

**La Lucha Por Un Espacio:
Guatemalan Journalists Fighting Against Censorship and Violence**

by

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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Abstract

Hundreds of journalists took to the streets in different parts of Guatemala to protest attacks against their colleagues and infringements on their freedom of expression in the country, during the second week of March in 2015. The larger protests were held in Guatemala City and in Mazatenango, Suchitepéquez, where earlier that week at slightly past noon three reporters were gunned down at a park in front of a municipality building; one survived the attack. Three days later a cameraman was shot dead by men on motorcycles, in front of the television station he worked for in Chicacao, Suchitepéquez. This is the perpetual cycle of violence that has been inculcated into the daily lives of the people in the country- it's a cultural construct that's oozed into the depths of society and sadly into the profession of journalism. This thesis is a study that investigates how Guatemalan journalists live and work in the country under a constant threat of violence, fighting for their space as a respected profession in a society that could benefit from a functioning media system. The in-depth interviews with reporters in the country will allow for a first-hand interpretation to support the research already conducted in the literature review. The study is a furthered analysis of literature and interviews to better understand why the state of journalism in Guatemala is complex, and why it is imperative for journalists to continue fighting for their space.

Introduction

Three dead journalists, two hired attacks, one department, and zero held accountable for the assaults taken place during the second week in March 2015. Those deadly incidents marked the bloodiest week for journalists thus far during the 2015 election year in Guatemala. Because the investigations are moving at a slow pace and human rights commissioners were threatened when they tried to further the investigation of the dead journalists, four respected news outlets joined forces to help solve the cases and seek justice for their slain and attacked colleagues. Those outlets launched “LaVerdaPuedeMás,” (the truth can do more). These are two cases and one important solidarity project exemplifying the type of camaraderie needed in the journalism profession to further justice and protection amongst each other. The lack of protection for journalists exercising their freedom of expression after reporting controversial issues such as corruption, denouncing violence, the disappearances of community leaders all over the country, and other provocative topics are what led to this study of journalism in Guatemala.

Since the end of September 2014 there have been more than 48 death threats and attacks against journalists in this country (Freedom House, 2015; Observatory of Journalists, 2015). Journalists are living and working under the constant threat of violence. An example of such case is the case of President Otto Pérez Molina and Vice-President Roxana Baldetti¹ versus José Rubén Zamora, founder of two of Guatemala’s most popular newspapers, and editor of the more independent one, *elPeriódico*. Both, the president and vice-president of Guatemala filed criminal complaints against Zamora accusing him of coercion, contempt, and even femicide (this was for allegedly intimidating the female vice-president of the country) in his coverage of the government (Elías, 2014). Also, there is the case of Lucia Escobar, journalist, who was

¹ Roxana Baldetti resigned from her position as vice-president on May 8, 2015, after she was implicated in a customs fraud scandal.

threatened during a press conference by the mayor of the town where she reported on corruption. The mayor called the journalist a drug dealer and said she “deserved to end up in a dumpster” (Escobar, 2011). She immediately fled the town, her family met with her within days. She has not returned, and now lives in secret and reports through an online broadcast radio station from an undisclosed space in Guatemala City.

These cases raise awareness about the current state of journalism in Guatemala. How do Guatemalan press laws protect journalists that have reported on such controversial issues? Zamora’s accusations of alleging blackmail and violence against women charges were dropped (Martinez, 2014). Escobar’s case remains open without anyone being held accountable. In other words, whoever threatened Escobar remains free with impunity. How does the lack of legal protection perpetuate impunity? Do journalists believe they are protected by the Constitution? Zamora and Escobar are two prominent journalists in the country who have not been protected by the law, in fact they have been bullied by the state, and despite the threats they continue to report. This lead to my last question that this research will address: How does the current state of violence in Guatemala influence journalism? These questions are important to consider because Guatemala is considered to be one of the most dangerous places for journalists in Latin America (Rockwell and Janus, 2003), yet journalists continue to write and report in the country with fear, and scarce security protocols, if any protocol at all.

The press laws in Guatemala have done little to protect members of the media. Journalists have disappeared, journalists have been murdered, and not one person has been charged for crimes against a journalist since 1960 (Impunidad 2014; Erlick 2004; Rockwell and Janus 2013; CPJ 2014). In Guatemala, freedom of expression is guaranteed in Article 35 of the Constitution. This thesis is really about how journalists are doing their work despite the high threat of

violence. This could be due to a culture of violence and culture of censorship that have formed a dependent relationship between the media, society, and the government that has been inculcated in the people of the country. This can be interpreted to better understand the peoples' fear to say anything and the reporter's fear of reporting because of outside influences.

According to one respected and popular columnist in Guatemala, Andres Z., it is not so much fear, but the fact that people do not read. Instead it's a form of ignorance that drives others to not take interests in their surroundings, let alone take a stance against the violence toward their messenger. He wrote in an email in April 2014:

“En lo personal, creo que la libertad de expresión se respeta bastante más que antes. Hace treinta años alguien que escribe las cosas que yo escribo ahora hubiera aparecido tirado en una alcantarilla con un balazo en la cabeza. Hoy, sencillamente te ignoran. La censura de antes se traducía en plomo, ahora se traduce en indiferencia. No te matan porque nadie lee, porque a nadie le importa.”

“Personally, I believe that freedom of expression is respected more than before. Thirty years ago someone who would write what I write would be found tossed in a sewer somewhere with a bullet to the head. Today, you're simply ignored. In the past, censorship was translated with lead, now it's translated with indifference. They don't kill you, because no one reads because no one cares.”

The situations journalists experience every day in Guatemala differ from the fear that reporters nowadays experience in Mexico, Ecuador, Colombia, and even Brazil with a combined of more than 32 unsolved cases of murdered journalists since January 2004 (CPJ, 2014). Being a

journalist in Guatemala is still a high-risk job. In 2012, during a celebration for the International Day of the Press, the Guatemalan government introduced a legislation to protect journalists, Programa de Protección a Periodistas, (Vargas, 2013; Elías, 2013; CERIGUA, 2015), which has not yet been passed in Congress.

There have been more than 500 combined murdered and missing journalists in Guatemala within the past 53 years (Carmona, 2013). This is an alarming number. Just between years 2000 to 2013 there were 24 murdered journalists in the country (CERIGUA, 2014). Of the 24 reported killed, only one case was solved (and went through the justice system). The murderer was charged with homicide and sentenced to 33 years in prison (CERIGUA, 2014). That leaves 96 percent of unsolved murdered journalists cases within the past 14 years.

This thesis will attempt to investigate how freedom of expression exists in the Republic of Guatemala's Constitution in Article 35, thus theoretically, but not in practice. Freedom of speech, "is important because it helps us find the truth; it is essential to our role as self-governors in a democracy, and it provides a kind of safety valve against possibly violent turmoil" (Siegel, 2011; Emerson, 1970). According to the *Observatorio de los Periodistas*, in 2014 there were 54 documented aggressions against freedom of expression, where the main violators were reported to be public officials, security forces, and civilians (CERIGUA, 2015). Although by law, freedom of the press entitles journalists in Guatemala to write what their editor deems publishable, this thesis will prove how acts of violence committed toward journalists exercising their freedom of expression in the country post-peace accords has put a strain on journalism and basic human rights.

State (non-)protection for journalists:

Article 35, “Constitución Política y Ley de Libre Emisión del Pensamiento Guatemala/ Political Constitution and Freedom of Expression and Thought Law”

Article 35 is considered the most important and relevant law for journalists in Guatemala.

Dedicated to freedom of expression, it provides that such expression must not be offensive or criminal and that media activity must be for the good of the public and accessible to everyone.

Broken down into nine chapters with 82 articles, some of Article 35’s relevant provisions include the following:

- Section (I) “Disposiciones Generales” (“General Orders”) explains in articles 1-14 that freedom of expression in any form shall not be limited and that there can be no anonymity in articles.
- Section (II) “Pensión del Pensamiento Por Medio De Radiodifusión y Televisión” (“Pension of Thought By Means Of Broadcasting and Television”) details in articles 15-26 regulations for radio and television.
- Section (III) “Delitos y Faltas en la Emisión del Pensamiento” (“Crimes and Misdemeanors in Broadcast Thought”) details in articles 27- 36 numerous types of statements that can be classified as treasonous, seditious, morally lacking, slanderous, an invasion of privacy or injurious. Article 36 states that such phrases as “se dice” (“it is said”), “se asegura” (“it is assured”) and “se sabe” (“it’s known”) will be treated as assertions of truthful statements.
- Section (IV) “Derechos de Aclaración Y Rectificación” (“Rights to Clarifications and Correction”) details in articles 37-47 describe the rules regarding clarifications and corrections including the applicable fines for not complying.
- Section (V) “De los Jurados” (“Juries”) details in articles 48-52 when a jury is needed and it provides instructions for their work.
- Section (VI) “Del Juicio” (“Judgment”) explains in articles 53-70 various court processes including when a judge is seen, how a judge is selected and how judgments are reached and appealed.
- Section (VII) “Del Tribunal de Honor” (“Court of Honor”) addresses in articles 71-76 attacks and complaints against public officials and employees.
- Section (VIII) “De La Reforma Y Vigencia de Esta Ley” (“Reform and Validity of this Law”) establishes in articles 78 and 79 the requirements for amending the present law and the law’s effective date of May 5, 1966.

