk-

kyyttä tunnistaa ja kykyä suodattaa tällaisia vaikutuspyrkimyksiä. Alle poimittu lainaus kuvaa journalistin kokemuksia pyrkimyksistä horjuttaa hänen asemaansa tiedotusvälineessä:

*Mun työnantajalle lähetetään jatkuvasti erilaisii diagnooseja mun mielenterveydestä muun muassa tai, valheita lähetetään että, mitä mä oon muka tehny [...] Jos kaikki ei alkais olemaan mun kohdalla jo hyvin vakuuttuneita siitä että, tai tietosii siit et, mun kohdalla tämänönen on selkeesti valetta. [...] Niin siihen menis kauheesti aikaa niihin selvityksiin. (H3)*

Aikaisemmassa tutkimuksessa jatkuvan ja laajamittaisen painostamisen, vihan ilmausten ja uhkailun on havaittu journalistien kohdalla johtavan useisiin negatiivisiin psykologisiin seurauksiin, ja ilmiötä voidaan perustellusti kuvata psykologiseksi väkivalaksi (Clark & Grech 2017, 12–13). Useat journalistit kokivat, että heihin yksityishenkilöinä kohdistetulla loukkaamisella, häirinnällä, mustamaalaamisella ja uhkailulla pyrittiin tosiasiaassa välillisesti vaikuttamaan heidän toimintaansa ammattiroolissa. Lainaus alla kuvaa tätä:

*[...] ne ei pysty iskemään mun ammattihenkilöön. Sitä ei, meil on kaikilla todella kova kuori, se ammattikuori. [...] Mut mihin ne pääsee käsiks on yksityishenkilö, koska sillä on paljon pehmeämpi se suojakuori, sil yksityisellä ihmisellä.[...] Et murtamalla sen yksityisen henkilön psyykkeen, sen henkisen kantin, päästään käsiksi siihen ammattihenkilöön. Elikkä saadaan se ihminen tekemään yksityishenkilön, yksityishenkilönä päätös esimerkiks luopua siitä ammatista. Tai valita toisin juttuaiheet tai siirtyä tekemään toisenlaisii kokonaan hommia [...]. (H3)*

Vahva ammattirooli ja sen koetut vaatimukset saattoivat myös altistaa journalisteja uupumukselle ja muille negatiivisille psykologisille seurauksille yksityiselämässä. Alana journalismia on leimannut kova maskuliininen eetos, jossa on korostettu kovanahkaisuutta, taipumattomuutta ja alistumattomuutta ulkoisille auktoriteeteille (Ross & De Bruin 2004). Moni haastatelluista korostikin ammattirooliaan ja koki ammatilliseksi velvollisuudekseen jatkaa valitsemiensa aiheiden parissa työskentelyä psykologisesta väkivallasta ja uhkailusta sekä mahdollisista yksityiselämän puolelle ulottuvista seurauksista huolimatta. Tämä paine voi olla erityisen kova esihenkilöasemassa, jossa alaisten ja journalistien suojaamisen ulkoiselta vaikuttamiselta ja painostukselta voidaan nähdä kuuluvan erityisen vahvasti ammattiroolin vaatimuksiin (Revers 2017, 162–165). Jännite koettujen vaatimusten, jaksamisen ja tarpeiden välillä voi olla yksilölle hyvin kuormittava. Alle poimitussa lainauksessa häirinnän kohteeksi johtotehtävissä toimiessaan joutunut journalisti kuvaa omaa kokemustaan:

*[...] totta kai sitten koki tosi paljon vastuuta yhteisölle ja toimittajille, omille työntekijöilleen että koitti olla vahva heidän takiaan, ja että he uskaltais jatkaa sitä työtä mitä siellä varsinakin tuli, niinä vuosina tuli meille tosi paljon nuoria uusia toimittajia ja uusia kykyjä, ja sitten nää jotkut tämmöset veteraanitoimittajat halus myöskin nostaa profiliaan ja halus tehdä aktiivisempaa ja, niinku ehkä rohkeampaa journalismia niin totta kai koitti olla sil-*

*leen hieman niinku esikuva heille ja että niinku kestää ja olla vahva. Että ei se nyt oo kauhean helppoa siinä asemassa sitten myöntää että, tämä sattuu ja tää vaikuttaa minuun ja, on niinku vaikeaa. (H26)*

Vastakeinona psykologisen vaikuttamisen menetelmille journalistit käyttivät toisinaan yleisövuorovaikutuksen välttämistä sekä henkilökohtaisen julkisuuden ja suorien yhteydenottomahdollisuuksien rajoittamista. Journalistit saattoivat esimerkiksi vetäytyä sosiaalisen median ympäristöistä. Tämä viestii siitä, että tietynlaisen julkisuuden ja näkyvyyden koettiin altistavan journalisteja esimerkiksi vihanilmauksille, mustamaalaamiselle ja uhkailulle (ks. Pöyhtäri ym. 2013, 152–154). Kontaktien rajoittamista pidettiin kuitenkin myös ongelmallisena sillä se heikensi esimerkiksi potentiaalisten lähteiden mahdollisuuksia ottaa suoraan yhteyttä journalisteihin. Moni haastateltavista myös mielsi sosiaalisen median tärkeäksi työympäristöksi ja työvälineeksi, jota käytettiin yleisöjen tavoittamiseen ja oman ammatillisen brändin rakentamiseen. Häirinnän kohteeksi joutuminen saattaa siis pakottaa journalistin punnitsemaan erilaisten toimintamallien hyötyjä ja haittoja. Chenin ja kumppanien (2018) tutkimuksessa naisjournalistit kuvasivat joutuvansa verkkoympäristössä valitsemaan sukupuolittuneelle häirinnälle altistavan yleisövuorovaikutuksen tai siitä pidättäytymisen välillä. Koska työnantajat kannustivat voimakkaasti vuorovaikutukseen, naisjournalistit kokivat vuorovaikutuksen välttämisen heikentävän heidän uramahdollisuuksiaan.

Tämän tutkimuksen teemahaastatteluissa journalistit korostivat erityisesti luottamuksen, kommunikaation ja tuen merkitystä psykologisen vaikuttamisen vastakeinona. Journalististen organisaatioiden sisäisen luottamuksen ja kommunikaation nähtiin olevan avainasemassa siinä, etteivät ulkopuoliset toimijat kyenneet painostamalla horjuttamaan tai kyseenalaistamaan journalistien ammattitaitoa, integriteettiä tai asemaa työyhteisön silmissä. Luottamuksen ollessa kunnossa journalistit kokivat pystyvänsä vapaasti myös raportoimaan vaikutusyrityksistä ja ohjaamaan niitä tarvittaessa esihenkilöidensä käsiteltäväksi oman työrauhansa takaamiseksi (ks. Revers 2017, 162–165).

Journalistien joutuessa kokemaan henkistä väkivaltaa tai uhkaa, sisäisen luottamuksen koettiin mahdollistavan sen, että asia otetaan organisaatiossa vakavasti ja että journalistit uskaltavat ja haluavat tarvittaessa turvautua tarjottuun apuun ja tukitoimiin. Tästä journalisteilla oli kaksijakoisia kokemuksia. Osa psykologisen väkivallan ja uhan kohteeksi joutuneista haastateltavista koki saaneensa kaiken mahdollisen tuen työnantajan ja organisaation puolelta. Osalla kokemukset olivat päinvastaisia, ja he olivat kohdanneet vähättelyä ja ymmärtämättömyyttä raportoidessaan kokemuksistaan eteenpäin:

*[...] nää jotka on uutispäälliköinä tai päätoimittajina sanoo että me ei saada antaa valtaa näille [...]. Mut se on heidän hyvin helppo sanoa, koska he ei oo henkilökohtasesti siinä vastaanottamassa tätä. Mä muistan ku mulle tuli ensimmäinen tappouhkaus niin sillonen uutispäällikkö [...] hän oli jotenki kauheen innossaan siitä et oo wow, että nyt tää tappouhkaus et joku on huomannu meitätki. Eikä ne ottanu ollenkaa huomioon sitä et sehän kohdistu minuun henkilönä, eikä se ollu, siin ei ollu tukee millään tasolla. (H29)*



On myös syytä huomioida, että journalisteihin julkisesti kohdistettua uhkailua ja häirintää voidaan tulkita koko tiedotusvälineelle ja laajemmin koko journalistikunnalle osoitettuna viestinä (Hiltunen 2019, 18). Myös ne haastateltavat, joilla ei ollut omakohtaista kokemusta häirinnän kohteeksi joutumisesta, olivat häirinnästä hyvin tietoisia ja toivat oma-aloitteisesti esiin kollegoilleen tapahtuneita tai julkisuudessa esillä olleita tapauksia (ks. myös. Pöyhtäri ym. 2013, 135–136).

### 3) Fyysiset menetelmät

Fyysisiin ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmiin luokittelen kuuluvaksi *journalistisen työn häiritsemisen tai estämisen fyysisessä tilassa, työvälineisiin tai omaisuuteen kohdistuvan vahingonteon ja fyysisen väkivallan*. Nämä on kuvattu taulukossa 5.

**Taulukko 5.** Fyysiset ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmät.

Vaikuttamisen menetelmä	Tyypilliset toteutustavat	Vaikuttamisen tavoitteet	Journalistin vastakeinot
<b>Työnteon häiritseminen tai estäminen</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Journalistisen työn vaikeuttaminen tai estäminen häiritsevällä tai uhkaavalla käytöksellä fyysisessä tilassa.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vaikeuttaa ja häiritä työn tekemistä ja estää journalistinen raportointi julkisuuteen.</li> <li>Heikentää journalistin turvallisuudentunnetta, ja viestiä, ettei media ole tervetullut paikalle.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Etukäteen tehtävä tilannearvio- ja suunnitelma.</li> <li>Turvatoimet ja työskentely pareittain tai ryhmässä.</li> </ul>
<b>Vahingonteko</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Työvälineisiin, työtiloihin tai journalistin henkilökohtaiseen omaisuuteen kohdistuva vahingonteko.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vaikeuttaa journalistisen työn tekemistä.</li> <li>Heikentää journalistin, tämän lähipiirin sekä työyhteisön turvallisuudentunnetta.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erilaiset turvatoimet.</li> </ul>
<b>Väkivalta</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Journalistiin kohdistuva fyysinen väkivalta.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keskeyttää journalistisen työn tekeminen väkivaltaisesti ja pakottaa journalisti poistumaan paikalta.</li> <li>Heikentää journalistin turvallisuudentunnetta, ja viestiä, ettei media ole tervetullut paikalle.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Etukäteen tehtävä tilannearvio- ja suunnitelma.</li> <li>Turvatoimet ja työskentely pareittain tai ryhmässä.</li> </ul>

*Häiritsevää ja uhkaavaa käytöstä* journalistit olivat kokeneet erityisesti mielenosoitusten, oikeudenkäyntien sekä poikkeuksellisten uutistilanteiden yhteydessä. Oikeudenkäynneistä raportoinnin yhteydessä journalistit olivat joutuneet sanallisesti uhaksi sekä uhkaavien lähestymisten ja eleiden kohteeksi. Mielenosoitukset, yleisötahtumat ja tilanteet, joissa journalistit työskentelevät levottomassa ympäristössä ja kohtaavat voimakkaiden tunteiden vallassa olevia ihmisiä, on aikaisemmassa tutkimuksessa tunnistettu riskitekijöiksi journalisteihin kohdistuvalle fyysiselle uhalle (Kodellas ym. 2014). Yhtä tähän tutkimukseen haastatelluista journalisteista oli mielenosoitus-tilanteessa yritetty heittää raskaalla esineellä ja toista tahallisesti kaataa maahan.

