HOW DO JOURNALISTS COPE WITH REPRESSION?

Examining the strategies used by critical journalists in Honduras to cope with pressures on their political space

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"Journalism wields such great power, you know what my government would do? It would turn journalist itself, it would be the journalism incarnate."

Machiavelli (The Dialogue in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu)

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Introduction

During one of the final days of April 2015, when I was nearing the final week of my two-month research trip to Honduras, I was eating lunch outside a restaurant in the center of the capital Tegucigalpa. I had just come from another interview with an opposition journalist when I received a text message from an unknown number;

"Why are you eating alone?" it said.

The text message caught me off guard, and the unknown number worried me. In the preceding weeks I had conducted over a dozen interviews with journalists who regularly got threatening and intimidating text messages, which had at times turned into aggression in the form of kidnappings. They had told me about their strategies in responding to these and other pressures. I had taken careful note of what they had told me and had nodded understandingly when they told me anecdotes of intimidation and violence, and the fear they lived with on a day-to-day basis.

But I didn't understand. I took note, but didn't yet understand, until that day outside the restaurant. I was sitting alone outside, unprotected. Weeks of documenting response strategies didn't help me one bit, I thought. The only thing I thought of was moving my chair against the wall so I couldn't be surprised from behind, something I had learnt from an interviewee. I looked around for anything suspicious and spotted two white vans with blacked out windows and no license plates standing on the other side of the road. My heart rate went up.

I decided to walk home, which was only 2 blocks away, and was taking decided and quick steps when I heard a knock on the window of a building I was passing. I looked through it and recognized her; Dina Meza, possibly the most passionate, brave and threatened journalist in Honduras, and certainly the bravest in my study. She signaled me to come in. "I was just testing your response strategies," she said laughing. I couldn't have been more relieved. Now I understood, at least a little better, what it means to live as a journalist under pressure in Honduras.

Despite somewhat of an overreaction on my part, this experience finally made me feel closer to those I had worked with for news reports for clients such as Channel 4 and Discovery Channel, when I would call on local journalists for help and expertise. They would do most of the legwork. After we covered the gang violence in 2013 in order to give the Western world an inside view of Honduras, the local journalists stayed behind as we flew back home. Just like after every report we did. As soon as the video would surface online, the journalists that had helped us would get

nervous, or they would worry members of the gangs we had interviewed would come after them.

In studying critical Honduran journalists I thus want to increase the understanding of the dynamics of violence against journalists and the ways they deal with pressures. But the question I address also stems from a global trend of declining press freedom.

This decline is agreed upon across the board. Two-thirds of the 180 countries surveyed by Reporters Without Borders for the 2015 World Press Freedom Index performed less well than in the previous year and Freedom House said that the wealthy owners who dominate private media in a growing number of countries shaped news coverage to support the government, a political party, or their own interests (2015) adding that the global deterioration in press freedom is not limited to autocracies or war zones.

In Honduras specifically, during 2014 and so far in 2015 around 50 violations of freedom of expression and information have been documented, from threats, attacks, aggressions, kidnappings, assaults, persecution, and confiscation of equipment to journalists being convicted, lawsuits filed and 14 communicators violently killed according to the National Human Rights Commission (CONADEH).[1] Interestingly, 46 journalists were reported killed since the 2009 coup d'état with a 91% impunity rate (Meza, D., 2015) which Reporters without borders stated was worrying as in Honduras "a climate of information control and authoritarianism prevails, in which community and opposition media are subject to various forms of persecution, including judicial harassment"(Reporters without Borders, 2015)

Freedom House rates Honduras as "partly free" giving all three indicators of freedom in Honduras (freedom rating, civil liberties, and political rights) a 4 where 1 is best and 7 is worst, (World Freedom Report, 2014) while Reporters without Borders paints a slightly less positive picture ranking Honduras #132 out of 180 countries on its press freedom index, with a score of 39.27 when 0 is the best and 100 is the worst. Transparency international ranks Honduras as #129 of 175 countries and gives it a score of 29 where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean (Corruption Perceptions Index, 2014).