- (IX) “Disposiciones Transitorias” (“Transitional Provisions”) addressed in articles 80-82 explain provisions applicable during periods of media transition in the country.²

Article 35’s last sentence is somewhat peculiar in that it demands the owners of media outlets to provide life insurance for all of their journalists.³

“Freedom of Thought and Expression,” Article 13 of the American Convention on Human Rights

Article 13 of the Convention is intended to protect the freedom of expression in Guatemala, in part, by protecting the media and its journalists. The Convention represents international law and it creates binding obligations once ratified by an OAS member state. Thirty-five OAS members, including Guatemala, have ratified the Convention and most have also ratified one or both of the subsequently adopted protocols. Article 13 established five principles for all OAS members as part of the “Pact of San Jose, Costa Rica”. These principles include:

- Everyone has the right to freedom of thought and expression including the freedom to seek it, publish it, and communicate it.
- There can be no censorship in advance of publication unless it involves respect for others or the protection of national security, public order, or public health or morals.
- The right of expression may not be restricted by indirect methods or means. There must not be any impediments for communication.
- Public entertainment may be subject to censorship in order to protect children and adolescents.
- Any propaganda for war and any advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitute incitements to lawless violence or to any other similar action against any person or group of persons on any grounds including those of race,

² Article 35- Guatemala. Republic of Guatemala. Executive Office. *The Constitution*. Guatemala: 1966. *Prensaregional.com.gt*. Web.

³ Article 35- Guatemala. Republic of Guatemala. Executive Office. *The Constitution*. Guatemala: 1966. *Prensaregional.com.gt*. Web

color, religion, language, or national origin shall be considered as offenses punishable by law.⁴

The final principle, in Article 13 of the OAS, results in everyone self-censoring during times of war out of fear of being accused of, or prosecuted for treason, which in most countries is punishable by prison time, heavy fines, or even death. The case for journalists is different than that of a civilian during times of war or conflict while working unilaterally (CPJ, 2012).

Guatemala's own history - starting with the Spanish conquistador Pedro de Alvarado through various coups to the end of the 36-year civil war - is replete with its fair share of dictators and political and economic upheaval, which has not been conducive for a stable free press (Ferreira, 2006; Gardner, 1971; Bowen, 1984; Cabezas Carcache, 2001). In any event, "since colonization, the government has had a voice among the media, either by ownership or influence," sometimes affected through violence (Gardner, 1971).

Chronology of a Changing News Media Landscape

The following chronology details the more popular news outlets from the beginning of the armed conflict in Guatemala (1960) and extends prior to the civil war to the present. The chronology includes news organizations vary from print publications to radio to television. Mainstream newspapers are listed because they were functioning during the epoch, but the purpose of this list is to detail the importance of alternative media during times of violence when mainstream news outlets are not doing their job, resulting in a barren media system lack of divulging hard news during the conflict. The chronology includes *radioperiódico*, "a popular means of self-syndication in the Latin American system of radio" (Rockwell and Janus, 92,

⁴ Article 13- American Convention on Human Rights. *OAS :: Special Rapporteurship for Freedom of Expression*.
Web.<<http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/expression/showarticle.asp?artID=25&>>.

2003), which became the main source of news for those living in the periphery of Guatemala City.

Print Media, Radio and Television

Pre-Conflict (circa 1800's to 1944)

1800's

- *Diario de Centro América/ Tipografía Nacional*, 1880 (daily)

1930's

- *Radio Nacional TGW (La Voz de Guatemala)*, 1930, first national radio station

1920's

- *La Hora*, an afternoon publication, 1920 (daily)
- *El Estudiante*, Partido Unionista student publication, 1920 (weekly)
- *El Imparcial* 1922-1985 (daily)
- *Nuestro Diario*, 1924 (daily)
- *El Tiempo*, 1928 (daily)

Post- first democratically elected president (1944-1954)

1940's

- *Acción Social Cristiana*, 1945 (daily)

1950's

- *Radio Cultural*, 1950
- *Impacto*, 1951, sister paper for La Hora (daily)
- *Prensa Libre*, 1951 (daily)
- *Crónica Parlamentaria*, 1950's-1970's, Congreso de la Republica news outlet
- *Flash de Hoy*, 1956 (daily)
- *Radio-Televisión Guatemala*, SA, 1956
- *Canal 3*, 1956
- *El Espectador*, 1958 (daily)

Armed Conflict (1960-1996)

1960's

- “*El Patriota*”—large staff compared to other radio period
- “*El Independiente*”, 1962
- “*Guatemala Flash*”, 1962-1996, “una necesidad”
- *El Gráfico*, 1963
- “*El Debate*”, 1963
- *Emisoras Unidas de Guatemala*, 1964
- *Canal 7 (Televisiete)* 1964
- *Diario Impacto*, 1960's- 1970's, sensationalized news that capitalized on the violence, only newspaper to print on Sunday (daily)
- “*El Heraldo*”, 1966
- *Canal 11 (Teleonce)*, 1966
- *Alerta*, late 1960- early 1970's (daily)
- “*Carta Informativa*”, 1960's, transmitted at night via Radio Ciroso

1970's

- “*El Debate*”, greatest influence in the 1970’s
- *Diario La Tarde*, 1970-1982, afternoon version of El Gráfico (daily)
- *Diario La Nación*, 1970-1974 (daily)
- *La Semana*, 1970, sister publication of La Nacion (weekly)
- *Inforpress Centroamericana*, 1972
- *Alero*, 1977-80, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala (monthly)
- *Siete Días*, 1978-1985, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala (weekly)
- *El Nuevo Diario*, 1978-1980 (daily)
- *Canal 13 (Trecevisión)*, 1978
- *Independiente*, circa 1979 (daily)
- “*Comando Informativo*”, circa 1970’s

1980’s

- *Metro Stereo*, 1980-2011
- “*El Clarín*”, transmitted through Radio Tropicana, 1980 on-air triple murder of journalists during newscast
- “*Patrullaje Informativo*”, 1981, Radio Emisoras Unidas
- *CERIGUA* (Centro de Reportes Informativos Sobre Guatemala), 1983, alternative
- *Prensa Popular*, 1987, “Comunicación Alternativa: una nueva opción”
- *Crónica de una Época*, 1987 (weekly)
- *La Época*, 1988-1988, government shut it down within four months

1990’s

- *Siglo21*, 1990 (daily)
- “*Libre Encuentro*”, 1991
- *Revista TINAMIT*, 1992 (weekly)
- *La República*, 1993-1997 (daily)

Unknown initial start dates (The following are print publications that were mentioned on more than one occasion, but no initial start date available. They were functioning outlets during the armed conflict.)

- *Crítica*
- *La Otra*
- *La Palabra*
- *Guatecosas* (weekly)
- *Pueblo* (weekly)

Post- Peace Accords (1996)

- *Diario Al Día*, 1996, de Corporación de Noticias
- *elPeriódico*, 1996
- “*Cartones Radiofónicos*”, post-war circa 1996, transmitted through La Voz de America
- *Nuestro Diario*, 1998
- *Guatevisión*, 2000
- *Azteca Guatemala*, 2008
- *Canal Antigua*, 2009

La historia

Guatemala: Thirty-Six Years and Counting

United States railroad mogul Minor C. Keith was hired by Guatemala to help the postal service with transportation. This was an immediate U.S. direct interest and investment in the country. But U.S. involvement goes beyond that, since the Monroe Doctrine initially intended to have exclusive rights to intervene in affairs of Latin America and protect the colonies from French or Russian colonization (Monroe, 1823), resulted as the U.S. cowboy foreign policy that allowed for U.S. to take action in the southern cone without any permission from any other entity. James Monroe, the fifth U.S. president from 1817-1825, announced in 1823 during a speech to Congress that this new policy would provide aid “only when our rights are invaded or seriously menaced that we resent injuries or make preparations for our defense” (Monroe, 1823). The policy was supposed to work as a “big brother” protecting its’ little sibling, but instead the policy was used to intervene and created a space for imperialism to dominate parts of Latin America, because of the mentality where “conservative activists considered Central America theirs” (Grandin, 2006).

In Guatemala, the biggest offender was the United Fruit Company (UFCO), now known as Chiquita Brands International, which owned most of the railroad tracks and more than one million acres in land (Bowen, 1984; Gordon 1983). The first democratic election in Guatemala took place in 1944 and resulted in the election of Juan José Arévalo. The period from 1944 to 1954 became known as the Ten Years of Spring in the country. In 1954, then-president of the country Jacobo Arbenz wanted to implement a land reform that would return land to the poor. He wanted to take back land UFCO had stolen and was no longer using (Bowen, 1984). This did not

sit well with the company. Corporation officials convinced the U.S. Congress that their own assets were in danger, and that the country was about to fall to Communism, and they accused then President Arbenz of being a Communist. According to documents released by the The National Security Archive, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) led the 1954 coup (Cullather, 1994) that led to the oust of Arbenz, and replaced him with a political puppet as leader. This coup sparked civil unrest that eventually blew up in 1960 with the start of a guerilla-led armed conflict.

The armed conflict in Guatemala lasted thirty-six years, where the C.I.A. concocted the coup in their covert “OPERATION PBSUCCESS” that ended the “Ten Years of Spring” in Guatemala in 1954, as detailed in the findings made by Doyle and Kornbluh (1997) when they were inspecting newly declassified C.I.A. documents. However, the U.S. has been involved in Guatemalan politics, society, and culture long before the coup against President Arbenz, but it was not until classified official documents were declassified and made public more than 40 years after the operation, that it became public knowledge. The armed conflict is still a taboo topic of discussion. There is widespread fear among much of the people, few openly discuss the period, making it difficult to recount and deal, resulting in a form of repression and a homogeneous censorship on historical memory.

The duress of the countrywide conflict inflicted a permanent state of violence in the country (Bowen, 1984). The by-product of years of violence was clear for the 2012 presidential elections in the country with the win of retired army general directly connected to human rights violations in the 1980's, Otto Pérez Molina. The fear of violence at the doorstep led voters to support a man who campaigned for “*mano dura*” or “firm hand” policies as a means of stabilizing the current situation of the state. Ironically, it has been under his presidency that

immunity was lifted for former General Efraín Ríos Montt who violently ruled the country during the deadliest index of indigenous deaths between 1982 through 1983 of the civil war.

Twenty-thirteen marked a year of hope for justice in the country, beginning in January when former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt was charged with genocide and crimes against humanity for incidents that took place during his thirteen months as president. In August, a former chief of detectives of the Guatemalan National Police was sentenced to 70 years in prison for his role in the disappearances of a university student in 1981, according to a report by the Guatemala Human Rights Commission (2015).