Useat haastatelluista journalisteista nostivat esiin impulsiivisen väkivallan uhan. Kun journalistit ovat yhä enemmän esillä omilla kasvoillaan ja henkilöinä (esim. Lehtonen 2013; Koljonen & Reunanen 2014), heidät tunnistetaan aiempaa useammin kadulla ja julkisissa tiloissa. Työhön kohdistuvat mahdolliset uhat voivat näin herkemmin heijastua myös yksityiselämän puolelle. Journalistit kertoivat muun muassa seuraamisesta ja eriasteisesta uhkaavasta käytöksestä. Yksi haastatelluista oli joutunut pahoinpitelyn uhriksi anniskeluravintolassa, kun median toiminnasta hermostunut henkilö oli lyönyt tätä nyrkillä. Muutamilla oli kokemusta läheltä piti -tilanteista, joissa sivulliset henkilöt olivat ehdineet uhkaavaan tilanteeseen väliin.

Uuden viestintäympäristön koettiin edesauttavan verkossa tapahtuvan häirinnän, uhkailun ja mustamaalauksen siirtymistä fyysiseen tilaan (ks. Pöyhtäri ym. 2013, 129–131). Verkon välityksellä voidaan julkisesti yllyttää suurta yleisöä häiritsevään ja uhkaavaan käytökseen sekä konkreettisesti edistää tätä esimerkiksi jakamalla tietoa henkilöistä ja tämän liikkeistä. Tällaisen kohteeksi joutunut journalisti kuvaa lainauksessa kokemuksiaan verkkokeskusteluista:

*[...] nimettömillä keskustelupalstoilla oli [...] ollu sitten havaintoja siitä että missä mä oon liikkunu ja mitä mä oon tehny ja niin pois päin, et jotenki kiinnostavaa et joku vaivaantuu tarkkailemaan tällä tavalla. (H29)*

Osa journalisteista oli vähentänyt julkisilla paikoilla liikkumista ja pyrkinyt välttämään sellaisia ympäristöjä, joissa heidät voitiin tunnistaa. Työn seurausten liukumisella henkilökohtaisen elämän puolelle oli myös vaikutusta journalistien lähipiiriin (ks. myös Pöyhtäri ym. 2013, 132). Alla journalisti kuvaa häiritsevän ja uhkaavan käytöksen vaikutusta perhe-elämäänsä:

*Vielä vois sanoo ton että esimerkiksi sillä on ollut lapsen vaikutus. Se täytyy sanoa että kun johonkin on lapsen kanssa mennyt niin joskus on törmännyt siihen että joku on käynyt huutamaan suupäänä niin sehän on lapsesta aika omituista. Tällästä on sattunut useita kertoja. (H21)*

Fyysisiin uhiin voitiin tarvittaessa vastata proaktiivisesti *ennakkosuunnittelulla, varautumisella ja turvatoimilla* sekä *työskentelemällä pareittain tai ryhmässä*. Turvatoimet saattavat kuitenkin vaikeuttaa ja rajoittaa journalistien työntekeä sekä mahdollisuuksia elää normaalia yksityiselämää.

#### 4) Institutionaaliset menetelmät

Institutionaaliseksi vaikuttamiseksi luokittelin kaikki sellaiset vaikuttamisen menetelmät, joissa käytetään hyväksi yhteiskunnallisia instituutioita. Institutionaaliseksi vaikuttamiseksi määrittelin esimerkiksi *painostustarkoituksessa Julkisen sanan neuvostoon tehdyt kantelut, viranomaiskantelut sekä oikeusjutut ja vahingonkorvausvaatimukset*. Näiden lisäksi institutionaaliseen vaikuttamiseen kuuluvat *viranomaisten käyttämät pakkokeinot* silloin, kun niillä on tarkoitus vaikuttaa journalismin autonomiaan ja journalistisen työn mahdollisuuksiin. Institutionaalisen vaikuttamisen menetelmät ja vastakeinot on tiivistetty taulukkoon 6.

**Taulukko 6.** Institutionaaliset ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmät.

Vaikuttamisen menetelmä	Tyypilliset toteutustavat	Vaikuttamisen tavoitteet	Journalistin vastakeinot
<b>Kanteleminen Julkisen sanan neuvostoon painostustarkoituksessa</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uhkaaminen JSN-kantelulla tai kantelun tekeminen painostustarkoituksessa.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tuottaa sisäistä painetta, epävarmuutta ja epäluottamusta journalistisessa organisaatiossa.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journalistin ohjeiden tunteminen ja huolellinen seuraaminen.</li> </ul>
<b>Viranomaiskantelut</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uhkaaminen kanteluiden tekemisestä erilaisille viranomaistahoille tai kanteluiden tekeminen painostustarkoituksessa.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tuottaa sisäistä painetta, epäluottamusta ja epävarmuutta journalistisessa organisaatiossa.</li> <li>• Käynnistää mahdollisesti työaikaa ja resursseja kuluttavia prosesseja.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lainsäädännön ja viranomaisten toimivaltuuksien tunteminen.</li> </ul>
<b>Oikeusjutut ja vahingonkorvausvaatimukset</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uhkaukset oikeusjutuista tai vahingonkorvausvaatimuksista.</li> <li>• Tutkintapyyntöjen tekeminen.</li> <li>• Suorien korvausvaatimusten lähettäminen.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aiheuttaa journalistiseen prosessiin taloudellisen tai oikeudellisen riskin mahdollisuus.</li> <li>• Tuottaa organisaation sisäistä painetta, epävarmuutta ja epäluottamusta.</li> <li>• Käynnistää työaikaa ja resursseja kuluttavia prosesseja.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journalismille keskeisen lainsäädännön ja sen tulkinnan tunteminen.</li> <li>• Juttujen tarkistuttaminen etukäteen journalistisen organisaation omilla juristeilla.</li> </ul>
<b>Pakkokeinot</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lain suomien pakkokeinojen kohdistaminen journalistiin, tiedotusvälineeseen tai näiden keskeisiin lähteisiin.</li> <li>• Pyrkimykset murtaa lähdesuoja pakkokeinoilla tai haastamalla journalisti todistajaksi oikeuteen.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Murtaa journalistien lähdesuoja.</li> <li>• Pelotella lähteet hiljaisiksi.</li> <li>• Estää määrättyjen aiheiden journalistinen tarkastelu.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pakkokeinojen mahdollisuuden huomioiminen ja niihin varautuminen.</li> <li>• Lähdesuojan turvaaminen poikkeuksellisilla järjestelyillä.</li> </ul>

Myös institutionaalisen vaikuttamisen osalta rajanveto on vaikeaa, sillä kantelut ja rikosilmoitukset ovat sinällään hyväksyttäviä tapoja asettaa mahdollisia väärinkäytöksiä tai rikoksia tutkittavaksi. Niitä tai niiden uhkaa voidaan kuitenkin tietoisesti käyttää journalismin kohdistuvan vaikuttamisen ja painostuksen välineinä, mikä perustellee niiden tarkastelemisen tässä kontekstissa. Esimerkiksi Julkisen sanan neuvosto on itse julkisesti ilmoittanut, että se pyrkii karsimaan kaikki kiusaamis- ja häirintätarkoituksessa tehdyt kantelut (JSN 2016).

Institutionaalisen vaikuttamisen vastakeinoina mainittiin usein *Journalistin ohjeiden* sekä *journalismin näkökulmasta keskeisen lainsäädännön ja sen tulkinnan tuntemus*. Lainsäädäntötuntemuksen katsottiin suojaavan erityisesti institutionaaliseen vaikuttamiseen liittyvältä pelotevaikutukselta. Kun journalisti pystyy toteamaan esimerkiksi tutkintapyyntöt tai korvausvaatimukset sellaisiksi, ettei niillä ole todellisuudessa mahdollisuutta menestyä, tavoiteltu pelotevaikutus menettää tehoaan. Silti näistä menetelmistä voi seurata kuormitusta journalistin työhön. Kokenut oikeustoimittaja kuvaa erään oman tapauksensa vaikutusta näin:

*[...] tuli vahingonkorvauskanneuhkaus. Puhuttiin miljoonakanteesta mikä nyt kuulostaa ehkä vähän ylimitotetulta mut toisaalt, kun tiedettiin myöskin että, tää ihminen on niitä tehny, nii kylhän se vaikuttaa vaikka tietää, että sillä kanteel ei oo läpimenomahdollisuuksii, mutta kun tietää et se aiheuttaa kuitenkin työtä ja vaivaa, nii totta kai se häiritsee tuolla mieles mut ei vaikuta kyllä siihen työhön mä oon sitte tämänki keissin kans jatkanu. Mut kylhän se jossain, kaivertaa ja rasittaa. (H24)*

Oikeudenkäynteihin liittyvä taloudellinen ja oikeudellinen riski sekä työläät ja aikaa vievät oikeusprosessit muodostavat erityisen riskintekijän freelancereille, joiden ei välttämättä ole mahdollista saada näihin tukea työnantajalta. Lisäksi toimittajia voidaan tutkintapyyntöillä pyrkiä tekemään ”osallisiksi” uutisoitavista tapahtumista ja tällä perusteella esittää vaatimuksia näiden jääväämisestä tapauksen journalistisesta käsittelystä (esim. Liski 2020).

## 5) Taloudelliset menetelmät

Taloudelliseen vaikuttamiseen luokittelen kuuluviksi *tiedotusvälineeseen kohdistuvat positiiviset ja negatiiviset taloudelliset sanktiot* sekä pyrkimykset vaikuttaa journalismin sisältöön *journalisteihin kohdistetulla lahjonnalla*. Nämä menetelmät on kirjattu taulukkoon 7.

Taulukko 7. Taloudelliset ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmät.