[1] Reported by the University of Texas: https://knightcenter.utexas.edu/es/blog/00-16106-medios-y-periodistas-de-honduras-denuncian-constantes-atropellos-la-libertad-de-expres [Accessed on June 6 2015]

But numbers aside, says Honduran journalist Thelma Mejia, "a lot of stories can be told about Honduran journalism, but there are so few written down that academia and journalists themselves have a deficit with society" (2002; 21). This study attempts to initiate a conversation to fill this deficit. As the writer and former interior minister of Honduras Victor Meza said "the media, especially print media, radio and television, have been at the margins, safe from the questioning looks of the population, far from the scrutinizing concerns of academics, trying to be the escape route of the social tensions and considering themselves, sometimes with reason, the best and best prepared defenders of transparency and justice, freedom and democracy" (Meza, 2002).

I formulate the research question as follows;

How do critical journalists in Honduras inform their response strategies in dealing with experienced pressures on their political space from 2000 to 2015 and what informs their choice for pro-active, defensive, collective and individual responses?

The time period specified in the research question is set up this way because it allows for the inclusion of almost a decade of evidence dating from before the 2009 coup d'état that marked a political shift in Honduras as well as ample post-coup documentation. This timeframe is thus broad enough to discern whether the coup changed pressures and/or strategies.

In answering this question this study will address the following sub questions:

- What does the current Honduran media landscape look like and how has it developed?
- What are the pressures experienced by journalists in Honduras?
    - What was the impact of the coup on political space for journalists
- What are the response-strategies used by journalists in Honduras in response to these pressures?
    - How does the Honduran media landscape inform journalists strategy-making?

Through interviews and documentary research this exploratory study thus begins to provide a sociological view of critical Honduran journalists responses to pressures on their political space. I show the patterns and differences in the strategies employed by journalists in response to various pressures at various moments in time from 2000 to 2015. To the extent that access to resources like support networks affect strategy making, this study starts a conversation about network

research in the context of journalism where it has so far largely been applied to social movements.

In Chapter 1 I will discuss the past literature on the topic of journalist's responses to pressures and show that indeed, the academic body of literature on this topic is scarce if not non-existent. I will then describe the various pressures the journalists in the sample encountered and introduce the term 'watchdog journalism', which will be useful when analyzing experienced pressures and strategy making. I will explain why this analysis is best done using the interplay between agency and structure as theorized by Jaspers (2012), before turning to the variety of strategies journalists employed in response to pressures using van der Borgh's defensive-pro-active and individual-collective dimensions and the vocabulary of collective action theory. Chapter 1 will conclude with the methods used.

Chapter 2 will consist of a history of the evolution of Honduran journalism including the most important ups and downs such as the cold war, the onset of neoliberalism and a powerful business and media oligarchy as well as the impact of the 2009 coup d'état. Especially the modern media landscape, which forms the context in which this study's sample lives, will be analyzed and explained, concluding with a short outline of Honduras' legal framework for freedom of the press.

The third and final Chapter will consolidate the evidence found in the form of interviews, observation and documentation with the theories outlined in Chapter 1, starting with evidence and analysis of the political pressures according to van der Borgh's model (2014; 42), outlining the evidence for the patterns found in the pressures encountered by journalists. Next it will outline the various strategies used by journalists in response to pressures, starting with the most diverse and widely used category; the individual defensive strategies, followed by the collective individual strategies. The following, relatively shorter section will focus on the pro-active responses, using the four journalists who used these strategies as a first window into possible larger patterns that could be identified in further studies.

I will conclude with a summary of the main findings of this study and several recommendations for future research.

1. Theory and Methods

1.1 Past Literature

Globally, the scholarly literature on journalists' response strategies to pressures on their political space is extremely sparse. Studies tend to deal with pressures on journalism stemming from a decline in print journalism due to technical and economic changes (Witschge, Nygren, 2015) or with specific communication strategies such as self-censorship (Hayes, 2007; Jaworski, Galasinski, 2000). There is also a body of literature dealing with critical journalism in Latin America in relation to accountability and democracy (Waisbord, 2000; Leyva, 2002), which analyzes journalism in Latin America as it relates to political science and history. Additionally, there is a limited body of Spanish language literature – though mostly non-academic – on repression of the Honduran media (Funes, 2002; Mejia, 2002; Meza, 2002, 2012) in which the media landscape is explained (see Chapter 2).