Although this represented a significant recognition of the crimes committed, there were no trials for the killers of the numerous journalists killed during the civil war. A review of public records indicates that no cases were initiated for the disappearance and presumed murder of beloved and respected journalists Irma Flaquer and Jorge Carpio Nicolle. It was not until years later that two well-documented cases that were taken to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights by family members of a disappeared journalist and a murdered journalist.

Irma Flaquer v. Guatemala (2003)

Irma Flaquer, 42, was a popular Guatemalan journalist who was disappeared in 1980 and who is believed to be dead. She was heading home from visiting her son and his family, when her car, driven by her son, was ambushed (Erlick, 2004). Ten years prior, in 1970, she survived a car bomb attack placed on her own vehicle. “The attack didn’t daunt her, instead in her reintegration back into journalism she deepened her analysis about the current situation in Guatemala. Knowing she was threatened, after miraculously saving her own existence, she didn’t lose any sleep” (Barrios Reina, 2002). Flaquer didn’t self-censor her column, “*Lo Que Otros*

Callan,” “What Others Silence.” She was indefinitely silenced when armed men took her, put her in a car, and shot her son at point blank, where he died instantly (Erlick; 2004). No charges have been filed against anyone for the killing of her son, or her forced disappearance in Guatemala. No one has been directly accused. The Inter-American Press Society later filed a petition at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights alleging that Guatemala had violated her right to freedom of expression, along with other rights the country had agreed to recognize as part of the Inter-American Convention of Human Rights (2003). The courts agreed on the following facts:

“8. The petitioners allege that on October 16, 1980, Irma Flaquer Azurdia, a journalist, accompanied by her son Fernando Valle Flaquer, was driving in her car when in the area where they were two vehicles suddenly blocked her path. Fernando Valle Flaquer was injured in the incident and subsequently died at the General San Juan de Dios hospital, where he had been taken. Since that date, there has been no information about the whereabouts of Irma Flaquer Azurdia

9. The petitioners also allege that during the investigation of the case by the Guatemalan authorities, it became clear that, while the then Government officially regretted the presumed death of Flaquer, it failed to make any serious official effort to investigate the matter. Furthermore, the 1985 law on general amnesty provided an excuse for the lukewarm attempts to conduct an official investigation to be abandoned and diluted both the responsibility and the participation of any agency of the Government.

10. According to the petitioners, the modus operandi used in the kidnapping of Flaquer and the murder of her son Fernando was consistent with the mechanisms of repression

used by the State during the internal armed conflict. The use of two vehicles and the type of maneuver in a very busy street have been described at various times in newspaper and human rights reports of the period as methods typically used by the police, military or Presidential Guard.

11. Finally, with regard to the exhaustion of domestic remedies, the petitioners noted that, under Article 46(2)(c) of the Inter-American Convention, the requirements for the exhaustion of domestic remedies are not applicable where there has been unwarranted delay in rendering a final judgment under previous remedies. The petitioners further claim that the task of the Commission for Historical Clarification did not constitute a domestic remedy to be exhausted, since that Commission lacked the authority to identify or punish individuals” (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2003).

This resulted in a five-point settlement: (1) A state apology and recognition of institution involvement in her case. (2) The state acknowledges the forced disappearance and will take legal measures to find those responsible, determining her whereabouts, and applying appropriate punishment. (3) Pay amount of compensation agreed upon by the petitioners. (4) The state must establish a Justice Promotion Committee in which they will hold a public ceremony in honor of the journalist. (5) Update the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights of progress of the investigations and activities every two months (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2003)⁵.

⁵ The case and settlement of, *Irma Flaquer v. Guatemala*, 2003, was published by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, archived at the Human Rights Library at the University of Minnesota.

Carpio Nicolle y otros v. Guatemala (1994)

Jorge Carpio Nicolle was a Guatemalan journalist who was shot four times at point blank during an ambush held by 30 hooded men. After the men stopped Carpio's vehicle, they asked him to confirm his identity. When he did, they opened fire. Hours later Carpio died at a local hospital (Proyecto Impunidad). Four others were either killed or wounded including his wife. Carpio's killers have never faced justice. Different men were found guilty of the killings, but were later acquitted and freed due to an appeal that claimed faulty ballistic results (Trotti, 1999). A Petition was filed with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in 1994 and in 2003 the court issued a decision against Guatemala finding that it had violated Carpio's right to freedom of expression along with other violations of the Convention. This specific case filed by Carpio's widow and three other surviving victims sought reparations for the other four victims of the brutal attack that took place on July 3, 1993 outside of Chichicastenango in the province of Quiché. This specific province also experienced one of the most violent epochs during the armed conflict.

The IACHR asked Guatemala to recognize what happened and asserted that, "there were irregularities in the subsequent domestic criminal proceedings, as well as a lack of investigation and criminal sanction of those who perpetrated and masterminded the attack" (*Carpio-Nicolle et al. v. Guatemala*, 2004)⁶. The Court asked for reparations, and for the Guatemalan government to pay all costs and expenses derived from the case to the victims. The court decided unanimously that the state had to acknowledge and take full responsibility for the attack and

⁶ The verdict for the, *Carpio-Nicolle et al. v. Guatemala*, 2004, was published in the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

murders. Although the court rendered two other unanimous decisions, Guatemala had violated Carpio's rights to freedom of expression and reparations. The judges ordered the state to investigate and punish those who committed and masterminded the attack, as well as to remove immunity so petitioners can proceed (*Carpio-Nicolle et al. v. Guatemala*, 2004).

Carpio's case reopened in 2009, because the state was convicted by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights for violating human rights; new evidence was not introduced, only access to consult through old documents about the case (Coronado, 2015).

Flaquer and Carpio cases are unrelated, but both cases involved journalism. They were both well-known opinionated and respected reporters in the country. After thirteen years, both the case of Flaquer's disappearance and the case of Carpio's murder, impunity continues as the cases remain unsolved.

Media and Armed Conflict in Guatemala

The first documented news article out of Guatemala, 1541, was a report about the death of Beatriz de la Cueva, wife of Pedro de Alvarado, conquistador of Guatemala, reported by Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo and printed in Mexico, where the first printing press in the America's was brought (Barrios y Barrios, 1997). Guatemala's first printing press arrived in the country almost one hundred years later in 1660 (Barrio y Barrios, 1997). More than 284 years later another political figure's death made headlines, Alejandro Cordova, congressman, respected journalist, and beloved editor of *El Imparcial*, was in front of his home when he was killed on October 1, 1944. Nineteen days later, a peoples' revolt ensued which forced the dictator out of office, and allowed for Guatemala's first democratic election, which transpired to the Ten Years of Spring, 1944-1954. It is said that Cordova's murder was the final push to accelerate a civic movement

against the government (Cabezas Carcache, 2001) that initiated Guatemala's "October Revolution." The circumstances behind the killing of Cordova are similar to the 1980 murder of Monseñor Oscar Romero. The killing of Romero is said to be one of the final events before the revolution launched into full effect in El Salvador. Comandante "Marcial", Salvador Cayetano Carpio, said in an interview, "It should be remembered that the vast majority of people participating in popular organizations and armed groups are members of the Catholic church" (Burbach, 1983). Romero was shot during mass, a day after he demanded for the Salvadoran government to decrease repression and violence against the Salvadoran people. Cordova wrote about discontent with the government and the potential presidential candidate Federico Ponce Vaides, just three months earlier he appeared in court opposing Ponce's candidacy. Some reports and scholarship link Cordova's murder to the government. His death came down from government orders (Schlesinger and Kinzer, 2005; Oficina de Derechos Humanos de Arzobispado de Guatemala), but no one has been charged for his murder.

During the thirty-six year armed conflict, 1960- 1996, not one has been held accountable for any death of any journalist. There were more than 250,000 dead and 50,000 missing people by the time the Peace Accords were signed in 1996, of those killed 342 were journalists and of those still missing 126 were journalists, according to a registry made by non-profit human rights organization in Guatemala, Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo (Carmona, 2013). The country has a construct of violence beginning with the gruesomely hostile rule of Pedro de Alvarado in the 1500's, the 1954 coup d'état, and the height of the armed conflict killings during a thirteen-month dictatorship of General Ríos Montt (Chomksy, 1992; Gonzalez, 2000), to what is now modern day Guatemala. Matters have worsened as a result of cartel and organized crime that has spread throughout the country, where the fear of "the potential 'Colombianization' of Central

America” (Arana, 2001) is now a reality. In the midst of these circumstances, journalists continue to document the most important political moments of the country since, *Gazeta de Guatemala*, founded in 1729, the very first newspaper (Cabezas Carcache, 2001).

Media during times of “peace”

The rate of attacks against journalists has declined since the end of the armed conflict when the Peace Accords were signed in 1996 (IFEX 2012). Between 2000-2013, there were 24 murdered journalists (CERIGUA, 2014), an average of 1.8 murdered journalists a year, compared to the average of 9.5 journalists killed a year during the armed conflict. Nevertheless, violence continues to rise and impunity continues widespread with only one recalled case where two ex-guards that worked security at the controversial La Puya mining site were charged with assaulting and threatening many journalists, including one ex-government official (CERIGUA, 2014). Since the end of the civil war in 1996, not one case of a murdered journalist has been solved or prosecuted, even when there are direct connections to the threatening entity. For example, in 2002, just six years after the war- during times of supposed “peace,” a death squad flyer read:

In recent months the pseudo-organizations of human rights and their sympathizers have been dedicated to discredit the image of our country and the triumph of democracy over communism won with the blood of our heroic soldiers...These devil persons are a disgrace of society and parasites of human rights that must be exterminated like a cancer... these liars must pay with their blood. The first who will feel the taste of our bullets will be: Clara Arenas, Miguel Angel Albizures, Miguel Angel Sandoval, Nery Rodenas, Frank LaRue, Mario Polanco, Abner Guoz, Marielos Monzón, Ronaldo Robles, Rosa Maria Bolaños and the damn Chinese Helen Mack. (Signed by Truly Guatemalans, June 2002)- (Martinez, 2002).