Vaikuttamisen menetelmä	Tyypilliset toteutustavat	Vaikuttamisen tavoitteet	Journalistin vastakeinot
<b>Taloudelliset sanktiot</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tiedotusvälineeseen kohdistettujen taloudellisten sanktioiden tai niiden uhan käyttäminen vaikutuspyrkimyksissä.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Käyttää taloudellista valtaa journalismin sisältöihin vaikuttamiseen.</li> <li>Luoda korkeampaa kynnystä suurien ilmoittajien tai rahoituksesta päättävien tahojen käsittelemiseen negatiivisissa yhteyksissä.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Journalismin ja liiketoiminnan erot-tavan palomuurin ylläpitäminen.</li> </ul>
<b>Lahjonta</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taloudellisesti merkittävien etujen tai lahjojen tarjoaminen vastineeksi mahdollisuudesta vaikuttaa journalistiseen sisältöön.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vaikuttaa journalismiin taloudellisen suostuttelun avulla.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Etuja ja lahjoja koskevat sisäiset linjaukset ja ohjeet.</li> <li>Kategorinen kieltäytyminen ulkopuolelta tulevista eduista ja lahjoista.</li> </ul>

Välineen koko, rahoitus ja resurssit vaikuttavat yleisesti tiedotusvälineiden kykyyn vastustaa taloudellisia sanktioita. Mitä riippuvaisempia välineet ovat mainosrahoitteisuudesta ja pienestä joukosta ilmoittajia, sitä alttiimpia ne ovat taloudelliselle painostukselle. (Kuutti 1995, 248–250.) Haastattelumateriaalin perusteella taloudellisilla sanktioilla uhkailua ei valtakunnallisissa välineissä yleensä pidetty kovinkaan merkittävänä tekijänä mainostajien suuren määrän takia. Haastateltu journalisti kuvaa tilanetta valtakunnallisen kaupallisen televisiokanavan näkökulmasta:

*[...] mainostajia oli niin hirveesti, että jos sä oisit ryhtynyt tekemään juttuja sillä tavalla että mainostajien lista vasemmassa kädessä että ketä ei saa loukata, niin sitten ois pitänyt heti raakata hirvee määrä aiheita pois koska, VR mainostaa, ei voi tehdä VR:stä, Finnair mainostaa, ei voi tehdä Finnairista, vaalimainontaa ei voi tehdä puolueet, ei tommosta ajattelua harrastettu siellä mun toimituksessa ainakaan. (H18)*

Heikoimmassa asemassa olivat pelkkien mainostulojen varassa olevat tai niistä hyvin riippuvaiset kaupunki- ja paikallislehdet, joissa taloudellinen painostus saattoi toisinaan vaikuttaa konkreettisesti journalismin aihevalintoihin (ks. myös Pöyhtäri ym. 2016, 10). Tiedotusvälineen omat taloudelliset edut saattoivat suuria ilmoittajia käsitellessä asettua konkreettisesti ristiriitaan yleisön tiedonsaantioikeuden ja journalistisen etiikan kanssa. Tällaisissa tilanteissa journalistisen työn ja liiketoiminnan erottavan palomuurin pitävyyden taloudellisen vaikuttamisen vastakeinona korostui. Kaikissa välineissä tämä raja ei journalistien mukaan ollut selvä. Lainauksessa tällai-

sessä lehdessä työskentelevä journalisti kuvaa juttuprosessia, josta joutui luopumaan päätoimittajan määräyksellä, kun jutun kohteeksi paljastui tiedotusvälineen omistavaan yhtiöön kytkeytyvä yritys:

*Näitä tilanteita tulee mainosrahoitteisissa medioissa varmasti paljon vastaan, niin kuin valitettavasti meilläkin. Toimittajan ammattietiikan kannalta ne ovat erittäin ikäviä. Ainakin jos pyrkii noudattamaan journalistin ohjeita ja haluaa olla hyvä sekä luotettava journalisti. Itseäni tämä tilanne harmittaa paljon, koska tässä oli erittäin hyvä juttu noin ammatillisessa mielessä sekä myös lukijoiden kannalta ja nyt en voikaan sitä tehdä. [...] Koen, että petän lukijoiden luottamuksen, vaikka he eivät sitä tietäisikään. Minulla on tieto niin sanotusta yhteiskunnallisesta epäkohdasta ja en voi tuoda sitä julki, vaikka juuri sitä varten työni ja toimittajan ammattinimike on olemassa. Toisaalta en tietenkään halua oman ja muiden työpaikan vaarantuvan ja ymmärrän, miksi emme juttua tee. (H15)*

Haastatellut journalistit toivat esille vastaavaa turhautumista ja ristiriitaisia tunteita kuvatessaan tilanteita, joissa he olivat kokeneet, etteivät he voineet toimia journalististen periaatteiden mukaisesti. Nämä kuvaukset vahvistavat osaltaan havaintoa professionalismien ja autonomian keskeisestä merkityksestä suomalaisten journalistien ammatillisessa itseymmärryksessä (Pöyhtäri ym. 2014, 26; Pöyhtäri ym. 2016). Samanaikaisesti ne havainnollistavat, kuinka vaikeaa yhdistelmävaikuttamisen torjuminen on tilanteissa, joissa journalistinen organisaatio ei tue tätä tavoitetta (ks. myös Kuutti 1995, 248).

Erilaisten etujen, kestitysten ja lahjojen tarjoamisen koettiin vähentyneen merkittävästi aikaisempaan verrattuna. Tätä pidettiin yleisesti terveenä kehityksenä journalismin näkökulmasta. Joissakin tiedotusvälineissä oli myös vastakeinona laadittu yhteisiä periaatteita ja ohjeita etujen ja lahjojen vastaanottamisesta. Muutamilla haastatelluista oli kokemusta kutsuista ja tarjouksista, joita he pitävät lahjonnan kaltaisina vaikuttamisyrityksinä:

*Kyllähän joskus on ollut sellasta lahjontaan viittaavaa että joku hyvä esimerkki että kaupungilla kun tuli arka asia esille ne kutsuivat katsomaan [...] peliä aitoon. Pyrkivät vaikuttamaan ennakolta siihen että miten sitä heidän asiaa minkä he tiesivät että kertoo siitä että on töpätty oikein kunnolla niin sen käsittelyä uskovat et se muuttaa jollakin tavalla. [...] (H21)*

## 6) Tietotekniset menetelmät

Tietotekniseksi vaikuttamiseksi määrittelyn menetelmät, jotka kohdistuvat journalistien tietoteknisiin työvälineisiin ja tapahtuvat pääasiassa tietoverkkojen välityksellä. Nämä kattavat esimerkiksi verkkovakoilun, erilaiset verkkohyökkäykset sekä pyrkimykset murtautua tiedotusvälineiden järjestelmiin tai journalistien sähköposteihin, viestintävälineisiin tai sosiaalisen median profiileihin. Nämä on kuvattu taulukossa 8.

**Taulukko 8.** Tietotekniset ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmät.

Vaikuttamisen menetelmä	Tyypilliset toteutustavat	Vaikuttamisen tavoitteet	Journalistin vastakeinot
<b>Tietomurrot ja verkkovakoilu</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yritykset murtautua teknisesti verkkopalveluihin sekä erilaiset kalastelu- ja verkkohyökkäykset.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saada käsiin arkaluontoista tietoa, esim. journalistien lähteitä.</li> <li>• Saada journalistin yksityiselämästä tietoa, jota voidaan käyttää julkisessa mustamaalauksessa.</li> <li>• Vakoilla journalistin ja tiedotusvälineen toimintaa sekä sisäistä viestintää.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tietoturhasta huolehtiminen.</li> <li>• Kalastelu- ja verkkohyökkäysten takitiikoihin perehtyminen.</li> </ul>

Tietoteknisen vaikuttamisen menetelmiä voidaan käyttää tiedonhankinnan ja seurannan välineenä, ja näin saatavalla informaatiolla voidaan pyrkiä tehostamaan muuntyyppisiä vaikuttamisen menetelmiä. Lisäksi esimerkiksi verkkohyökkäykset saattavat kohdistua koko tiedotusvälineeseen yksittäisen journalistin sijasta, ja vastuu niiden torjumisesta on tällaisissa tilanteissa usein pääasiassa tiedotusvälineen teknisellä henkilöstöllä. Tietoteknisen vaikuttamisen tunnistaminen voi pyrkimysten onnistumisesta riippumatta olla vaikeaa ja edellyttää laajaa tietoteknistä osaamista. Näin ollen vain erittäin harvoilla haastatelluista journalisteista oli näistä menetelmistä tai niiden välittömistä vastakeinoista suoraa omakohtaista kokemusta.

## Lopuksi

Tulosten perusteella voidaan todeta, että journalistit kohtaavat työssään erilaisia ja intensiteetiltään vaihtelevia ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmiä myös Suomen kaltaisessa korkean sananvapauden länsimaassa. Ulkoinen vaikuttaminen on siis syytä tunnistaa tekijäksi, jolla voi potentiaalisesti olla suoria ja epäsuoria vaikutuksia journalismiin ja journalismin autonomiaan ja joka tulisi huomioida laajemmin aihetta tutkittaessa (ks. Reich & Hanitzsch 2013, 133–134; Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring 2016, 889). Vaikuttamisen torjumiseen journalistit soveltavat sekä reaktiivisia että proaktiivisia vastakeinoja. Vastakeinojen tehokas hyödyntäminen kuitenkin edellyttää sitä, että koko journalistinen organisaatio ja komentoketju ovat vahvasti sitoutuneet professionalismiin ja journalismin autonomian ylläpitämiseen.

Tässä artikkelissa esittelemäni luokittelu ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmistä ja vastakeinoista eroaa aikaisemmin mainitusta Luostarisen (1994) typologiasta kahdella keskeisellä tavalla. Ensinnäkin luokitteluni perustuu tutkimuskirjallisuuden sijaan

empiriaan. Empiirisen aineiston käyttö kytkee luokitteluni määrättyyn ajalliseen ja maantieteelliseen kontekstiin, eli laajan yleistettävyyden sijaan pyrin täsmällisemmin kuvaamaan journalisteihin kohdistuvan ulkoisen vaikuttamisen kokonaisuutta nykyisessä hybridissä viestintäympäristössä ja korkean sananvapauden länsimaiden kontekstissa. Luokitteluni pyrkii siis myös tavoittamaan tällaiselle kontekstille tyypillisiä hienovaraisia vaikuttamisen menetelmiä ja mahdollistaa näin yksityiskohtaisemmat jatkoanalyysit ulkoisesta vaikuttamisesta tässä ympäristössä. Toiseksi, luokitteluni kuvaa journalistisen työn tekijöiden näkökulmaa ilmiöön ja siten painottaa luokitteluperusteena journalistien kokemuksia ja näkemyksiä esimerkiksi ulkoisten toimijoiden oletettujen intentioiden sijaan.