What the above research omits is the individual level. However, no studies were found in which journalists activities (in any country) fighting for their space were analyzed on this level and no study was found that uses concepts from the sociological literature on collective action to analyze how journalists defend their freedoms. Considering the fact that subjects of this study perceived the current media landscape to be more restrictive and tenser than before the 2009 coup d'état (In chapter 2, this is described in more detail), and as press freedom is declining globally, I found this to be a significant knowledge gap.

Central to this study is the existence of 'political space', which is divided into de-facto and de jure political space. With freedom of the press established in the Honduran Constitution, it legally recognizes that journalists have the civil right to a certain amount of freedom in their reporting. This is the de-jure space. Simultaneously however, journalists may come across obstacles and situations that may pose limits to what they are legally entitled to; this is de facto political space.

Chris van der Borgh and Carolijn Terwindt (2014) referred to the political space in which NGO's operate which may shrink through pressures such as criminalization and a backlash on civil society. Similar to the pressures on NGOs, those experienced by individual journalists may come from various actors broadly identified as the state or politics, crime, and the private sphere.

The 2000 study by Barrera and Ruiz "Journalistic Strategies of Opening and Resistance in an authoritarian public space: the cases of Madrid (Spain) and La Opinion (Argentina)", is important as it dealt with strategies by the critical press in response to state pressure and "restrictive public space". In this study, we use the terms public space and political space interchangeably.

Barrera divides the identified journalistic strategies into "political-journalistic" and "professional", in which the first refers to adopting certain rhetoric that may result in a more positive viewing of the paper by the regime, the second refers to the practical strategies of establishing relationships with foreign papers and training of the editorial team. Due to time constraints, this study focuses on "professional strategies" journalists employ to reclaim and expand their political space, albeit on an individual level and through anecdotal evidence. Contrary to Barrera, my argument discerns these professional strategies in more detail than simply the two kinds identified in his study -relationships with foreign papers and training of staff -. My research will use the concept of 'networks', as an important resource in journalistic strategies.

Despite Barrera's focus on responses to pressures, it deals primarily with analyzing the content of the opening pages of the two papers during the two regimes, where I will not focus on specific regimes. His research also focuses on identifying the structural dynamics of the papers as companies. Relying only on documentation, the study does not include the role of the individual journalists in deciding which strategies to employ. Where Barrera focuses on the newspaper as such, this study focuses on the individual strategies used by journalists. This approach also better suits Honduran journalists, as the pressures do not solely come from the state, but from various sources.

Though journalist's restricted political space is often presented as a result of government contestation, Filomeno Aguilar (2014) in a study focusing on killings of journalists in the Philippines between 1998 and 2012, concluded that "the killings of mass media practitioners need to be understood in the context of local-level contestations over positions and resources sanctioned by the state framework" and that "journalists murdered for their occupation (classified as "motive confirmed") did not threaten the interests of the state as state but rather the interests of local power-holders." This thesis is in line with Aguilar's finding, as the most severe cases of repression mentioned by journalists occurred when they offended or accused individuals with power (who may be connected to the state structure to varying extents), rather than when they questioned the state apparatus directly. Though

Chapter 2 and 3 of this thesis will provide more specifics on how this dynamic affects journalists in Honduras, examples include journalist Julio Alvarado risking a 16-month prison sentence after having offended the Dean of the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH), journalists Dina Meza, Robert Marin and Claudia Mendoza getting their worst threats when accusing the owners of a private security company of human rights abuses and Paulo Cerrato being kidnapped after reporting on crime, to name a few.

Besides repression that is reported, many journalists keep pressures to themselves, pointing to the consideration whether Honduras' slightly lower than medium ranking on press freedom mentioned in the introduction is just. The statistics are also complicated by the fact that when it comes to journalist killings, the lack of information about motives results in categorizing them under common crime. Aguilar comments on the systematic pressures on journalists in transitional Democracies, saying that the murder of journalists seems to be a constant feature in these countries, not known for central state control or repression of the mass media (2014; 657). With 46 journalists killed since the 2009 coup (Meza D., 2015), I consider this observation important in the case of Honduras. Systematic pressures coming from non-official sources are harder to document and quantify, as are the corresponding responses. This thesis thus looks beyond the statistic, in an attempt to better describe the de-facto political space journalists have in Honduras and how it informs the way they respond.