Seven of those listed on the flyer worked either as a columnist, journalist, or editor. Including Frank La Rue, who went on to serve as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression from 2008 to 2014. Their reporting exposed corruption and government wrong-doings which landed them on a hit list linked to far-right extremists (CPJ, 2003). None of those on the list were killed, and no one who took part in the threat was convicted or charged.

The country is considered to be “Partly Free” in the lens of freedom of expression, according to Freedom House (2014) and was rated a 60th out of 100, with one hundred being the worst score. According to the former UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Frank La Rue, 2013 was the worst case for violence against journalists in a decade (Freedom House, 2014).

Although freedom of expression is protected under Article 35, there are legal restrictions for the Guatemalan press that have allowed for respected journalists, like José Rubén Zamora, to be taken to court. One of the restrictions is Article 41 of the Radio and Communications Law that serves more to protect the audience rather than the journalist. This article prohibits transmissions “offensive to civic values and the national symbols... vulgar comedy and offensive sounds... contrary to morals and good etiquette.”

After a 36-year armed conflict the country has experienced more violence now than during the war with 14 murders a day (Gobierno de Guatemala, 2014). In 2015, the problem is not just political violence, but many reporters said they must now be aware of drug cartels, gangs, and wealthy corrupt entrepreneurs.

“Hoy”

Guatemala is made up of 22 departments, 23 ethnicities, and a population of more than 15.8 million people (CIA World Fact Book, 2014). It is a country in which 60 percent of the population is indigenous. The official language is Spanish, and there are 23 recognized indigenous languages, including Quiché, Kaqchikel, Q'eqchi', Mam, Garifuna, and Xinca. According to the World Bank statistics, in 2013 the gross national income for Guatemala was at \$3,340 a year, making the average salary at \$278.33 a month. In 2014, 44 percent of the reported attacks against journalists arose in the department of Guatemala (CERIGUA, 2015), which is where the capital is located. Yet, journalists still feel safer within the capital's city limits.

The Republic of Guatemala is ranked 124 out of 180 countries for the 2015 World Press Freedom Index, a red rating. This rating signifies lax protection of journalists, and lax freedom of expression and freedom of the press. Similar to the rating of the red country, Guatemala has its own “*zona roja*” where reporters, police, or anyone not affiliated to the region are not allowed, unless given permission. These red zones are ruled by cartels. For example, a red zone threshold is in the Petén region of Guatemala, approximately 295 miles northeast of Guatemala City.

Indeed, there are two worlds within Guatemala in reference to the journalism profession. Now that we have established the difference between these two Guatemala's, a timeline of events related to journalism is needed to add a perspective on what has helped shape this thesis, and shape the answers given by the journalists interviewed and most importantly currently shaping the state of journalism in the country.

Snuq' Jolom Konob radio comunitaria

On Tuesday, January 20, 2015, radio station employees showed up to work, but were greeted by a closed down building. The mayor of Santa Eulalia, Huehuetenago, where the station

is located, ordered the place boarded up and inaccessible. According to Reporters Without Borders (2015) the radio station was reporting on conflicts surrounding the new hydroelectric plant, Hidro Santa Cruz, in the community of Santa Eulalia. The majority of the people in that community are indigenous, mostly Q'anjob'al, and concerned that they are building on their sacred land. Local municipal authority approved the new plant, and now they are defending the company by closing the radio station, in doing so censoring the community. Local journalists quickly denounced the infringement on their human right to freedom of expression. The denouncements appeared on social media to help disseminate the information. Community radio plays an important role in Guatemala, especially in rural areas, because of their local access they disclose information about the local problems that mainstream media is not reporting in that specific region (Marchesi, 2014; RSF, 2015).

Two months later, on Thursday, March 19, members of the station had planned a reopening of the station. Locals, activists, and journalists showed up to cover the event, but instead were met by police and private security on strict orders not to let anyone inside the radio station. Lucía Ixchiú, a journalist for Prensa Comunitaria wrote in a blog post on March 30 (2015) that the peaceful supporters of the radio were met by approximately ten men, some armed, yelling at them and threatening them, *“periodistas mierdas, después de esta reunión la radio se va chingar periodistas mierdas, después también se van a chingar ustedes, comunistas de mierda,”* (shit journalists, after this demonstration the radio will be screwed you shit journalists, you will all be screwed you shit communists!) The peaceful attendees were threatened, harassed, and physically assaulted (Bastos, 2015). Two journalists were physically attacked. The radio station locale remains closed, but the radio remains on-air via their website

from an undisclosed location and still hopeful for a re-open of their facility (Radio Snuq' Jolom Konob' 2015).

Mazatenango estaba “muy cargado”

Three journalists were killed within three days in the department of Suchitepéquez, approximately 96 miles south of Guatemala City in the month of March 2015. It was past noon when Danilo López, *Prensa Libre* correspondent, was gunned down on Tuesday, March 10, along with Federico Salazar, *Nuevo Mundo Radio* correspondent. Both men and the sole survivor of the attack, Marvin Túnchez, local journalist, were across from the Mazatenango municipal building in the park covering an event about the *Día de la Mujer*. According to an official from the District Attorney's Unit of Investigation for Crimes Against Journalists, López had called that same morning at 11:30a.m. to tell the official that he feared for his life and that the environment in Mazatenango was “muy cargado”, too tense (Gamazo, 2015). He explained that he was currently investigating money laundering in a municipality in Suchitepéquez. López wasn't a stranger to threats. Different officials from across the department had threatened him on various occasions for his coverage (*Prensa Libre*, 2015). It is believed he was the target.

Three days later, Guido Giovanni Villatoro, a Channel 14 videographer, was gunned down in front of the station in Chicacao, Suchitepéquez (teleSUR, 2015). Three men have been arrested in connection to his murder, but no one charged. As for the López and Salazar case, two men were arrested for allegedly committing the crimes, but neither man has said who orchestrated the hit or who paid them.

The killings shocked journalists all over Guatemala, within days indignant journalists took to the streets of the capital and marched, demanding justice for their fallen colleagues.

Fundacion contra el Terrorismo Mediático

Prensa Libre revealed information about a new organization that was approved by the government to start running, the *Fundación contra el Terrorismo Mediático* (Foundation against Media Terrorism)⁷. One of the objectives of the organization was to defend the public and fight against information provided by news outlets that invalidate the right of a human, the public, and private institutions (Sánchez, 2015). The immediate media attention, news organizations collectively criticized which prompted the Office of Human Rights to take legal action against the organization and claimed it was ‘unconstitutional’ (Zavala, 2015). The foundation objectives infringed upon freedom of expression and freedom of thought. Within days another organization, the Foundation Against Terrorism filed a complaint against the new organization claiming the name in itself is confusing. Four days after *Prensa Libre* exposed the media terrorism organization, the Minister of the Interior, Mauricio López Bonilla, annulled the permission for the *Fundacion contra el Terrorismo Mediático* to operate. He assured that ‘next time we will be more careful in the type of organization that is approved’ (elPeriodico, 2015).

#LaVerdadPuedeMás

The continued impunity related to the cases of the murdered journalists in March led to mobilization by one non-profit organization and four independent media outlets in Guatemala to join forces and launch their own campaign in an effort to help restore their colleague’s cases. According to Coronado (2015), only five members from the District Attorney’s Unit of Investigation for Crimes Against Journalists were sent to investigate the crimes, which is half of the staff. The district attorney cannot send more people because of their lack of resources

⁷ *Prensa Libre* broke the news on March 24, 2015.

(Coronado, 2015). The project, #LaVerdadPuedeMás (the truth can do more), consists of the magazine ContraPoder, Plaza Pública, Nómada, and Soy502, the top four respected alternative news sites in Guatemala. They state:

Nos hemos reunido con el apoyo de Cerigua para investigar el asesinato en Suchitepéquez de los periodistas Danilo López y Federico Salazar y dar a conocer los hechos que intentaron silenciar con su muerte. La alianza de las cinco instituciones es un esfuerzo para honrar el trabajo de nuestros colegas y evidenciar que la verdad es más fuerte que la censura y los abusos del poder

We have joined forces with Cerigua to investigate the murder of journalists Danilo López and Federica Salazar in Suchitepéquez, and to expose the acts that tried to silence by death. The alliance of the five institutions is an effort to honor the work done by our colleagues, and show that the truth is much stronger than censorship and abuse of power.⁸

The project was not the first hashtag to be created as a result of the attacks. It was almost immediately after the murders in Suchitepéquez that media-activists turned to social media outlets to call for action.

April 14, 2015, Edison Landa, U.N. Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, participated in a forum titled, “Freedom of Expression, Indigenous Communities, and Governance in Guatemala.” The Movement for Community Radios from Guatemala hosted the panel. In preparation for the big event journalists in the country united through social networks to create #LibertadExpresiónGuate and spread the word about the visit of the U.N. official, where they also encouraged everyone to Tweet him,

⁸ The project #LaVerdadPuedeMás mission was published in their first effort piece, “Cinco fiscales para atender 130 denuncias de periodistas” by Elsa Coronado. The citation can be found in the bibliography at the end of this thesis.

@EdisonLanza and @CIDH, Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, to create awareness about the issues at hand.

Conceptual Framework:

This study employs Shoemaker and Reese's hierarchy of influences model (1996). Other literature and studies have used the hierarchy of influences in conflict settings. Among those is the study by Jeannine Relly and Celeste González de Bustamante (2014), which examined freedom of expression in northern Mexico. This study adapts the methodology and framework applied by Relly and González (2014) to examine the state of journalism in Guatemala.

The model is structured to provide an insight into the influences on journalists and their reporting or lack thereof. The five-levels of influence allowed investigation on reporting in the country by looking at individual-level influences, news media routines influences, followed by organizational-level influences, extra-media influences, and finally ideological influences (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; Relly and González, 2014).