Haastatellut journalistit näkivät ulkoisen vaikuttamisen nykytilan kytkeytyvän moniin viestintäympäristön ja yhteiskunnan muutoksiin. Artikkelin lopuksi tarkastelenkin analyysini ja aikaisemman tutkimuksen pohjalta niitä laajempia taustatekijöitä ja kehityskulkuja, joihin ulkoinen vaikuttaminen tämänhetkessä suomalaisessa mediaympäristössä yhdistyy. Olen tiivistänyt nämä neljäksi trendiksi: 1) journalismin omien resurssien heikkeneminen, 2) ammattimaisen viestintätoiminnan kasvu, 3) journalismin haasteet uusien taloudellisten ansaintamallien ja yleisöjen löytämisen kanssa sekä 4) yleisön suunnalta tulevan painostuksen ja uhan lisääntyminen.

Analysoidusta haastattelumateriaalista välittyi vahva huoli siitä, että ulkoista vaikuttamista suuremman rajoitteen journalismin autonomialle muodostaa tulevaisuudessa journalismin omien *resurssien riittävyys* kriittiseen ja tutkivaan työhön. Uhkana nähtiin sisältöjen monimuotoisuuden ja moniäänisyyden köyhtyminen ja journalismin typistyminen tiedotemateriaalin ja muiden tuottamien sisältöjen välittäjäksi (ks. myös Luostarinen 1994, 16). Jos journalismin itsenäisyys ja kriittinen potentiaali sekä näihin pohjautuva erityisasema heikentyvät, myös journalismiin kohdistuvalla ulkoisella vaikuttamisella saavutettavat edut vähenevät (emt.; Kunelius 2003, 23–25). Journalismin omien taloudellisten resurssien heikkenemisen on aikaisemmissa tutkimuksissa havaittu heikentäneen journalistien mahdollisuuksia itsenäiseen toimitukselliseen työhön (Pöyhtäri ym. 2016, 9) ja lisänneen juttujen kierrättämistä sekä valmiin tiedotusmateriaalin käyttöä journalismissa (esim. Nikunen 2011; Juntunen 2011).

Vaikutuskeinoista puhuttaessa paljon yritysten ja viranomaisten kanssa tekemisissä olevat journalistit kuvasivat *viestintätoiminnan kasvua ja ammattimaistumista* Suomessa (vrt. Mykkänen ym. 2020; Kantola & Lounasmeri 2014; Pöyhtäri ym. 2016, 10). Tietojen tarkkaan kontrollointiin perustuvien viestintäoppien nähtiin usein lyöneen läpi yritysmaailman lisäksi myös viranomaisviestinnässä, minkä toimittajat kokivat hankaloittavan journalismin mahdollisuuksia julkisen vallan tarkasteluun. Journalistien huolena oli, että yhä suurempi osa yhteiskunnallisesti merkittävästä vallankäytöstä pyritään saattamaan itsenäisen journalistisen valvonnan ulottumattomiin.

Erityisesti kaupallisille tiedotusvälineille työskentelevät journalistit nostivat usein esiin journalismin haasteet *uusien ansaintamallien ja yleisöjen löytämisessä*. Hybridissä viestintäympäristössä uudentyyppiset toimijat haastavat monelta suunnalta perinteisen journalismin asemaa ja tulonlähteitä (Chadwick 2017). Tilaajamäärien vähetessä haastateltavat pitivät uhkana sitä, että tiedotusvälineet tulevat tulevaisuudessa entistä



riippuvaisemmiksi mainostuloista. Tämän he näkivät potentiaalisesti lisäävän mainostajien valtaa ja tekevän journalismista aiempaa haavoittuvampaa taloudellisten sanktioiden kautta tapahtuvalle vaikuttamiselle ja painostukselle, ellei koko journalistinen organisaatio ole vahvasti sitoutunut liiketoiminnan ja journalismin erottavan palomuurin ylläpitämiseen (vrt. Atal 2018).

Suurimpana muutoksena ulkoisessa vaikuttamisessa pidettiin yleisön ja keskenään samanmielisten toimijoiden muodostamien *verkostojen harjoittaman häirinnän ja painostuksen yleistymistä*. Tämän he näkivät eroavan niistä ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmistä, joihin journalistit ovat tottuneet. Journalistit kokivat olevansa harjaantuneita esimerkiksi juttujen lähteiden ja kohteiden suunnasta tulevan ulkoisen vaikuttamisen suodattamiseen ja saavansa tähän poikkeustapauksia lukuun ottamatta hyvin tukea taustaorganisaatioiltaan. Näiden ulkoisen vaikuttamisen menetelmien torjuminen nähtiin vakiintuneena osana journalistisia rutiineja (vrt. Kuutti 1995, 245), ja haastateltavat kokivat professionalismia ja journalististen organisaatioiden sisäisen luottamuksen mahdollistavan tehokkaasti tällaisten menetelmien vaikutusten ehkäisemisen.

Verkon välityksellä organisoidut painostus- ja uhkailukampanjat koettiin puolestaan arvaamattomiksi ja hallitsemattomiksi, ja niiden nähtiin vaikuttavan ammattiroolin lisäksi uusilla tavoilla journalistien yksityiselämään. Journalistit olivat erityisen huolissaan laajamittaisen henkilöön kohdistuvan häirinnän yleistymisestä, jota yhteiskunnallisen ilmapiirin kiristymisen koettiin ruokkivan. Vaikka journalistiset organisaatiot saattoivat tarjota tukea myös näissä tapauksissa, niiden ei koettu pystyvän estämään tällaista toimintaa tai täysin torjumaan sen vaikutuksia yksittäiseen journalistiin.

Yleisön suunnasta tulevan painostuksen ja uhan epäsuorat ja välilliset seuraukset journalismille ja sen demokraattiselle roolille voivat muodostua merkittäviksi. Pelko häirinnästä ja painostuksesta voi johtaa itsesensuuriin ja vaikenemiseen, mikä muodostaa uhan ilmaisunvapaudelle ja journalismin toimimiselle yhteiskunnallisen tiedon välittäjänä (Pöyhtäri ym. 2013). Aikaisemman tutkimuksen perusteella tällä voi olla merkittäviä seurauksia journalismin sisällöille myös Pohjoismaiden kaltaisissa korkean sananvapauden yhteiskunnissa (ks. Hiltunen 2019; Hiltunen & Suuronen 2020; Pöyhtäri ym. 2013; Löfgren Nilsson & Örnebring 2016; Landsverk Hagen 2015). Useat journalistit nimesivätkin haastatteluissa aiheita, joita eivät mielellään käsittele tällaisten seurausten pelossa. Häirinnän ja uhkailun pelko voi myös ajaa journalisteja pois journalismin parista. Alanvaihdoksen tehnyt journalisti ilmoitti kokemustensa vaikuttaneen siihen, että hän hakeutui pois journalistiselta uralta. Osa muista haastatelluista ilmaisi harkinnensa vastaavaa.

Post ja Kepplinger (2019, 2437) ennustavat, että erilaisten vihamielisten yleisöreaktioiden kohtaamisesta muodostuu tulevaisuudessa entistä tavanomaisempi osa journalistin ammattia. Journalismin autonomian kannalta uudeksi merkittäväksi tekijäksi voikin muodostua se, miten yleisön suunnasta tulevan kuormituksen ja uhan vaikutusta journalisteihin pystytään vähentämään ja torjumaan. Ylipäätään journalismi vasta totuttelee toimimaan viestintäympäristössä, jossa sitä haastetaan yhteiskunnallisesti ja taloudellisesti uusilla tavoilla (Chadwick 2017) ja jossa yleisö odottaa siltä yhä useammin samanlaista julkista vastuuta ja läpinäkyvyyttä kuin muilta yhteiskunnallisilta

vallankäyttäjiltä (Manninen 2019). Suomalaisen journalismin autonomian kannalta onkin keskeistä, miten näihin erisuuntaisiin paineisiin ja vaatimuksiin pystytään vastaamaan ja mukautumaan, ja millaiseen tärkeysjärjestykseen nämä tekijät asetetaan tiedotusvälineissä.

### Rahoitus

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### Kiitokset

*Kiitän tutkijatohtori Reeta Pöyhätäriä (Jyväskylän yliopisto) käsikirjoituksen kommentoinista ja kehitysehdotuksista.*

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## Liite 1.