1.2 Pressures

The pressures exercised to limit journalists political space can take on many forms. They range from overt political pressures such as restricting rules imposed on journalists by the government to pressures of which the source is not easily identified such as certain types of threats and intimidation. This study borrows van der Borgh's and Carolijn Terwindt's categorization of five main pressures; physical harassment and intimidation, criminalization; prosecution and investigation, administrative restrictions, stigmatization and negative labeling and participation under pressure (van der Borgh and Terwindt, 2014; 42). The economic pressures fall under the category 'participation under pressure' and may come in the form of bribes, sponsorship or advertising, in order to sway a journalists coverage. Pressures may come from both state and non-state actors, and may be collected in the term 'repression'.

As journalists' response strategies vary according to the kind of repression they encounter, I find it useful to use Siegel's two types of repression; targeted repression

and random repression where "targeted repression falls first upon participants with greatest social influence, while random repression afflicts all with equal likelihood" (2011; 994). This study emphasizes targeted repression, as questions were directed towards journalists personal experiences with pressures put specifically on them, But as conversations flowed, there was ample talk about general repression created by the restrictive media landscape, which I will further explain in Chapter 2.

When looking at the types of repression journalists in this study encountered, it is also important to consider the way journalism is practiced in Honduras. For the purposes of this argument I make use especially of one of two types of journalism that are spoken of in political science studies about journalism; lapdog journalism and watchdog journalism. Grounded in a political economy approach of media where the media is seen as first and foremost as economic entities that create surplus value (Golding & Murdock, 1979), lapdog journalism theory says that news media follow the agenda of the society's elites, supporting and perpetuating the exploitation and social inequalities on which they profit (Bednar, 2012; Franklin et. al, 2005). Watchdog journalism is a type of critical journalism that holds political and private powers accountable for wrongdoing (Waisbord, 2000). I do not hold that respondents strictly adhere to just one of these types, but an individual positions oneself anywhere on a spectrum ranging between the two at any given moment in time thus accounting for the role of human agency in decision-making as described by Jaspers (2012). Still, we use the concept of watchdog journalism to help contextualize strategies and pressures.

Interestingly, Brunetti and Weder's study that found correlative relationship between more press freedom and less corruption, found that in Latin American countries (2001), their overall explanation for this relationship - the potential cost for a corrupt bureaucrat of being exposed by a journalist - did not hold true. As they did not find an alternative explanation, this calls for exploration, adding to the value of documenting pressures encountered by critical journalists and their corresponding response strategies, which include pressures resulting from corruption in the fourth estate itself. As said, not all journalists burdened with the task can or are willing to fulfill their role as a 'watchdog'.

The pressures the critical journalists referece in this thesis are often results of press exposés denouncing human rights abuses, corruption, and crime. But contrary to what one might expect, the critical journalists in Honduras who encountered most political pressures were not those who employed investigative journalism that adhered to the Anglo-American tradition that works on all levels, unearthing information that is not to be found easily on the surface (Negrine, 1996; 35). They

were rather the watchdogs described by Silvio Waisbord as journalists that do not require the parameters of investigative journalism as put forward by Negrine, but simply denounce wrongdoing, often via 'leaks' (Waisbord, 2000). Chapter 3.2.1.1 on Preventive Cautionary Measures further explains and gives examples of this dynamic where limited de-facto space leads to increased meticulousness and investigation.

Chapter 3 will provide examples of the consequences of providing this 'critical scrutiny', and set out to identify the differences and commonalities in critical journalists response strategies to the structural pressures they encounter.

1.3 Strategies

This study focuses especially on the pro-active and defensive strategies used by journalists to defend and reclaim political space. Pro-active strategies refer to those strategies that actively aim to increase the journalist's freedom in reporting on a long-term institutional level. This could be by lobbying for legal reform. Defensive strategies are those immediate risk mitigating measures that result from repression such as protecting oneself, changing modes of communication, taking different routes to work or quit a job (van der Borgh and Terwindt, 2014; 137).

Another fault line I reference from van der Borgh to order and make sense of response strategies is the individual- collective divide, in which individual responses refer to those responses one individual engages in after pressures such as self-censorship, resignation, changing jobs, physically arming oneself, assuming a lower profile and training oneself. The collective responses refer more to the use of networking and coordination with other individuals or organizations (van der Borgh and Terwindt, 2014; 137).