Individual-Level Influence

Journalists are supposed to be a representative of society, they are expected to reflect to beliefs of the public (Reese, 2001). In Latin America, in general, the recognition of cultural diversity alters one's perception of social and cultural reality (Zambrano, 2000). The individual-level of influence allows researchers to examine what influences journalists when it comes to work and making decision that are ethically correct. Individual level influences can include: age, gender, education, work history, current job, family beliefs, values, professional background, and

other demographics (Relly and González, 2014; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; Reese, 2001; Hughes, 2006).

News Media Routines Influence

News media routines can be defined as examining the patterned routines at work as an ongoing influence (Riffe, 2011) in journalism. The “structured, deeply naturalized rules, norms, procedures that are embedded in media work” (Reese and Buckalew, 1995) can shed a light into the constraints on journalist within a larger structure. In this case Guatemala is a place where freedom of expression is limited and the types of stories might be affected.

Organizational-Level Influences

Reese (2001) explains that this level is full of layers that peel away at the news organization, editorial policy, company, ownership, and it’s here where it is decided what is newsworthy. This level will allow for the researcher to analyze the journalist influence of reporting based on his or her news media organizations’ policies and structure during a time of violence (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; Relly and Gonzalez; 2014).

Extra-Media Influence

The investigation on this level can be shaped by institutions, including the government, advertisers, public relations, mainstream media, non-profit organizations, sources, and other economic entities (Reese, 2001), that have a reach to the journalist. Anything outside of organization level is considered to be an extra-media influence (Relly and Gonzalez, 2014). One example of an extra media influence in the Guatemalan context is that one newspaper became the “unofficial” propaganda arm during the dictatorship of Jorge Ubico in Guatemala between 1931-1944. Ubico made the newspaper *El Día* to the extent of the official-unofficial publicist for anything related to his political party. The former dictator also forced the shutdown of two

newspapers, *Diario de Guatemala* and *Excelsior*, by getting the banks to stop financially supporting the papers, and he then pulled out government advertisements, driving the outlets into bankruptcy (Cabezas Carcahe, 2001).

Ideological Influence

Shoemaker and Reese's (1996) ideological level of influence examines the "institutional, occupational, and cultural practices that make up the mass media."

Using the hierarchy of influence model is recommended and seen as a strong framework for analyzing reporting in conflict zones (Fahmy and Johnson, 2012; Kim, 2010; Rely and González, 2013).

Based on the literature this study aims to research and answer the following questions:

RQ1. What are the constraints on the press in Guatemala City?

RQ2. How is violence influencing the way journalists are practicing their profession?

RQ2a. What are journalists doing in Guatemala to overcome the challenges?

RQ3. What are the most important factors that influence journalism in Guatemala?

Methodology

This research examines the current state of journalism and limits to freedom of expression within the Guatemala City boundaries. Security measures for the researched subjects, as well as myself, the researcher, played a role in keeping the interviews within city limits. Also the fact that the most influential news outlets such as *Prensa Libre*, *Al Dia*, *Plaza Pública*, *Nómada*, *Soy502*, *ContraPoder*, *elPeriódico*, and *Siglo 21* are located in the capital. During the logistics portion of preparing to travel and conduct research in Guatemala, one journalist said

there was resentment toward foreigners conducting research as a backlash after a BBC exposé broke about the world's most dangerous hospital (2014), so no one was going to talk. It was a false claim, journalists wanted to talk. Two other journalists said the complete opposite, that there is no backlash and that there would be no problem investigating the topic, that because a similar study has not been done in the country there would be acceptance from the journalism community. There was one stressed recommendation though, to stay within Guatemala City limits and not conduct interviews outside of the capital where there is less security, because journalists in the *interior* "are more at risk than those based near power centers of a country" (Estévez, 2010; Relly and Gonzalez, 2014). According to a CERIGUA study, most cases of reported crime or threat against a journalist have occurred in the Department of Guatemala (Guatemala City), with 12 reports made between January 1 to April 25 in 2013. That same report stated that many attacks have not been denounced because of fear of retaliation (CERIGUA, 2014).

The study included 14 Guatemalan journalists who were interviewed from 10 minutes to two-and-a-half-hours. Twenty-four journalists were contacted, for a 58 percent response rate. Of the 24 contacted, 15 agreed to meet in-person, and one did not show up. There was no participant recruitment of any potential vulnerable population. A snowball approach was used for recruitment. The list of journalists to interview began by recruiting through email with contacts that were recommended by a journalist in the country. From that emailed group another journalist gave contacts for more journalists to contact, and they were emailed. Once on the ground in Guatemala contacts were made, and from there, the list of journalists expanded. After the very first interview, the participant called his colleagues to confirm their participation in the study. One confirmed for the following day, and the other journalist contacted by the first

participant could not participate since a few days later he was involved in a public scandal where one of the presidential candidates attempted to defame him. On the third day of interviews, the first participant of the day gave a list of journalists to call and set-up interviews. Two agreed, the rest did not answer their phones. All participants in this investigation were working Guatemalan journalists, with the exception of two that had recently retired in the country within the past month before the interviews started.

The in-depth interviews took place in public spaces such as café's, restaurants, newsrooms, job-site, offices, and one was in the journalist's private home. The interviews were conducted in Spanish, recorded and transcribed. The questions were in a flexible format. All participants were offered anonymity on the consent form. Only one requested anonymity. Consent forms were offered in English and in Spanish. Participants were asked about freedom of expression, and influences for reporting. The questionnaire was formatted to have questions about the constraints at various levels of influence, similar to the work done by Relly and González (2014). The 21 questions investigated demographics, history, culture, and personal anecdotes and opinions. The interviews helped profile and enhance the research with first-hand experience from journalists' perspectives.

Most of the contacted journalists are from print and online news organizations working out of Guatemala City from small, medium, and large news organizations. Because of the sensitive research topic, sending out an email to every journalist with an email account could not have found willing journalists to interview due to their lack of confidence. Because this is a qualitative study, a rapport between the participant and myself was required for truthful answers. The list of journalists was compiled by asking fellow journalist contacts I had made within the past couple of years while traveling, studying, and working in Central America. I also attempted

to contact journalism organizations and non-profit organizations that have a focus in journalism by email and phone to recruit potential subjects.

Findings

The journalists interviewed were recruited and interviewed throughout Guatemala City, only one was interviewed outside of the capital in the popular tourist destination of Antigua, approximately a 45-minute drive west of the city. Of the 14 interviewed three were women, two indigenous men, and the rest were ladino⁹ men. All interviewed had some level of post-secondary education. Four had only Bachelor's of Arts degree, eight had Master's in Arts degrees, and two had terminal degrees from a doctoral program from a university in Latin America. Eleven majored in either Journalism or Communications as undergraduates. The rest majored in literature, sociology, and international relations. The ages of the journalists interviewed ranged from 25 to 54, with the median ages of 39 and 40. The number of years working in journalism ranged from 7 to 30 years, an average of 17.7 years working as a journalist. All participants except for one had worked for *Prensa Libre* at one point, mostly at the beginning of their career.

In general the participants shared similar ideas about the importance of freedom of expression in a democracy, and why the right for expression is for everyone, not just for journalists.

Es un derecho que de todo ciudadano para poder emitir cualquier opinión y que por lo mismo no debe ser perseguido. Para mí es un respaldo para que yo pueda expresar lo que yo siento, lo que

⁹ Todd Little-Siebold (2001) refers to the term *ladino* as an ethnic category applied by the elite to non-indigenous spaniards in Guatemala. It was a true “state efforts to make all Guatemalans either Indians or Ladinos... Therefore, the argument that the Liberal state created Guatemala’s curious bipolar ethnic landscape” (Little-Siebold, 2001) of today.

yo piense o lo que yo he encontrado, que pueda contribuir a fortalecer una democracia, una democracia entre comillas. Y contar con un derecho y que este plasmado en la constitución de la república de Guatemala. Y también es un derecho humano universal porque es una de las herramientas de poder decir algo, poder expresar algo. Si no existiese entonces me quedaría desamparado sin herramienta.

It's a right for all citizens to emit whatever opinion and not be persecuted for doing so. For me it's a support mechanism to express myself however I feel, what I'm thinking or what I've found, and to contribute to strengthen a democracy, a democracy quote un-quote. And to count on my right that's represented in the constitution of the Republic of Guatemala. Also, it's a universal human right because it's a tool that allows us to speak up, to express ourselves. If it didn't exist I would be left defenseless without a tool.¹⁰

Freedom of expression and the right to exercise freedom of the press is of utmost importance for journalists and their professionalism. Although all journalists concurred on the importance of freedom of expression to democracy, almost all said that it should be expressed to a certain degree, to practice responsible freedom of expression. There is an unspoken collective censorship on three topics: cartels, organized crime, and corporate companies. Those topics are off-limits for the main reason of personal safety.

The following section will breakdown influences based on Shoemaker and Reese's (1996) hierarchy of influences model using quotes from the journalists interviewed as support.

Individual level

¹⁰ Walter Tzaltic is a correspondent for Enfoque 360 of NVO (Noticias Veraz Y Oportuna) Noticias 102.9, a radio that reports mainly on the periphery of Guatemala City and Antigua.

Educational, professional training, salaries, and ethics are the strongest influences at the individual level for journalist in the country. When it came to training all interviewed journalists had at least a journalism specific educational background in the profession, whether it was their specialty in high school, or took a few classes in college, or majored in the field of study. Among those journalists interviewed there was a general distrust for those journalists who learned the profession by practice, what journalists referred to as '*empirico*.' Juan Pablo Dardón Pereira, retired journalist stated, "someone begins to work in the profession because they had to. They began by cleaning the floors, and someone gave that person a camera, and gave them the opportunity to photograph. Then photography took that person to reporting, and etc. etc." Distrust according to those interviewed relates to the question of being *empirico*- trained by practice, no educational foundation. The shared consent for distrust in those that learn solely by practice is their lack in ethics, and ethics is a key foundation for journalism. The greatest connection to lack in ethics is the low salaries in journalism.