## Teemahaastattelurunko: Suomalaisiin journalisteihin kohdistuva ulkoinen vaikuttaminen

1. **Oma tausta – Koulutus ja työura**
  - 1.1. Ikä ja sukupuoli?
  - 1.2. Millainen on ammatillinen taustasi? Miten päädyit toimittajaksi?
  - 1.3. Millainen koulutus sinulla on?
  - 1.4. Kuinka kauan olet tehnyt journalistista työtä?
  - 1.5. Missä tiedotusvälineissä olet aiemmin ollut töissä?
  - 1.6. Missä työskentelet tällä hetkellä? Millaisessa työsuhteessa ja missä tehtävissä? Miten kuvailisit tätä tiedotusvälinettä?
  - 1.7. Mistä aiheista teet eniten juttuja? Oletko erikoistunut johonkin aihepiiriin?
  - 1.8. Miten kuvailisit itseäsi toimittajana? (esimerkiksi arvot, pyrkimykset, ammatti-identiteetti)
2. **Kokemukset ulkoisesta vaikuttamisesta**
  - 2.1. Miten sinun tämänhetkiseen journalistiseen työhösi pyritään useimmin vaikuttamaan ulkopuolelta? Voitko antaa tästä esimerkkejä?
  - 2.2. Miten tämä näkyy työssäsi? Millaisten aiheiden ja tapausten yhteydessä ulkoista vaikuttamista esiintyy?
  - 2.3. Millaisista ulkoista vaikuttamista olet kohdannut aikaisemmin työurallasi?
  - 2.4. Onko ulkoisella vaikuttamisella ollut konkreettista vaikutusta toimintaasi journalistina tai tekemääsi journalismiin? Millaista? Onko ulkoisella vaikuttamisella seurauksia työsi kuormittavuuteen?
  - 2.5. Onko sinuun kohdistuvassa ulkoisessa vaikuttamisessa tapahtunut muutoksia? Ovatko esimerkiksi sen määrä tai keinot muuttuneet jollakin tavalla työurasi aikana? Mistä arvelet tämän johtuvan?
  - 2.6. Missä menee mielestäsi raja erittäin kriittisen palautteen ja ulkoisen vaikuttamisen välillä? Millaista käsittelyä toimittajan tulee mielestäsi kestää? Mikä on hyväksyttävää ja mikä ei?
  - 2.7. Onko työhösi pyritty vaikuttamaan haastattelu-tilannetta tai tiedonsaantia ohjaamalla tai rajoittamalla? Millaisissa tilanteissa?
  - 2.8. Miten menettelet haastateltavan pyytäessä lausuntojensa ennakkotarkastusta? Onko tämä johtanut vaikuttamisyrityksiin?
  - 2.9. Miten suhtaudut pyyntöihin muuttaa tai poistaa jutusta jotain ennen julkaisua? Mihin perustat harkintasi näissä tilanteissa? Teetkö poikkeuksia?
3. **Ulkoisen vaikuttamisen käsittely omassa työssä ja työyhteisössä**
  - 3.1. Onko ulkoista vaikuttamista käsitelty omassa työyhteisössäsi?
    - 3.1.1. Kollegoiden kanssa?
    - 3.1.2. Esihenkilöidesi kanssa?
    - 3.1.3. Onko sinulla esimerkkitapauksia aiheen käsittelystä työyhteisön sisällä?
  - 3.2. Miten ulkoista vaikuttamista pyritään torjumaan työyhteisössäsi? Onko tätä suunniteltu tietoisesti? Onko tästä olemassa virallista ohjeistusta tai linjauksia?
  - 3.3. Luotatko esihenkilöidesi tai välineesi omistajien kykyyn torjua ulkoista vaikuttamista? Onko sinulla esimerkkejä tilanteista, joissa on mielestäsi toimittu hyvin tai huonosti?
  - 3.4. Miten hyvin välineessäsi toteutuu mielestäsi se, että toimituksellista sisältöä koskevat päätökset tehdään journalistisin perustein eikä päätösvaltaa luovuteta ulkopuolelle missään tilanteessa?
  - 3.5. Millaisin keinoin välineesi kykyä torjua ulkoista vaikuttamista voitaisiin mielestäsi parantaa?
4. **Näkemykset ulkoisesta vaikuttamisesta**
  - 4.1. Miten arvioisit yleensä suomalaisen journalismin kykyä torjua ulkoista vaikuttamista? Pystyvätkö seuraavat vaikuttamaan journalismin sisältöihin?
    - 4.1.1. Poliitikot
    - 4.1.2. Mainostajat tai yritykset
    - 4.1.3. Intressiryhmät
    - 4.1.4. Yleisö tai muut ulkopuoliset
  - 4.2. Tulisiko ulkoista vaikuttamista tuoda julki? Jos pitäisi, niin miten ja mitä kanavia pitkin? Milloin yleisöllä on oikeus tietää pyrkimyksistä ulkoiseen vaikuttamiseen?
  - 4.3. Oletko itse kehittänyt menetelmiä tai periaatteita ulkoisen vaikuttamisen torjumiseksi? Millaisia?
  - 4.4. Miten journalistien itsenäisyyttä ja riippumattomuutta voitaisiin yleisesti edistää Suomessa? Millaisiin asioihin tulisi kiinnittää huomiota?
  - 4.5. Onko journalisteihin kohdistuva ulkoinen vaikuttaminen mielestäsi yleistynyt tai muuttunut jollakin tavalla? Mistä uskot tämän johtuvan?
  - 4.6. Oletko huolissasi toimittajiin kohdistuvasta vaikuttamisesta? Miksi tai miksi et?
  - 4.7. Onko sinulla aihepiiristä kokemuksia, näkemyksiä tai ajatuksia, joita ei käsitelty aikaisemmin tässä haastattelussa ja jotka pitäisi tuoda siinä julki?

# PUBLICATION IV

## **External Interference in a Hybrid Media Environment**

Ilmari Hiltunen

*Journalism Practice*

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# External Interference in a Hybrid Media Environment

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## ABSTRACT

Contemporary journalists face a multitude of external pressures and threats, ranging from political and commercial interference to online harassment and increasing anti-press hostility. This empirical article examines how the hybridization of the media environment is reflected in journalists' experiences of external interference. The article also explores the factors in journalists' working environment that support their ability to maintain their external autonomy against interference. The article is based on an applied thematic analysis of 31 semi-structured interviews with Finnish journalists supplemented by 4 background interviews with organizational stakeholders. Four major developments were identified in the analysis: (1) a proliferation of publicity control, (2) an increasingly contested public sphere, (3) societal and political polarization, and (4) the personalization of journalism. The autonomy of journalism was supported by a combination of (1) journalistic professionalism, (2) internal confidence within journalistic organizations, and (3) communication and support measures. The findings suggest that the hybridization of the media environment has intensified the external interference and pressure journalists encounter in their work. These, in turn, increase the workload and mental strain related to journalistic work, having the potential to cause fatigue, chilling effects, and self-censorship in the long run.


## KEYWORDS

Autonomy; harassment; hybridity; interference; intimidation; journalism (profession)

## Introduction

The transition to the contemporary networked communication environment has had a significant economic and cultural impact on journalism and the conditions in which journalists conduct their work (Nygren, Dobek-Ostrowska, and Anikina 2015, 79). The authority and power of traditional media actors are being restructured, and the digitalization and proliferation of online communication has provided unprecedented possibilities for individuals and societal actors to participate in creating, steering, and manipulating information flows (Chadwick 2017, 4–5). Mediatization of society has complicated and blurred the distinctions between reality and media representations of reality, and between fact and fiction (Hjarvard 2008, 111–112). For social actors and institutions, these transformations have highlighted the importance of constructing and controlling their representations in both interactive

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and mass media (Hjarvard 2008; Laaksonen 2017). These developments have gone hand in hand with concerns about polarization and fragmentation in the public sphere and their consequences for democracy (Van Aelst et al. 2017).

Amid these transformations, journalism as an institution faces new challenges. Trust in news media is declining and polarizing along political lines (e.g., Reuters Institute 2019, 20–21). The rise of right-wing populism has propelled anti-press sentiments into the political mainstream, leading to a global surge in harassment and public demonization of journalists (Waisbord 2020a, 7–8; Hameleers 2020). The capture of news media by governments and businesses, often working together, has become a widely used tool for influencing and steering public opinion and perspective (Schiffrin 2018). Simultaneously, journalism has suffered a substantial decrease in subscriptions and advertising revenue, reducing the financial resources available (Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2019, 1088–1092). Resources allocated to communications and public relations (PR) have steadily increased, highlighting the growing disparity between journalism and the communications industry (e.g., Jackson and Moloney 2016).

Despite these challenges, journalism has managed to maintain its position as an important arena of public debate and provider of societal information. Contributing factors include the professional ideology of journalism, its observed prestige, and its ability to create a collective public forum for diverse interests (Waisbord 2013; Luostarinen 1994, 28–29). Due to journalism's perceived autonomy, audience expectations are radically different from those for, say, advertising or political communication, which are fundamentally recognized as partisan and persuasive forms of communication (Kunelius 2003, 23). The benefits of being able to steer or influence journalism to one's benefit or strategically silence it can, therefore, be significant for external actors (Luostarinen 1994, 53–56; Schiffrin 2018).

However, external threats and challenges to journalism's autonomy have been severely understudied in the context of Western countries with high press freedom, where there has existed a tendency to take journalistic autonomy and the physical and mental safety of journalists for granted (Reich and Hanitzsch 2013, 134; Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016, 880–881). This article examines empirically how the hybridization of the media environment has affected external pressures and threats from the perspective of Finnish legacy media journalists. The article also explores features that journalists consider crucial to their ability to resist the effects of external interference. By using Finland as an example, this article examines external interference and its implications in a democratic and stable European country with strong safeguards for media autonomy, effectively bridging gaps in previous research.

The research questions are as follows:

RQ1: How is the hybridization of the media environment reflected in journalists' experiences of external interference?

RQ2: What factors in journalists' working environment support their ability to maintain their external autonomy against interference?

This article represents qualitative component of a mixed-methods study exploring external interference in Finnish journalism. The quantitative findings concerning the prevalence, methods, and implications of external interference are presented in previous publications (Hiltunen 2019; Hiltunen and Suuronen 2019, 2020).

## Theoretical Framework and Key Concepts

### **Hybrid Media Environment**

This article steers away from a media systemic approach to hybridity and instead opts to regard media hybridity as an assemblage of features brought on and intensified by technological and social transformations. The defining element of hybridity is the interplay between older and newer, characterized by co-dependency and constant adaptation (Chadwick 2017, 4–5). Reflecting this, I do not argue that methods of external interference or factors supporting journalists' autonomy discussed in this article are necessarily something novel. However, in order to understand their current manifestations and significance, we need to consider how the features of contemporary hybrid media environment have transformed them (cf. Gulyas 2017, 886–887). Adopting the hybrid media environment as a framework for research is, therefore, an effort to address the rapid changes that have altered the way in which journalism is produced, distributed, and received and the role it plays in contemporary society (Gulyas 2017, 885–886).

In light of previous literature (Chadwick 2017; Gulyas 2017; Laaksonen 2017; Blach-Ørsten, Eberholst, and Burkal 2017; Anderson 2013), I ground my analysis on three features of the hybrid media environment I consider crucial for understanding contemporary manifestations of external interference: increased complexity, the blurring of boundaries and the diffusion of power.

*Increased complexity* refers to the increased opportunities for public expression and the construction of media publicity. Due to digitalization and the proliferation of online media platforms (Blach-Ørsten, Eberholst, and Burkal 2017, 336), there has been a transition from the practical monopolies of traditional mass media to a high-choice media environment (Van Aelst et al. 2017). The once relatively stable and commonly shared public sphere within the legacy media is turning into a mosaic comprising an ever-increasing number of smaller shards due to the multiplicity of media forms, outlets, and logics (Chadwick 2017, 25).

The *blurring of boundaries* highlights how the hybridization complicates the traditional distinctions and positions. Due to increased opportunities for public expression, journalists have lost their role as dominant gatekeepers of the public sphere, and the power of one-way mass media has given way to the proliferation of interactive, participatory, and self-organized forms of media and communication (Anderson 2013; Ahva 2017). This has made it difficult to draw clear-cut separations between producers and receivers, as there are unprecedentedly low barriers of access and increasing possibilities to address the public directly (Bruns 2007). Simultaneously, hybridity contributes to the shifting boundaries between public and private and professional and personal by introducing digital media spheres that occupy the liminal spaces in between and encourage communication crossing these lines (e.g., Jameson 2014).

Due to the increased complexity and blurring boundaries, the *power to influence representations, frames, and interpretations in public spheres is diffusing*. As actors ranging from individuals to networked activists to institutions, corporations and states have manifold ways to construct, steer and contest representations publicly and in real time, the intensity and number of actors involved in these processes are unparalleled compared to the analog era (Chadwick 2017). While representations produced by legacy media journalism are still influential, they are debated, adapted, and challenged in new ways in

public, and journalism in turn often taps into representations circling in digital media spheres (Chadwick 2017; Laaksonen 2017). In this environment, power and representations are increasingly unstable, as they are formed, steered, and fought over by a myriad of voices amid constant hybrid cacophony (Laaksonen 2017).