Using the pro-active and defensive divide as well as the individual- collective divides put forward by van der Borgh in analyzing NGO's response strategies to pressures are a useful framework when looking at journalist's strategies. That is to say, journalists and NGOs are both seen as watchdogs in civil society (Blitt, 2004) especially when it comes to Human Rights, though not all journalists, and not all NGOs take on this role. Similar to leaders of social movements, visible in their role as opinion makers in the country's population, journalists experience political pressures and thus need to strategically respond to them. Like NGOs, journalists may, to varying degrees stand opposed to governments or choose to walk their line and collaborate with them. However, NGOs might legitimately collaborate with the government, while this would not be legitimate in journalists, who as members of

'the fourth estate' are tasked with scrutinizing the powers. Analyzing the distribution of response strategies to pressures using van der Borgh's and Terwindt's scheme then becomes even more interesting.

In analyzing the journalists' responses to pressures, this study considers some of the vocabulary of collective action theory to make sense of individual differences between journalists. It holds that the rules of arenas provide advantage to some and disadvantage to others, depending on what resources, skills, statuses and positions they hold. But that action may also be informed by strategic agency (Jasper, 2012; 3). In the case of journalists; it is not just the 'rules of the game' that determine behavior, but individual qualities such as personal connections, status, or skills as well as personal conviction and determination may inform individual choices of responses to the same pressures. Charles Tilly himself acknowledges that relying only on the traditional notion of "political opportunity structures", where action solely depends on context (in this case; the Honduran media environment), denies the agency of the individual and can only be applied after the fact (Tilly, 2008, -.91). It is for this reason that we lean more on Jasper's interplay between agency and (political opportunity) structure in analyzing individual journalists strategies.

An example pointing to this interplay is the well-documented fact (Mejia, 2002; Arce, 2015) that in Honduras, journalists are not only subject to extortion and bribes, but also engage in extortion themselves, using information as leverage. In other words, instead of pushing for more political space, assuming their role as a watchdog, journalists may choose – whether due to pragmatism, lack of conviction, courage, or passion for ethical journalism – to abide by the pragmatic 'rules of the game', as dictated by the limits to their de-facto political space. They therefore reinforce those rules, while others actively resist those pressures and may or may not find new ways to do so. The restrictive media landscape can thus also create political opportunity structures for individual journalists.

In accordance with Jaspers (2012), I find that an important factor informing strategy making is the personal resource of having a robust support network. I inform the definition of this resource using the body of literature known as 'network research' (Siegel, 2011; Gould, 1993; Stevenson, 2000; Keck & Sikkink, 2000) which "proceeds from the implicit assumption that networks operate as social constraints on action" (Stevenson, 2000) and may thus operate as constraints on strategy making.

A robust network may consist of friends, acquaintances, colleagues, and other individuals that could be mobilized in defense of a journalist. Individuals with higher levels of influence make for stronger network links to further one's goals.

Simultaneously, the actions of those individuals close to journalists matters when deciding which strategies they might adopt because people care most about the actions of those close to them, those within their social networks (Siegel, 2011). If a journalist has friends in the highest echelons of government, for example, this might inform their choice of strategy in response to political pressures.

Additionally, a network becomes more robust in fighting repression when it includes more supportive organizations. Keck & Sikkink underline the significance of what they call "transnational advocacy networks" (1998; 4) in constraining repression. These networks include "those actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services," (1998; 1) and are used to "build new links between actors in civil societies", "multiply opportunities for dialogue and exchange", and "make international resources available in domestic political and social struggles". Human Rights NGOs dealing with freedom of expression and international judicial bodies may be important links in these networks.

1.4 Methods

The 16 journalists chosen for this study, and whose maneuvers within a shrinking political space will be analyzed, all live in the urban setting of Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras. This intentional sampling excludes journalists from the interior of the country, who report on local issues where there is less state presence, and where pressures on journalists are not made as visible due to their local reach. Local journalists are thus arguably at greater risk when engaging in critical reporting. This means this study's sample cannot be used to draw conclusions about pressures on and strategies by Honduran journalists in general, but only more specifically about critical journalists reporting in the urban setting of the capital. Overall, the reporting by these journalists is more political, addresses national issues and is published more widely.