Most journalists will never tell you the reason they went into the profession was to make money, but a livable wage is expected. At the organizational level of influence salary was at the top of the list. In order to take the courses to stay fresh on your game you need money, but even before that, salary can inhibit on ones' ethics in this field if you are not making enough to make ends meet. An average salary of a journalist in Guatemala is \$300 a month, which does not include health insurance, a direct violation of Article 35 in the Constitution (1966). Silvio Gramajo, columnist and communications professor, said that working solely as a journalist with the measly income makes life hard and drives others to a second and /or a third job, mostly taken in government offices.

Lo que hay realmente presenta una realidad muy deficiente en cuanto a los beneficios en la contratación personal. Te dan el trabajo pero prácticamente no te dan prestaciones, no tienes

seguro, si pueden te piden que compras hasta tu lapicero, y te pagan una miseria. Hay medios de comunicación que pagan una miseria. Eso empieza a causar problemas éticas. Lo peor es que hay momentos donde hasta se justifica, es por decir, “me pagan tan poco tengo que ver como consigo dinero de otra manera.” Es un asunto muy feo.

The reality presents a deficiency in terms of benefits in the contract. They give you the job, but then they practically don't give you any benefits, no insurance, if they can they even ask you to buy your own pen, and they pay you a pittance. There are news outlets that pay next to nothing. And that begins to cause ethical dilemmas. The worst is that there are times when it's justified, just to say, 'I get paid so little that I need to make money by other means.' It's an ugly situation.

Marvin del Cid Acevedo, freelance investigative reporter, said that working in the profession in Guatemala for \$300 a month is not worth it, especially if you do not get health or life insurance. On top of that there are expenditures, and you are most likely using your own equipment, which the agency will not insure. Then there is the issue of risking your life and your personal security if you are putting your neck out for the news outlet to get the story. Martín Rodríguez, director and founder of Nómada, said all of the journalists on his staff get the life insurance mandated by Article 35. Which is important, because according to the research not many outlets paid that requirement.

Espionage via tapped telephones or hacking is an expected assumption by all journalists interviewed. Dina Fernandez, director of Soy502, said her email was hacked. She said the government can deny it, but she has proof. One morning she had an appointment with someone, as she got to the table someone she did not know was waiting for her, the person handed her an envelope with a document she had been working on the night before in her office from her work computer. She said no one knew about that document except for one other person, she said, “that

left one of those sensations where you're indignant and upset, and the only thing you can do is report it to the institutions.”

All of the journalists interviewed denounced violence against journalists, and against freedom of expression in the country, but in the process they all admitted to either being threatened or censoring themselves. A few openly admitted to not filing any complaints, silencing themselves- self-censorship.

Media Routines Influences

Situated in downtown Guatemala City, just blocks from *El Parque Central*, and one block from the famous San Sebastian Church¹¹, the Centro Civitas office is tucked away on the second story of a building monitored by security. A short flight of stairs leads to an off-white tiled platform surrounded by dark brown wooden doors on the second floor. The rays from the natural light barely make its way through the dark hallway clashing into a fluorescent-lighted space. The center's office is the one with the ironclad screen door and a camera right above the entrance. There is no sign informing about the office, the doors are plain. The only option is to ring the doorbell and wait for someone to answer the door to confirm an appointment. Once inside, the screen door is locked, and the main door dead bolted. There is a television monitor with a live feed from the front security camera. These are the precautionary measures the organization had to take at its newer establishment after numerous threats. The office had been burglarized at which the assailants stole computers and documents with important contact and

¹¹ The San Sebastian Church is known as the church where Bishop Juan Gerardi was brutally murdered, his body found bludgeoned to death on April 26, 1998, two days after the release of the REMHI report, Guatemala: Never Again, a human rights report about the armed conflict, concluding that 80 percent of the killings were committed by the Guatemalan Army- conspiring with the elite and members of government (Goldman,2007).

business information in 2010 (Article 19, 2010). Members of the organization are encouraged not to have any routines getting to work for their own safety. Miguel González Moraga, editor of the organization's magazine, *Sala de Redacción*, explains the advice he gives his staff:

No tengo (rutina) por seguridad, y por la dinámica de la institución. Nosotros no tenemos horarios aquí. Nosotros tenemos que entregar productos. Que los materiales del sitio estén al uno cada mes. Interactuar en las redes sociales. Resolver dudas por correo electrónico. Entonces no tengo. Y recomendamos no tener. La mayoría de los periodistas tienen.

I don't have a routine for security purposes, and for the dynamic of the institution. We don't have schedules here. We just need to turn in product. We make sure the site is filled with our best work. We maintain and interact on our social media sites. We respond to our emails. So, I don't have a routine. And we recommend not to have one. Most journalists have one.

This is a recommendation that one of Guatemala's best investigative journalists, and contributor to the magazine, Marvin Del Cid Acevedo, takes to heart. In 2010, two assailants broke into his apartment while he was at work. They stole two computers and left a message on his mirror saying, "You will die" (CPJ, 2010). Earlier that morning he had reported numerous calls from blocked numbers threatening him and questioning his work. CPJ (2010) reported that his co-workers had told him that they had seen a car follow him the day before the incident. He said that after that he had armed security for two years. Routines are not part of his lifestyle. There is one thing, about which he is consistent, and that is his belief in the practice of journalism, and constantly taking courses to stay keen in the rapidly evolving profession. It is important to stay

current in the profession and practice of journalism because journalists constitute the “oxygen to society” (Interiano, 1996), they are the one’s educating society with truth. Marvin del Cid

Acevedo explained:

Que se preparen cada vez mejor académicamente. Y como es esto? No solo necesariamente con el hecho que yo me gradué de la universidad, digamos, mínimo uno al año tiene que sacar un diplomado en algo para ser actualizado. Por ejemplo yo el año pasado terminé un diplomado en derechos humanos, después me metí a sacar un diplomado con la Universidad de Costa Rica sobre libertad de expresión, acceso a la información, y derechos humanos. Y ahorita me metí a sacar otro diplomado en derechos humanos mas avanzado. Es decir de que periodistas se tienen que estar capacitando constantemente. Yo creo que es un reto bien importante porque además los periodistas estamos sometidos a la opinión publica, y eso se nos compleja mucho si no estamos suficientemente preparados.

We need to be prepared academically. What do I mean? I don’t just mean by graduating from college, let’s say, at least once a year one should get certified in something that needs to be updated. For example, last year I finished a certificate in human rights, later I enrolled and completed another certificate in freedom of expression, access to information, and human rights from the University of Costa Rica. And I currently enrolled to get another certificate in human rights, but at a more advanced level. Journalists have to continuously educate themselves. It’s a really important challenge because we as journalists are submitted into public opinion, and it gets real complicated if we aren’t sufficiently prepared.

Organizational level

Centro Civitas and other international organizations hold workshops in different topics in the profession for practicing reporters. El Faro,¹² El Salvador's more popular and respected news outlet, has held workshops for Guatemalan journalists in their country, and has even partnered up with Plaza Pública for certain lectures, mostly about security issues.

Martín Rodríguez¹³ has a unique style of running the news outlet when it comes to policies regarding security. Research revealed that many news outlets in the country do not have a security protocol when it comes to reporting. His outlet is the exception it has a policy on how to cover cartels and organized crime. For example they will not accuse anyone of being a cartel figure unless the Ministerio Público has done it first, and they need another source if the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) is involved to confirm the information. Rodríguez explained:

No acusamos a personas de ser narcotraficantes sin que no los haiga acusado el Ministerio Público. Sobre todo, no lo hacemos teniendo como única fuente a la gente de la DEA, que le filtra a los periodistas cosas. Los periodistas lo publican y después ellos usan las publicaciones de los periodistas como fuente de sus informes. No confío en muchas instituciones policiales, soy aséptico a ellos. Creo que acusar a alguien de algo fuerte como el crimen organizado es muy duro.

We don't accuse people of being narcos first without the Ministerio Público having accused them already. Overall, we don't do it with the DEA as our only source, they filter information to journalists. The journalists then publish the information and the DEA use the articles reported by the journalists as a source for their reports. I don't confide in many policel institutions, I'm

¹² El Faro was referred to by a few of the journalists as "Latin America's best newspaper." El Salvador endured a 12-year civil war that ended in 1992, since then the country has experienced mostly gang-violence in comparison to Guatemala. Historical memory is botched similar to the case in Guatemala.

¹³ Martín Rodríguez is founder and editor-in-chief of Nómada, and he was one of the founders of Plaza Pública. He's 32 years old.

aseptic to them. I believe that accusing someone of something so strong like organized crime is tough.

Findings revealed that among the news outlets included in the study, Nómada is the only one that has precautions in relations to cyber security. He was also the only one to confirm security measures in terms of cyber security. Everyone took minor precautions such as not using Wi-Fi in public spaces, or not depending so much on technology for storing information. Rodríguez said his staff uses Telegram, a messaging application focused on speed and security, for their cell phones. They use RiseUp, a communication medium that does not have any connection from any corporation or government, for Internet protection. Rodríguez has taken extra steps for his news outlet to be safe.

Investigative journalism has declined in the recent years, mainly because of the organizational influences such as poor salaries, lack of safety protocols, and lack of workplace protection, according to the study's interview with Fernando Ramos, arts and culture columnist. Although news outlets like Plaza Pública dedicate a large portion of their pieces to long format investigations, and Marvin del Cid Acevedo works primarily in investigative journalism, the style is in a state of decline as a result of safety and economy.

Extra-media level

Businesses, corporations, government officials, and other media outlets can influence security and censorship issues related to journalists in Guatemala. Advertisers are the news outlets greatest concerns because they pay the bills, and most importantly because they determine what is covered or not covered. There is not separation of money and news context, increasing the dependency factor of the outlet to their economic backers, instead of striving for independence.

No hay un interés genuino en querer crear un medio independiente. El problema de esto es el financiamiento porque es muy difícil tener un medio y pagarle a los periodistas sin necesidad de hacer una pauta. Y el problema está en cuando, por ejemplo del segmento digamos, hay un monopolio y quiero escribir sobre ese problema, no me dejan y me retiran la pauta. Entonces viene el medio y dice, 'bueno, que quiero? El negocio o la noticia?' Prefieren el negocio. El problema de los medios es mala acá porque está manejada por un grupo de empresarios. No hay periodismo independiente.