The aim of this article is to explore how legacy media journalists' aspirations for external autonomy and independent reporting are being challenged within contemporary hybrid environment characterized by ever-increasing complexity, dissolution of boundaries and dispersing power.

### ***Journalistic Autonomy***

Autonomy has been considered the fundamental building block of modern journalism (Deuze 2005) and can be understood as the professional aspiration of journalists to protect their work from any attempts at manipulation or interference (Kunelius 2003, 23). Autonomous position has been considered critical for the democratic role of journalism, enabling it to publicly report and discuss matters considered disconcerting by politicians and other powerful societal actors (Luostarinen 1994).

Studies typically separate two analytical dimensions of journalistic autonomy: external and internal (Nygren, Dobek-Ostrowska, and Anikina 2015, 80–81). The external dimension refers to the societal and political autonomy of journalism and the extent to which journalists are protected from forces external to journalistic organizations. The internal dimension highlights the extent to which journalists can make their decisions free from management pressures and forces inside media outlets (Reich and Hanitzsch 2013, 135). This article focuses on the external dimension of autonomy and examines methods that outside actors utilize when trying to transgress the external boundaries of journalistic autonomy.

Critical scholars, like Schudson (2005), have pointed out that the significance of autonomy in journalism can be problematized and too much autonomy could actually be harmful for the democratic mission of journalism. If journalism becomes too elitist, insular, and detached from the public and the society, there is a risk of journalism losing its relevance and democratic potential. However, I disagree with the notion that vulnerability to external pressures is needed to keep journalism responsive to society at large (Schudson 2005, 220–221), as the traditional journalistic ideals emphasizing informing the public and cultivating democratic participation act to keep journalism attuned to its democratic role in society. While I agree with the notion that “journalistic autonomy cannot be a value for its own sake” (Schudson 2005, 222), I perceive autonomy as necessary requirement for journalism to be able to fulfill its democratic role representing the collective interests of the public instead of being harnessed to serve narrow partisan ones (Kunelius 2003, 24–25). Therefore, I argue that the concept of autonomy is especially suitable for an empirical study focusing on methods that actively aim to influence how journalistic work is conducted and what information it conveys to the public.

### ***External and Mixed Interference***

For this article, *external interference* is defined broadly as all active and/or invasive methods actors external to journalistic organizations use to interfere in the journalistic process and to influence journalists and editorial content (see also Luostarinen 1994;

Shoemaker and Reese 1996). Methods of external interference can also be used strategically to induce a chilling effect and self-censorship among journalists with the aim of influencing journalism in the future (see Clark and Grech 2017).

*Mixed interference*, defined as situations in which external interference is transmitted internally through a media organization's chain of command, is also included within the scope of the study (Hemánus 1983, 192; Goyanes, Vaz-Álvarez, and Demeter 2020; Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2019).

The definition of external interference used in this article emphasizes the individual experience and perspective of journalists, thus rendering the social phenomenon accessible to the researcher (see Reich and Hanitzsch 2013, 136). By using this type of broad definition, it is possible to simultaneously study low-intensity interference alongside more intrusive and aggressive methods, allowing for a nuanced overall picture of the phenomenon. This definition, however, excludes standard PR activities such as press releases and press conferences, information subsidies, and other similar agenda-building efforts (Mykkänen and Ikonen 2019). While one can argue that these practices can have a significant impact on journalistic content, these activities do not actively limit or violate the external autonomy of journalism because the decision whether to engage with PR activities and material remains with the journalists. Therefore, they are not included within the scope of this study.

## **Context: Journalistic Culture in Finland**

Finland, like other Nordic countries, ranks very high in measures of media freedom. Systemic factors supporting media autonomy in Finland include the strong position of public service broadcast media, high newspaper circulation, high levels of professionalism, institutional self-regulation via an independent press council, and low political parallelism in the media (Nord 2008). These are reflected in the journalistic culture; Finnish journalists report a high degree of perceived professional autonomy and seem to regard themselves as distant from direct political, government, and business influences (Väliveronen, Ahva, and Pöyhtäri 2016).

Comparatively, Finnish journalists feel less economic pressure than journalists in non-Nordic countries where press freedom is high do, indicating that the influence of commercialization and growing competitiveness are moderated by the traditions and structural particularities of the Nordic media system (Ahva et al. 2017, 607). When compared to other Nordic countries, however, Finnish and Danish journalists reported significantly more political influence in their work (Ahva et al. 2017, 607).

While trust in the news media has remained relatively high in Finland (Reuters Institute 2019, 20–21), there is evidence of a gradual decline and polarization along partisan lines (Matikainen et al. 2020; Sivonen and Saarinen 2018).

## **Material and Method**

This article is based on a qualitative analysis of 31 semi-structured one-on-one interviews conducted with Finnish journalists. To further contextualize the findings, four background interviews were conducted at a later stage of the study with the chairpersons from *the Union of Journalists in Finland*, *the Finnish Association of Editors*, and *The Council for Mass Media in Finland*, and with the Head of Journalistic Standards and Ethics of the

Finnish Broadcasting Company (*Yleisradio Oy*). All the interviews were conducted between January 2018 and December 2019 and were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

### **Sample and Procedure**

For the journalist interviews, the study combined critical case sampling ( $n = 15$ ) with maximum variety sampling ( $n = 16$ ) (Patton 1990, 172–176). The critical case sample consisted of 15 interviews with high-profile Finnish journalists reporting on topics identified as prone to external interference and pressure such as politics, business, crime, immigration, and investigative reporting (c.f. Parker 2015, 96–99). The maximum variety sample comprised 16 journalists who, in the 2017 research survey (Hiltunen 2019), expressed their interest in participating in a follow-up interview. The sampling processes were guided by the aim of maximizing variance among the interviewees, with journalists from different demographics, types of employment, occupational positions, media outlets, and specializations represented in the sample. One contacted journalist declined to participate in the study due to personal reasons.

The combination of sampling methods contributed a rich and diverse set of material (Patton 1990, 185–186). However, due to the slant towards journalists who presumably encounter external interference the most, the sample is not representative in relation to the whole population. The findings should be, therefore, regarded as illustrative, highlighting phenomena that may gradually become more commonplace among all Finnish journalists.

The key demographic characteristics of the sample are illustrated in Table 1.

The age range of interviewees varied from 27 to 65 years, with the average age being 44 years. The journalistic work experience of the interviewees ranged from 8 years to 42 years, with the average work experience being 21 years. Of the interviewees, 22 had salaried positions in media outlets and 7 worked as freelancers. One interviewee had a combination of employment types and one had recently switched careers. The employing media outlets of the salaried journalists are illustrated in Table 2.

Of the semi-structured interviews, 24 were conducted using Skype or similar voice-over-internet-protocol software with video connections and 7 were conducted face-to-face. The length of the interviews varied from 43 min to 121 min, with the average length being 73 min.

### **Interview Guide**

The semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix A) addressed three topic areas: (1) personal experiences of external interference, (2) reactions to external interference, and (3) perceptions of how external interference affects journalistic work and profession.

**Table 1.** Key demographic features of the interview sample ( $n = 31$ ).

Gender	<i>n</i>	Education	<i>n</i>	Occupational position	<i>n</i>
Female	18	Master's degree or higher academic degree	14	Editor-in-chief	3
Male	13	Bachelor's degree	3	Managing editor	4
		University of applied sciences degree	4	Producer	1
		University studies without a degree	4	Special reporter	9
		Upper secondary school degree	4	Reporter	14
		Vocational degree	2		

**Table 2.** Employing media outlets of salaried journalists ( $n = 22$ ).

Media outlet	<i>n</i>
National newspaper	3
Public broadcasting	3
Tabloid newspaper	3
Semi-local newspaper	3
Local newspaper	3
Magazine	3
Regional newspaper	2
Commercial broadcasting	1
News agency	1

The flexible structure of the interviews made it possible to emphasize various aspects of interference with different interviewees, producing an information-rich tapestry of experiences and perspectives (Ryan, Coughlan, and Cronin 2009). Because the subject matter can be considered sensitive the material has been used anonymously, with minimal identifying features.

### **Coding and Analysis**

The research follows the sociological tradition of situating texts as proxies for experience, regarding them as representations of individuals' perceptions, feelings, knowledge, and behavior (Bernard and Ryan 1998). The material was analyzed using inductive applied thematic analysis with the aim of identifying both implicit and explicit ideas within it and grouping together interrelated ideas as themes (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey 2012). Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti 8 was used in the process.

The material was coded and analyzed in two rounds. In the first round, a descriptive coding strategy was used to develop initial codes (Saldaña 2013, 87–91). By examining and cataloging how journalists reflected on their experiences, feelings, and perceptions, the material was condensed, and an initial classification was constructed. The second round employed pattern coding to explore commonalities, differences, and relationships between the codes, and interrelated elements were combined (Saldaña 2013, 209–213). By merging related elements, it was possible to refine the material into themes. As these themes pointed to specific developments within the working environment of journalists, the concept of a hybrid media environment was chosen as a framework for the analysis. The findings are presented below, with extracts from the interviews translated by the author used to illustrate how interviewees reflected on the research themes.

## **Findings**

### **Hybridization of the Media Environment**

When comparing the experiences of interference with the aspects of hybridization, four major developments were identified: (1) a proliferation of publicity control, (2) an increasingly contested public sphere, (3) political and social polarization, and (4) personalization of journalism.



### ***Proliferation of Publicity Control***

In a complex communication environment in which both the interactive and mass media have become more ubiquitous and socially influential, societal actors spend increasing amounts of resources on constructing and controlling their media presence and representations (Hjarvard 2008; Laaksonen 2017). The interviews indicate that these efforts are reflected in the way in which various actors interacted with journalists and journalism.

For journalists, these aspirations manifested as increased efforts to influence and control journalistic processes and their outcomes. Interviewed journalists described how, in addition to utilizing standard PR and lobbying strategies (see Mykkänen and Ikonen 2019) communications professionals actively interfered in the conduct of journalism by controlling access to sources and information, monitoring and intervening in interviews, and contacting and pressuring journalists on behalf of their clients. Journalists also reported communications professionals putting out untruthful public statements disputing their stories and actively contacting their superiors to discredit their stories and sources.

These practices were described as seeping from corporations into public governance. The quotation below shows how one investigative journalist perceives the influx of business communications practices into public administration:

From my perspective, they have started to employ a very similar repertoire of tricks [...] they have simply copied what the businesses are doing without giving any thought to whether good governmental communication should somehow be different from corporate PR. (Interview 28)

Efforts to protect their public image were also cited as reasons for government officials' occasional reluctance to provide public information and documents to journalists, effectively violating the Finnish legislation regarding the openness of government activities. Journalists encountered this especially when the information could be considered disconcerting for the authorities or parties close to them.