The sample includes journalists from both left- and right wing publications. It includes print, radio as well as television journalists. Subjects were approached using the snowball effect, where one journalist led to or recommended the next. At the same time, to make the sample more complete in spanning the breadth of media and political affiliation, several were approached specifically. Through field-work and talks with and about potential interviewees I found that virtually every journalist I considered had experienced pressures, but I explicitly sought out those who felt considerably more limited in their reporting as a result of the experienced

pressures, as opposed to journalists who felt content in their actual 'political space' despite existing pressures.

Though I sought the sample to consist of 'ethical' journalists, which I attempted to determine by talking to third persons about them, analyzing their reporting and simply making personal assessments, I clearly cannot guarantee this quality pervades the sample. However, the respondents reported legitimate grievances about the freedoms they are deprived of. They also repeatedly spoke about the 'other' type of journalist. A journalist that engages in extortion or is easily bribed, a journalist motivated more by personal gain than concern for the purity of his or her profession. Though all respondents were critical journalists, this study regards the ethical-non-ethical divide to be a spectrum, and considers it possible that not all journalists always abided by the ethical standards of the profession.

All but one of the respondents went to college while only 16% of the Honduran population follows education beyond secondary school (National Demographic and Health Survey 2011-2012), and all of them have worked for nationally distributed media. The conversations occurred one on one either in hotel lobbies, other public venues or offices. Some information comes from casual conversations with journalists I met. Most of the interviewees had no problems with being recorded; others preferred me only to take notes. Every formal interview lasted around an hour and a half, was subsequently transcribed and colour coded into the various strategies mentioned and relevant background information.

Taking the sampling method into account as well as the nature of the interviews, which – though guided by my main questions – were exploratory and reactionary to the subject's individual situation and answers, this study should be considered a starting point in understanding the way journalists deal with pressures. I do not proclaim to have checked the accuracy of all anecdotes provided by the subjects, but through triangulation using news articles, reports, books and other documentation I consider the provided information to give a valid picture of the dynamics involved in the overall origin of pressures and the corresponding response strategies. Subjects responded to all questions, and though some answers were kept vague, the omitted details (names, dates, places and other specifics) were generally not necessary in order to identify larger trends and patterns, which is the main goal of this empirical study.

2. The Media in Honduras

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will describe the national context in which Honduran media operate. In doing so I consider the history and evolution of journalism in Honduras from a so-called 'banana republic' where unbridled foreign interest dominated the country to a partial democracy in an ongoing struggle for legitimacy which is ravaged by violence, struggling with impunity and the influence of transnational criminal organizations. In doing so I consider the impact of the Cold War and the role Honduras played in the civil wars in neighboring El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua resulting from its supposed neutrality and geostrategic location.

Next I will discuss how Honduras developed the current media landscape and the powers that dominate the press. Though the power players may have shifted, the media is still controlled by a select few. The Honduran business elites, consisting of six families, dominate Honduran mainstream media and played an important role in the 2009 coup d'état, which increased their influence. An examination will follow outlining the effects of this context on journalists' political space.

I saw the first hand effects the adverse media environment has on journalists, and will also describe the dynamics between individual journalists and their environment. As has been documented by various authors (Mejia, 2002, 2006; Arce, 2015), journalists in Honduras are no strangers to corruption themselves.

Finally I will outline the legal framework relevant to the media, outlining the gap between the de jure (constitutional and legal) protections and the de facto workings of the legal system, where I will show how legal amendments have limited journalists political space during the last decade.

2.2 History and Evolution of Honduran Media

In order to better understand the problems Honduran journalists encounter, it is important to realize how journalism arose in Honduras. Several Historical facts have had great influence on the way it is currently practiced. First of all we must consider

the first informational publications in Honduras, which appeared in 1888 in the form of a four-page English language flyer called 'Honduras Progress'. The flyer was a medium for foreign investors to advocate their mission and interests in Honduras. The press, consisting of pamphlets and flyers distributed by foreign capital remained rather informal until in 1933 Honduras' first professional newspaper was founded by the National Party (PN) called 'La Epoca'; marking the start of what Victor Meza (2002) called the *partisan press*, and in 1949 the Liberal Party founded 'El Pueblo'.