There isn't a genuine interest in creating an independent news outlet. The problem with this is financing, because it is too difficult to have a news outlet and pay the journalists without the need of having an agenda. The problem is when, for example, say there is a monopoly and I want to write about this problem, I'm not allowed and they remove the beat. That's where the fear comes in, and you ask yourself, "What do I want? The business or the news?" They prefer the business. It's a bad problem with the media because a small group of businessmen run it. There isn't independent journalism.¹⁴

Corporations as an Extra-Media Influence

Aside from independent media being at a stand still because of funding and dependency on businesses and corporations, news outlets in general are experiencing censorship based on corporate interest. It is a decision editors have learned to balance in order to keep their job and funding. Dina Fernandez¹⁵ admitted to not putting up a story about McDonald's food poisoning people in Japan on the Soy502 website because it was the first day of their huge advertisement

¹⁴ Fernando Ramos was a former film critic for Prensa Libre, and now blogs for El Salmon, a digital magazine dedicated to art, culture, and life in Guatemala.

¹⁵ Dina Fernandez is the director of Soy502, a news website favored for its independence and reporting.

campaign that brought in a lot of money to the website, “ I would be lying if I told you no that wasn’t the reason.” In this way the organization censored the story. Just like Juan Pablo not being able to show a picture of his parking ticket or naming the exact location of the parking structure, or Plaza Pública staying away from religious themed stories because they are located on a private campus at a Jesuit university, these are all examples of censorship. The worst part is that it is the economic backers that have the last say in what is news. They are not journalists they are business people. Society is learning about the version of reality from the corporate perspective, it is not real, it is “journalism of convenience” (Seib, 2002), or the “banal of journalism” (Sonwalker, 2007)- preferring some events and issues to cover rather than others, thus censoring media and leaning toward the status quo.

In January 2015, various media outlets, owned by Manuel Baldizón, the lead runner in this 2015 presidential election year, professionally attacked one of the most respected journalists, Luis Font. His case is not the first case of intended defamation of character of a journalist from a politician. This was common after 1986, the government agents would accuse certain journalists as destabilizers of democracy, connections with cartels or just attempt to publically humiliate them, as tactics to disqualify their integrity and morality as journalists (Barrios Reina, 2002).

Government as an Extra-Media Influence

For this level of influence, the term government will encompass all forms of government including local, state, federal, guerilla, police, and military. It is not just business people that are a threat to journalists, but also government officials. They are an alarming thirty-one percent of the assailants attacking journalists in Guatemala in 2014 (CERIGUA, 2015). Most journalists

agreed that the government shapes their coverage, not to the extreme as it did during the armed conflict, but the government still has power exercising violence by instilling censorship.

Es una violencia distinta. Obviamente el periodismo estaba mucho mas censurada. Después de la firma de la paz si hubo una diferencia muy significativa en términos de libertad de expresión porque se comienza en la prensa a hablar de lo que no se hablaba del conflicto armado interno ahora sin miedo. Además se abre los espacios de expresiones para representativos de la izquierda. Se abre el aspecto de ellos. Ahora si hay una diferencia de lo que se podía hacer después de las firmas de las firmas de paz. Por ejemplo la cobertura de Ríos Montt si no sucedía. Tu mirabas por ejemplo los reportes de guerra eran los mismos reportes que daban el ejercito y a veces se publicaban y cuando se ponían era una cosita pequeña.

It's a different violence. Obviously journalism used to be a lot more censored. After the peace accords were signed there was a significant difference in terms of freedom of expression, because the press is beginning to fearlessly talk about what wasn't discussed during the armed conflict. Also, new spaces were opening for representatives from the leftist parties to express themselves. The platforms are open for everyone. There is a difference in what could be said after the Peace Accords were signed. For example the coverage of the Ríos Montt trial would not have happened then. For example, you can look at the war reports that were published in that time, they were the same news releases that the military gave out, and sometimes they made the paper but they were given the smallest little space.¹⁶

La Zona Roja as an Extra-Media Influence

¹⁶ Evelyn Blanck is a respected journalist in Guatemala with 30 years experience in the profession. She is currently an editor for Sala de Redacción at Centro Civitas.

The red zone offered a more specific space for analysis at the extra-media level of influence in reference to journalists and censorship. *La zona roja* is an area of difficulty situation for reporting, where insecurity reigns to those dedicated in the journalism profession (Barreto, 2014). This area is also patrolled by outside forces, whether they are cartel patrol groups, or another form of organized crime, there is control of who comes in-and-out of the red zone. That form of control has spread its tentacles into local government, directly affecting journalism in the area. The journalists interviewed said the *zona roja* is an extremely dangerous space for reporting. According to Ligia Flores, journalist and organizer for Centro Civitas a non-profit organization dedicated to promote a better state of journalism in the country, no reporter in that area is working as a journalist, unless they are sports reporters, even then they have limitations. She said:

En Petén, por ejemplo, hay periodistas deportivos y lo que hacen es dedicarse únicamente a reportar un partido de futbol o hacer un análisis de cómo están los equipos y de vez en cuando señalar un político que esta por ahí apropiándose de la ficha del equipo, pero nos han comentado que han recibido llamadas los periodistas deportivos para que dejen de hacer comentarios sobre quien es el dueño del equipo. Les impiden entrar a la cobertura de actividades deportivas y esas cosas no se denuncian. Los periodistas no lo comentan de una manera confidencial... Es bien frustrante porque los periodistas se quedan en el medio y no quieren denunciar y eso hace que se retiren de las coberturas. Entonces ya la ciudadanía ya no tiene información de calidad.

For example, in Petén there are sports journalists that are solely dedicated to reporting about soccer games, or an analysis of how the teams are doing, and every now and then they mention a politician that is appropriating the teams name, and we've been told that those sports reporters have received calls to stop making comments about who owns what team. Then they aren't

allowed to cover the games in the area, and that isn't reported to anyone. The journalists have informed us about these things in a very confidential manner... It's frustrating because the reporters stay with their outlet, they don't want to file a complaint, and that pushes them away from reporting those issues. So, now the citizens won't get any quality news.¹⁷

Violence as an Extra-Media Influence

Threats, assaults, and violence as a whole, becoming a social norm were mentioned frequently by the journalists interviewed. In this case violence is referred to as structural violence, since it is evolving into normalcy because it is silent, it is a process (Galtung, 1969). Almost all journalists interviewed had experienced some sort of threat against them. The following list is a typology of threats and aggressions created by CERIGUA (2015):

- Intimidation
- Censorship
- Legal harassment
- Threats
- Source obstruction
- Physical assault and arrest
- Verbal aggression
- Intent to obstruct the source
- Closing down a community radio station
- Physical assault and obstructing the source
- Theft

¹⁷ Ligia Flores writes for Sala de Redacción, the Centro Civitas newspaper. She also is the liaison for the departmental journalists and the center.

- Physical aggression
- Attempt for murder
- Material assault
- Intimidation and retention
- House raid
- Retention
- Retention and physical assault
- Verbal assault and threat
- Intimidation and restricted access to source
- Physical assault and material damage
- Plagiarism
- Armed attack
- Arrest
- Intimidation and censorship

Defamation and any sort of cyber related attacks such as hacking, espionage, bullying should be added to the list of threats and aggressions. One journalist, Juan Pablo was kidnapped with his news team for a few hours in Quiche, approximately 155 miles north of Guatemala City.

Creo que adentro en la Guatemala profunda es un poco temeroso ser periodismo. En la campaña cuando gano Portillo con el FRG me toco ir hacer una investigación con los exPAC en el Quiche y nos retuvieron. Adentro ya en la Guatemala profunda donde no llegan los derechos humanos, donde no llega el internet, donde no llega nada, simplemente llega esta persona y piensan, “nos pueden servir a nosotros si los retenemos...” Osea, no. Es una cosa muy distinta el área metropolitana donde tomamos noticieros en HD, hacemos blogs, tomamos fotografías, que irte a trabajar adentro. Son dos mundos distintos ahí.

I think that deep inside the country of Guatemala it is scary for journalism. When Portillo¹⁸ won the election with the FRG,¹⁹ I was assigned to investigate the ex-PAC's²⁰ in Quiche, and they retained us. Once inside the countryside of Guatemala where human rights have no reach, where internet has no reach, where nothing has any reach except one person to say, "These people can give us leverage if we hold them..." No. The metropolitana area is distinct, we film newscasts in HD, we write blogs, we take pictures, it's just different than working in the countryside. It's two different worlds.²¹

Ideological level

The most common phrase used to explain the current state of journalism in the country was, "*Hay dos Guatemala's, la capital y el interior,*" there are two Guatemala's, the capital and the countryside. A much better phrase to use is there is Guatemala City and everything else. Meaning that the capital is a completely different world to work as a journalist, compared to the peripheries of the city, taking into account diversity, historical memory, and professionalism.

Diversity as an Ideological Influence

¹⁸ Alfonso Portillo was president of Guatemala from 2000 to 2004. He was accused of taking \$2.5 million in bribes from Taiwan and laundering the money through U.S. banks (Person, Ax, and Menchu, 2015). He served five years in a U.S. prison, and returned to Guatemala in March 2015, where he was welcomed like a hero (Reynolds, 2015).

¹⁹ FRG, Frente Republicano Guatemalteco, or Guatemalan Republican Front. A right-wing political party founded by former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt (Sieder, 2002).

²⁰ PAC, Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil, or Civil Self-Defense Patrols.

²¹ Juan Pablo Dardón Pereira was a journalist with Siglo21, one of the seven newspapers in Guatemala (Gramajo, 2014), for 15 years until Jan. 13, 2015. He publically resigned through his blog, Fe de Rata, on a post, "Renuncio de Siglo 21." He stated his discontent for his practice because of constant censorship. The final straw was a piece he wrote about a price increase for parking in an upscale shopping center during peak traffic hours. His complaint wasn't about the threefold increase; there wasn't a notice about the increase. He called it fraud. The title was changed, the photograph illustrating the parking voucher with the hours and the cost was removed. It was only text. He wrote in his blog that it was the most read story that day for the newspaper. He was even congratulated by his editor. But there was an upset from the corporate end. He wrote, he understands the importance of "taking care of the client, so it can find an ally for its' commercial interest in the outlet" (Dardón Pereira, 2015). He was interviewed two days after his resignation.