Another symptom of increased publicity control was the observed proliferation of threats invoking legal repercussions. While the interviewees perceived the majority of these to be unfounded and made only to pressure and intimidate, even the possibility of lengthy, laborious, and time-consuming legal processes was often enough to introduce additional workload and mental strain into journalistic activities.

The increased efforts at interfering in journalistic processes highlight how autonomous journalism can be perceived as a reputational risk in the hybrid media environment. Because societal actors have multiple communication channels at their own disposal and invest more and more resources in constructing their public representation and promoting their interests through communicational activities (Laaksonen 2017), independent journalism can be seen more as a hazard than a benefit, from the actors' perspective.

### ***Increasingly Contested Public Sphere***

While the representations produced by journalism have always been a subject of contest and debate, interviewees perceived the conflicts in the public sphere as having intensified and as brought more directly to journalists (see also Post and Kepplinger 2019; Craft, Vos, and Wolfgang 2016). Waisbord (2020a, 3) states that in the analog era, opportunities for public expression were limited due to higher barriers to access and the dominant position



of the press as a gatekeeper. Groups willing to interfere with journalism or challenge its representations were forced to use resource-intensive, time-consuming, and laborious tactics (Waisbord 2020a, 3). However, the proliferation of digital media platforms and of possibilities for interaction have made it easy to construct networks that form their own alternative or counter publics and to engage in reflexive political action seeking to influence mainstream journalism (Häyhtiö and Rinne 2009; Hatakka 2019; Noppari, Hiltunen, and Ahva 2019).

Several interviewees reported experiences of coordinated interference by groups and networks fitting this description and promoting, for example, anti-vaccination, anti-immigration or pro-Russia views. This interference included verbal abuse, verbal threats, orchestrated public defamation and discrediting, and various forms of harassment. In addition, these groups utilized social media and other online platforms to publicly fan collective aggression toward journalists (see also Waisbord 2020b). The explicit goal was to incite other members of the audience to participate in harassing behaviors, effectively crowdsourcing the harassment (Bartlett and Chan 2020). Journalists targeted with this kind of interference experienced it as explicit effort to silence them, as illustrated by the quote below:

What they are hoping to accomplish is for me not to cover these issues [...] As I am one of the few journalists that actively follows this field in Finland, getting me to stop would be a pretty huge victory for them. (Interview 31)

While only few interviewees explicitly mentioned engaging in self-censorship or brought up other direct effects on their journalism caused by harassment, most of them reported negative psychological effects because of it. While harassment did not necessarily have a direct effect on their professional journalistic conduct, it created an additional stressor and affected their physical and mental well-being. In the quote below, a journalist who had experienced long-term harassment while working in an editorial role recounts their experience of the psychological effects:

I was living under a constant threat of psychological violence. I always feared what they were going to come up with next [...] In a way, the most serious consequences are inside your own head [...] you start to contemplate all kinds of possibilities. (Interview 26)

### ***Societal and Political Polarization***

Societal and political polarization were identified by the interviewees as both symptoms and driving forces of the erosion of public trust in journalism, going hand in hand with increasingly contested and fragmented public sphere (see also Matikainen et al. 2020, 80–81; Sivonen and Saarinen 2018; Noppari, Hiltunen, and Ahva 2019, 33–34). Political populism was often explicitly identified as the main catalyst for polarization, creating divisions and explicitly inciting mistrust against journalism as an institution (see Waisbord 2020a, 7–8; Hameleers 2020). This was considered a new feature in the Finnish public sphere, as one managing editor notes:

[...] political polarization has become evident [...] certain rifts relate to populist politics and a growing nationalist, anti-immigration ethos, as well as the rise of simplified truths [...] they are adapting methods that have been internationally successful and transferring them to the Finnish context, which is a somewhat new thing for a country with a long tradition of consensus. (Interview 22)

Polarization was perceived contributing to situations in which journalists felt that they were forcibly dragged into societal struggles (see Ojala and Pöyhtäri 2018). Instead of seeing journalism as neutral and detached, various actors had a tendency to blame journalism for taking sides, thus justifying the view of journalists as “fair game” for interference and attacks. This was regarded as extremely unfair by journalists, who highlighted their commitment to traditional professional values of accuracy and balanced reporting. This rift in perceptions illustrates contestation over the professional role of journalists as journalism is increasingly seen as a politicized practice (Ojala and Pöyhtäri 2018, 169). Below, a special reporter describes their perspective on the matter:

Nowadays, it feels like many people are under impression that [...] journalists always have some kind of an agenda and that we are somehow against ordinary people. Many people share that kind of notion. I find that extremely scary. (Interview 3)

While the interviewees did not generally observe a dramatic change in the general public, they felt that individuals and groups engaging in antagonistic language and extremist views had become more active and visible due to the possibilities provided by the hybrid media environment. For journalists, polarization was manifested by an increasingly aggressive public discourse and hostile attitudes toward journalism and journalists. Interviewees reported that this also contributed to the increased threat of disruption and verbal and physical aggression when reporting from the field. A few had personal experiences of physical threats and violence related to hostility toward the media.

### ***Personalization of Journalism***

Most of the journalists expressed concern about the dissolution of the professional and private roles of the journalist from the audience perspective. They felt that the hybrid media environment is characterized by personalization; personal visibility of journalists is increasing, and public attention is shifting away from journalism toward the journalists doing the reporting (see also Waisbord 2020b, 6–8).

Due to the increased contestation and polarization, personalization led to situations in which individual journalists started to symbolize societal causes in the eyes of the public. This illustrates how the public image of journalists is increasingly shaped by multiple actors and interactions in the hybrid media sphere. While this symbolization can be beneficial for journalists when building their professional recognition, it also dissolves the boundaries between journalists, activists, and other public voices. Below a freelance reporter reflects on how the public perception of their professional brand has affected their career but also the interference directed at them:

I have not planned it. On the contrary [...] but of course I have benefited from my brand and the recognition [...] But if there is a considerable group of people that find this type of reporter and this type of public voice and figure important, not only in a journalistic sense but also in the sense of public discussion, there is usually also a flip side. Because figures like that always have a counterweight and a counterforce. (Interview 27)

For journalists working with sensitive topics, personalization placed new pressures on how they performed, not only in their professional but also in their personal lives, because anything from their personal history could be used to discredit or defame them (cf. Revers 2017, 165–166). The combination of personalization and accessibility

to information online has increased the need for journalists to think ahead and consider their personal information and digital footprints more carefully (Waisbord 2020a, 3–4). Interviewees described how personalization led to an increase in harassment targeting the private personas of journalists as well as defamation campaigns featuring elements of character assassination (see also Clark and Horsley 2020, 47–51). Most of the interviewees expressed concerns over personal attacks becoming more widespread, and several brought up examples of how they had been used as a means of psychological pressure toward them. Some pointed out how these effects were made worse by the public visibility of insults and defamation online. Below, an editor-in-chief describes the difference between the experience of being targeted with personal attacks and other types of interference:

When they target your personal characteristics instead of your professional role [...] you are left quite unarmed. If they attack my professional self, I have my professional role and professional defenses in place, but when they attack my persona, there really is nothing. (Interview 6)

Personalization was also connected to a variety of physical threats. Interviewees reported experiences of stalking and situations featuring threats of impulsive violence as a result of people recognizing them in public.

Interviewees' general attitudes toward personalization and public brand-building were divided. Several of them brought up positive effects, while others explicitly rejected any additional visibility or audience interaction. Despite these differences, interviewed journalists shared a unanimous position that while their journalistic work could justifiably be subjected to harsh public criticism, their private lives were not fair game for similar treatment. However, several of them pointed out that in the contemporary communication environment, the decision regarding personal publicity was not entirely up to journalists themselves. Other actors can direct unwanted public attention onto journalists' private personas, effectively forcing them into the limelight (see also Waisbord 2020b, 1–2).

### ***Factors Supporting Journalists' Professional Autonomy Against External Interference***

When examining the factors that support the autonomy of journalists against external interference, three main themes were identified: (1) journalistic professionalism, (2) internal confidence within journalistic organizations, and (3) communication and support measures. While these are examined separately here, in reality they are fundamentally intertwined and build upon each other. This separation should therefore be understood only as an analytical necessity.

Although freelancers are not formally part of journalistic organizations, their interviews indicated almost identical views on factors supporting their journalistic autonomy. Therefore, the concept of journalistic organization used refers to media outlets of both salaried employees and freelancers alike.

#### ***Journalistic Professionalism***

When discussing factors supporting journalistic autonomy against external interference, journalists highlighted the paramount importance of journalistic professionalism. On

the basis of Bourdieu's field theory (1993), Waisbord (2013, 10–13) defined journalists' ability to set up boundaries, exercise control, and force their professional logics over the social field of journalism as the central features of the journalistic profession. As social fields are characterized by constant interaction, the journalistic profession is engaged in continuous boundary work (Bourdieu 1984; Revers 2017) to negotiate its relations to fields like politics and economy and to guard journalistic logic from their encroachment (see also Goyanes, Vaz-Álvarez, and Demeter 2020; Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2019).

Previous studies have identified a strong commitment to professionalism, journalism ethics, and to the role of a detached and objective observer as characteristic of Finnish journalism culture (e.g., Väliverronen, Ahva, and Pöyhtäri 2016; Reunanen and Koljonen 2014). These notions were supported by the interview material; journalists expressed a strong desire to uphold these commitments and perceived resistance to external influence as an important aspect of their work. Highlighting these commitments can also be considered an effort to reinforce the boundaries between journalism and other media content and between professional journalists and actors like bloggers and social media activists (cf. Anderson 2013, 98).

Instead of targeting journalists directly, external actors often aim to interfere by contacting journalists' superiors or the owners of their media outlet (see also Goyanes and Rodríguez-Castro 2019). Interviewees, therefore, emphasized the importance of shared professional principles. When everyone in the journalistic organization was committed to common professional values and ideals, journalists could rely on their editors and the owners not to give in to any external interference and uphold the firewall between editorial and advertising content (cf. Duffy and Cheng 2020). This made it possible for journalists to work adhering to their professional guidelines and ensured the predictability of editorial decisions. Shared professional commitment was also seen as important in preventing the formation of so-called "parallel newsrooms," internal cliques of journalists willing to collaborate with external actors (Goyanes, Vaz-Álvarez, and Demeter 2020, 7).