The diversity within Guatemala was a continuous theme brought up by the interviewed journalists, mainly because of the implementation that the “two Guatemala’s has” apart from separating the metropolitan and the periphery, there is the ladino and indigenous Guatemala. The division has had a social impact affecting journalism, explained by Vinicio Sic, retired journalist:

La metrópolis es donde se toman las decisiones y es aquí donde los medios marcan sus agendas, pero hay muchas cosas en los departamentos que esta pasando y que afecta la población que se invisibiliza en los grandes medios. Eso es algo que no satisface ese universo en el que vivimos.

The metropolis is where the decisions are made, and it where the news outlets create their agendas, but there’s a lot happening in the departments that affects the population that goes unnoticed by the bigger news outlets. That isn’t satisfying this universe that we live in today.

Journalism professionalism as an Ideological Influence

Professionalism was mentioned as one of the most influential sources for practicing journalism in exercising freedom of expression, where “political, economic, societal, and cultural heritage and context in a country, in part, shapes journalistic values and professional role perceptions (González de Bustamante and Relly, 2015; Hanitzch 2006,2007; Hallen and Mancini, 2004; Hanitzch et al, 2011; Pintak, 2014; Waisbord, 2013). Two of the journalists interviewed had lost faith in journalism in their country. Everyone else was optimistic and hopeful for the future of the practice in Guatemala.

Historical memory as an Ideological Influence

The purpose of this study was not supposed to be about the violence against journalists, but in a country like Guatemala where there has been a perpetual state of violence, when you investigate the state of journalism with a focus on freedom of expression, it goes hand-in-hand.

Alejandra Gutiérrez, director of Plaza Pública, was the only one to mention lack of historical memory as a root to the situation of freedom of expression.

Históricamente hay una auto-censura colectiva, creo yo, que es una cultura de silencio a nivel de todos los ciudadanos y hay mucho temor aun para hablar, expresarse, y opinar....El mismo temor que se cruza con la cultura de la violencia que es también no solo el temor a decir algo que y que me critiquen por eso si no que directamente me maten por eso. Eso puede suceder. Entonces yo no diría que es un estado demasiado saludable de la libertad de expresión.

Historically there's a collective self-censorship, I think it's part of a culture of violence at the level of the citizens, and there's a lot of fear to talk, express yourself, and give an opinion... Fear itself traverses with culture of violence, which is also not just fear to say something and to be critiqued, but that I will be killed for what I said. It can happen. So, I wouldn't say that we have a very healthy state for freedom of expression.

Discussion

The study examined the way journalists in Guatemala are fighting for a space to professionally practice journalism against perpetual censorship and violence, a constant obstacle in their human right for freedom of expression. The main concern for journalists in Guatemala is professionalism, which entails education, training, ethics, salary, and safety. This investigation revealed that the strongest influences in journalism in Guatemala are censorship, training, education, ethics, security, and advertisers/ corporations. The semi-structured in-depth interviews allowed for a rapport between the researcher and the participant, which made the process of gathering information from 14 different journalists less routine, and more ritual-like. Most interviews did not feel like interviews, they were similar to informal conversations between

colleagues. The laidback, yet professional, ambience resulted in mostly detailed and informative interviews.

There is a divide within journalists on the professional level in the country, similar to the two Guatemala's concept, which has been applied to this divide, but as the *emperico* vs the journalism educated. All the journalists interviewed had the journalism education background, so perhaps this study is one-sided, since it is missing the point of view from an *emperico*, but that will have to be investigated in another study. The lack of training in ethics that those who have gone through the university training creates two different schools of practice within the field; an *emperico* and a properly-formed journalist. The lack of proper foundation reflects in a domino effect, for example, journalism schools stress ethics, lack of ethics reflect in poor journalism, poor journalism lacks respect and quality resulting in lower pay and fewer jobs.

The low paying jobs require for second or third jobs to make ends meet, which is the case in Guatemala. The pay is minimum and not always guaranteed²². Journalists are not required to have previous academic training before entering the practice at a professional level. Because of their career field, many get hired on my government agencies or offices, creating a huge conflict of interest. One journalist pointed out that some of the aggressions against journalists in the provinces of Guatemala are because of confusion. A reporter can't work as a government representative in the morning and then an "objective" reporter in the afternoon, and vice-versa. It is unethical. Other journalists have taken more dangerous jobs, sometimes, even illegal means to make a little extra cash, since they cannot afford their life working as a reporter. One journalist asked, "why work as a journalist if you cannot survive that way?" He continued: "If I couldn't

²² There are ongoing legal battles between two of Guatemala's largest circulating newspapers where they have not paid their journalists in months. One journalist retired in December and when he was interviewed in mid-January still hadn't received his paycheck, which was backed up from previous pay periods.

make ends meet on my salary that is where I draw the line. I don't want to ruin my integrity or rather the integrity of journalism because I'm hungry, or stressed, and working multiple jobs.”

The issue of professionalism quickly evolved into a question of security. Aside from dealing with the physicality of threats and assaults for personal safety, journalists now also worry about their cyber security. It is interesting to note that as concerned journalists are about being followed and cyber-security, social media is the first place they turn to to report. Similar to González de Bustamante and Relly (2014) it was uncovered that social media influences collective action and raises awareness, hence the dependency for the immediacy of posting online. Which has been beneficial in the past to gather people for a protest, which was the case this past March right after the murders of both journalists in Mazatenango.

Security issues for journalists penetrate borders, boundaries, beats, and technology. In the case of the sports reporters, they aren't reporting on corruption, or government, or human rights, or the environment, they only write about sports, and some still are not safe. The entire interview with Ligia in reference to sports reporters in Petén is disturbing. The fact that there are not any journalists properly reporting from that area is a silent signifier of fear. The fact that sports journalists have been repeatedly threatened, harassed, and barred from reporting is a violation of their human right to freedom of expression. And the fact that they have not taken action against their current situation can convey an unspoken acceptance as a victim of violence, or as Fassin and Reichtman (2009) concur that “the victim's denial thus emerges as the last defense of a traumatized psyche.” It's a domino effect in this situation, the censorship is hindering the knowledge of the citizens and beyond, thus having those people evolve into a state of acceptance and silence, consequently obstructing a proper democracy from taking place. Virgilio Álvarez Aragón's (2006) emphasizes on the lack of education focused on the importance of journalism to

democracy, which has blindly guided the country further into a culture of violence and impunity that continues to “overwhelmingly oppress.”

Repressing historical memory is a form of oppression and inculcated censorship, which has become part of the Guatemalan culture of violence; reflected in the construct of the current state of journalism in the country. Not discussing the past, the violence, the militancy, the social activism “produces both fear and “clandestine habits”” (Oglesby, 2007) conveyed through journalists in the censorship by cartels, organized crime, and big business.

Conclusion

This is one of the first academic studies to examine the current state of journalism and limits to freedom of expression in Guatemala. Literature was difficult to find in reference to the country and freedom of expression.

Limitations of the study

Parallels were drawn from studies that had similar topics related to influences on journalism in times of conflict in different countries such as Iraq and the northern border states of Mexico and the United States. There was just one problem with these studies, they were set in certain periods of times for moments of conflict, and Guatemala has been in a perpetual state of conflict since the 1940's. How can comparison be drawn? It seems that rather than comparisons, parallels would be the best option. Another limit was the amount of time spent gathering data on the field for this study. With more time a deeper study into the profession looking at the mediums, the ownership of the outlets, government ties/relationships, a deeper discussion on the culture and people of the country because indigeneity and social class play a huge role in the country as well as in the profession.

Journalism in the country is evolving, it is adapting to the current state in the country. Twenty years ago the government violently ran the country, flash forward to today, there is a shift in powers. It is not the government anymore, but rather a triad: the cartels, organized crime and corporations that run the state and the press. Although one can now report about the military, the police, and for the most part government, there is censorship elsewhere. There is a different access to information that was not existent during the armed conflict, but now in violent times of “peace” there are limitations to the censored triad topics.

La Esperanza

The situation in the country is complicated for journalists. There is incredible competition with new online news outlets, and large corporate papers like *Prensa Libre*²³.

Professionalism, independence, and investigative journalism are key for a better Guatemala. Not everyone in the profession has had proper training, but there it doesn't seem to matter, in many cases it's about whom you know.

The country overflows with stories, from the armed conflict to organized crime to culture, politics, environment, tourism, human rights and so on. The topics are endless, but what makes this country so unique for reporting? There's an abundance of opportunity to investigate, and tell a story. There's no other place like this for a reporter. The profession is constantly evolving. In the past four years, four of the most respected, non-partisan news agencies launched. They have quickly risen to international prominence for their style of writing and transparency. Although these new outlets are small, they have the right idea to help the country move forward

²³ Although it might seem like *Prensa Libre* is the big monster, ironically everyone interviewed had previously worked for that outlet at some point in their career, whether as a correspondent, reporter, editor, or photographer- everyone had at least one pay check by the newspaper.

in every manner. So far they do not play newspaper politics, as for endorsing politicians and seeking large corporate funding from businesses that dig their talons into journalism integrity.

Journalists are fighting to prevent a situation in which they have to self-censor in all cases, and thereby risking the loss of any credibility. There is an unofficial mum censorship in reference to organized crime, whether it's by choice or for safety, it is off the table. One journalist said to attach organized crime to someone is dangerous in the sense that lack of proof leaves that person vulnerable and the journalist not doing their job. There must be further research. Most importantly there must be solidarity and support amongst journalist to support and help each other, especially during times of violence.

Journalists today in Guatemala seem to be fighting an uphill battle with a few great leaders, brave soldiers, and fallen comrades, all in hopes of a better future.

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