Journalists voiced explicit disappointment in cases where they felt that their professional aspirations were not shared or supported by their journalistic organizations. These incidents typically took form of mixed interference: external pressure cascaded through editors perceived as sympathetic to external actors' interests (Hemánus 1983, 192; Kuutti 1995, 246–250; Goyanes, Vaz-Álvarez, and Demeter 2020, 8–10). This highlights how one weak link in the organizational chain of command can nullify the efforts of resistance to external interference. Below, a reporter reflects on how the weak professional commitment of the editor-in-chief undermined the whole newsroom's aspiration for autonomy:

Our editor-in-chief is easily influenced [...] and by exploiting this, his contact circle can bring out their preferred topics, effectively bypassing normal journalistic procedures. [...] When your superior does not have a strong journalistic outlook, external actors are able to get the newspaper to serve their commercial interests more easily. (Interview 2)

The strong professional commitment was also evidenced by reports from several interviewees who had continued their work despite being targeted with aggressive harassment and interference. Previous research has demonstrated how interference and attacks against their work can lead to increased defiance, resilience, and determination among

journalists (Clark and Horsley 2020; Post and Kepplinger 2019; Clark and Grech 2017). However, Parker (2015, 132–133) notes that strong occupational commitment can be a double-edged sword because people who feel a calling to their work are also more likely to make sacrifices for their jobs. Journalists subscribing to a strong professional identity may therefore be more ready to prioritize their occupational commitment over their individual well-being (see Clark and Horsley 2020, 82–84, 107–108). While this may mitigate the direct effects of external interference on journalism, it can simultaneously have serious detrimental consequences for individual journalists. In the quote below, a reporter reflects on how they manage the emotional toll of harassment by foregrounding their professional role:

They are trying to manipulate my emotions to prevent me from doing my job [...] but a professional journalist does not make any decisions on the basis of their feelings but according to journalistic guidelines [...] if they manage to distress me, I will process it in therapy rather than let it show in my work. I am trying to separate my own personal emotional life and my professional duties and rights in every possible way. (Interview 4)

### ***Internal Confidence Within Journalistic Organizations***

When working in an environment characterized by increased external pressures, journalists see internal confidence within journalistic organizations as another factor that significantly supports their aspirations for professional autonomy. In journalistic organizations, internal confidence comprises multiple trust relationships: between reporters and managing editors, between managing editors and editors-in-chief, and between editors-in-chief and the board and the owners of the media outlet (Hiltunen and Suuronen 2020, 15).

According to the interviewees, the fostering of internal confidence made it easier to continue their work in times of heightened external pressure, echoing description of *editorial defense shield* by Revers (2017, 162–163). When faced with interference or threats, journalists could convey these to their editors, who then sprung to their defense, shielding journalists and their work (see also Kuutti 1995, 246). Naturally, this requires a strong two-way confidence between reporters and their superiors. Below, an investigative journalist describes how support from their superiors contributed to their ability to conduct their work when faced with external interference:

I have been fortunate with my superiors [...] They have stood between me and interference [...] they have said that I should just focus on my work and they will take care of all the correspondence and the fallout. (Interview 30)

However, if internal confidence faltered as a result of newsroom conflicts, it was not easily repaired. Interviewees who had worked in these types of conditions described long-lasting distrust resulting from incidents that had decreased their confidence in their organization. Below, a special reporter recalls their managing editors' reaction when their story was contested by a subject with high societal status. Eventually, the story in question proved accurate.

I have had such problems that I do not necessarily trust my managing editors. [...] I was so irritated by the speed with which my bosses believed I was wrong when someone with sufficient authority simply claimed so. [...] In my opinion, superiors should be able to consider various arguments and evidence, not just who is behind some claim. (Interview 13)

The significance of internal confidence was also highlighted when journalists were targeted with false claims and defamation aimed at influencing their professional and personal reputation (see Post and Kepplinger 2019, 2426). According to the journalists, the goal of these was often to diminish their professional recognition among their colleagues and make their work more difficult by labeling them as suspicious and problematic persons. These defamation efforts could target their employer, their superiors, and their colleagues simultaneously, testing the internal confidence of the whole organization. One special reporter described their experiences regarding these tactics and the role internal confidence plays in countering the effects:

My employer regularly receives things like diagnoses of my mental health and untruthful claims about what I have supposedly done [...] If everyone would not be completely convinced that these are blatant lies [...] it would take a tremendous amount of time to clear these things up. (Interview 3)

### ***Communication and Support Measures***

Building on internal confidence, interviewees saw open communication and active support as crucial elements in countering the detrimental effects of external interference. When journalists felt that they could rely on the support of their superiors and employers, they were willing to report and openly discuss matters related to interference. At the opposite end of the spectrum, journalists who expressed mistrust tended to keep these incidents to themselves and mostly tried to deal with them on their own.

The analysis revealed striking differences in the perceived level of organizational support. Some journalists reported that their employers had gone to significant lengths to help them deal with external pressure or organized harassment, providing both material and mental support and explicitly communicating their commitment to supporting them. Others described how the lack of response from their superiors and employers had left them demoralized and unwilling to report any incidences of interference to them. Both salaried employees and freelancers reported occasionally having experienced insufficient organizational support. While freelancers highlighted how their detached position sometimes made communication and getting support difficult, salaried journalists typically saw the lack of support as symptomatic of problems in attitudes and personnel within the organization. Below, a salaried special reporter recounts how their employer's lack of response to their reports of online harassment and defamation had affected their perception of support:

I have not reported even half of it to my employer because I have noticed that it is not worth it given the lack of response [...] I do not have any reason to expect or assume that my employer would support me in these matters, so I do not even bother to try anymore. Instead, I will seek support elsewhere. (Interview 23)

Even if journalists are not personally targeted, they can form attitudes based on interference and harassment they see targeted at others (Lewis, Zamith, and Coddington 2020, 15–16). This so-called bystander effect ensures that support or the lack of it is easily perceived as communicational action by the employer. The interviews indicate that inconsistencies regarding the level of support and indeterminacy of response quickly undermined the perceived level of support. Additionally, interviewees were mindful of incidents in

which their colleagues or other journalists had been subjected to intimidation and harassment, often bringing them up in the interviews. Acts of public harassment, defamation, and intimidation targeting journalists can therefore be understood as strategic communicational actions intended to send a message not only to the direct target but also to their colleagues and the whole profession (see also Hiltunen 2019, 18).

External interference was also used as a means of delaying journalistic processes and publication of information (Hiltunen 2020). By presenting false claims and threats, the subjects of stories were occasionally able to sow discord among journalistic organizations, slowing down or halting journalistic processes. Interviewees provided several examples of how a culture of open communication had helped to alleviate these effects and ensured that journalists continued their work undisturbed. The quote by an investigative journalist below illustrates how intertwined journalistic professionalism, internal confidence, and communication and support are and how their combination makes it possible for journalists to work efficiently despite external pressure:

For a freelancer, it is also a question of time and money [...] With an inexperienced editor who is unaccustomed to dealing with pressure, it would take me days to convince them to run the story [...] but when you have an experienced investigative journalist as an editor, it is quick and easy for me to demonstrate what evidence we have and what we can say on that basis. Then, they can greenlight the story and take care of anyone trying to pressure us. (Interview 28)

## Discussion

The findings indicate that the hybridization of the media environment has intensified the external interference and pressure that journalists encounter in their work. The growing complexity and social influence of both interactive and mass media have increased efforts at aggressive publicity control that create friction in journalistic routines. Journalism and journalists are subjected to constant ideologically motivated scrutiny and attacks, as the proliferation of clashing representations, values and interpretations, and possibilities for participation feed the contestation and polarization of the public sphere. Furthermore, increasing online visibility, combined with the personalization of journalism and citizens' easy access to journalists, has contributed to the spread of phenomena like harassment, defamation, and intimidation, having detrimental effects on journalists' work and personal lives. While harassment and psychological violence targeting Finnish journalists were not completely absent in the past (see, e.g., Kuutti 1995, 242–246), the speed, intensity, and publicity of these phenomena have increased manifold in the contemporary hybrid media environment (see Waisbord 2020a, 3–4).

Despite the pressures brought on by the hybrid media environment, interviewees generally agreed that Finnish journalism has managed to maintain its external autonomy reasonably well. The findings highlight how professionalism and internal confidence act as mediating factors mitigating the direct effects of external interference on journalistic output (see also Clark and Horsley 2020, 77–82). Only a few interviewees had engaged in self-censorship and the majority said interference had no dramatic direct effects on their journalism. However, interviewees agreed on interference increasing the mental strain of their work and occasionally affecting their personal lives (see also Clark and Horsley 2020, 74–76; Clark and Grech 2017, 37–42). Some interviewees reported the need to take breaks or focus on less sensitive subjects after assignments that had



involved a substantial amount of interference, and a few mentioned having thought of leaving the profession due to constant pressure. The interviewee who had switched careers explicitly said that their experiences of harassment and the perceived lack of organizational support influenced their decision. The findings indicate that the accumulating effects of interference can become evident in the long run, because journalists may become tired or unwilling to continuously subject themselves to interference and pressure (see also Clark and Grech 2017, 62–63).

Interestingly, the factors supporting journalistic autonomy reported by the interviewees echo very traditional journalistic ideals. This may indicate that challenges posed by contemporary hybrid media environment have highlighted the importance of the fundamental elements of the profession. However, this can simultaneously reflect the difficulty of finding effective ways to deal with new manifestations of interference. Especially harassment and threats stemming from the audience and networked actors were perceived as something unpredictable and uncontrollable. Interviewees targeted by constant online harassment, defamation, and threats were often struggling to make sense of the situation and saw their employers as unable to protect them effectively from their impact. Post and Kepplinger (2019, 2437) state that audience hostility of the current intensity and reach is a relatively new phenomenon. Therefore, it may be possible that journalists and journalistic organizations will eventually develop new routines and coping methods, becoming increasingly resilient in the future (Post and Kepplinger 2019, 2437). The same may be true for other types of interference intensified by the hybrid the media environment, as journalism can learn to adapt to and find new and effective ways to preserve its autonomy in this environment.

However, the opposite may also prove true. Interviewees raised concerns about diminishing resources, the polarization of trust in journalism, and the increasing competition between journalism and other media content in the hybrid media environment (see also Hiltunen 2020). Journalism has to face these challenges while undergoing structural changes regarding the traditional models and infrastructure of the business. The lack of resources increases the production pressures inside newsrooms, decreasing the journalists' opportunities for autonomous reporting and encouraging practices such as "churnalism", the abundant use of unchecked PR material (Davies 2008). Moreover, the deteriorating financial situation can make journalism increasingly vulnerable to economic and political interference because succumbing to these pressures can offer journalism commercial benefits (Schiffrin 2018; Clark and Horsley 2020, 97–99). Increasing attacks and audience hostility toward journalists can lead to "participation fatigue" and have the potential to drive women and minorities in particular away from journalism (Waisbord 2020b; Post and Kepplinger 2019, 2437). When the aforementioned developments are combined with the contested relevance of journalism in the hybrid media environment, the combination can deflate the public prestige and desirability of the journalistic profession. As a result, more journalists could become frustrated and disillusioned with the reality of the profession and seek alternative employment (c.f. Nölleke, Maares, and Hanusch 2020).

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