The Partisan Press, says Meza, is "systematically at the service of the political parties, defending its ideas about the country and the world and adapting reality of the news through the lens of the party concerning ongoing political strife" (2002;9). He goes on to describe the simultaneous onset of *the classist press*, as "the press that is tied to a social class with a certain radical ideology and which is constantly at odds with the political powers, whichever party they might be" (2002; 10) and *the press of clans, which* consists of newspapers that are a family project; an initiative of a clan as a status symbol (2002; 11-12). The latter is the type of journalism most closely linked to the classic, informative and generally independent journalism which started to mark the divide between information and opinion (2002; 11). It happens to be the type of journalism considered the ideal by most of the general population. Though the newspaper *El Cronista*, which was founded in 1913 by the journalist Paulino Valladares, was a good example of the independent press, it was no competition for the classist and partisan press.

In 1933 the United Fruit Company backed the election of the ruthless general Tiburcio Carias Andino, who ruled from 1932 to 1949, setting a precedent for a swath of subsequent military dictatorships or military backed governments via coup d'états throughout most of the 20th century (O'Donnell, 1999; Ruhl, 1996). In the 1950s the American owned United Fruit Company accounted for more than 90% of the government's tax revenues, controlling large swaths of territory and transportation networks in Honduras, and its control over the press was crucial to its continued success, which gave rise to the label a 'banana republic'.

From the 1960s throughout the 1980s, the subject of national security emerged within the context of the Cold War, which in Honduras had the basic premise of fighting an external enemy that had the potential of mixing with domestic political and social conditions and thus becoming an internal enemy (Meza, 2012; 11). This was fuelled by Ronald Reagan's obsession with the spread of communism in Central America and using Honduras as a staging area for the Contras (Green, 2015). This context gave rise to the *Doctrina de Seguridad Nacional* (National Security Doctrine),

supported and financed heavily by the U.S., in which all citizens were viewed as potential threats, and legitimized the use of torture, murder, and disappearance (Kruckewitt, 2006).

The Central American peace process in the mid-1980s was considered a turning point for Latin America, a regional framework that marked a departure from Reagan-era anti-communist policies and its view of Central America as a stage of the Cold War (Llana, 2012). With the deterioration of relations between the Honduran army and the U.S. because of a shift from counterinsurgency and anticommunism to the rhetoric of justice and the principles of democracy (Tábora, 2015), new space was created for civil society to make demands. With Honduras having become internationally known to have committed grave human rights violations by the end of the 1980s, the country saw mass protests against the system of national security.

The repression of dissident voices in the heyday of military dictatorships, excluding any possibility of knowing what happened to thousands who were kidnapped, tortured and murdered resulted in a widespread demand for truth (Waisbord, 2000; 188). The democratic process gave rise not only to organizations demanding the truth about human rights violations, but also to a journalism more occupied with truth telling. The 80s didn't just mark Honduran history, but they gave Honduran journalism the opportunity to try out its boldness and courage, at the risk of many journalists' lives (Mejia, 2002). However, this newly found opportunity for bold and courageous journalism did not last long.

The precedents for the decline of independent journalism can be found in the second half of the twentieth century, when a new kind of journalism arose, the *press of the national industry and commerce* (Meza, 2002; 13). This form of journalism was dominated by the private business interests of a select few. And when you ask any Honduran who they are, one most often refers to the Palestinian business elite, also commonly referred to as the 'turcos'. This small fraction of the population are immigrants or descendants from Palestinians who migrated to Honduras at end of the 19th and the start of the 20th century as the Ottoman Empire fell (Gutierrez, 2013). Having accumulated and expanded their economic and social capital in the first half of the twentieth century under beneficial industrialization policies for foreigners, Palestinians continued to benefit in the 1990s from the new neoliberal policies and established alliances with high-ranking military official and political and economic groups, eventually affiliating and becoming members of the National Party (Gutierrez, 2013; 5). By 1990 ten of the twenty-three families and transnational companies that controlled Honduran resources were Palestinian

immigrants or descendants. We will come back to the role of these prominent families in Honduran media in Chapter 2.3.

In the next ten years the critical journalism of the 80s gave way to apathy and indifference, blamed by some on the neoliberal agenda that had taken root in the 90s and which besides liberalizing the economy also generated confusion in the press, which wasn't prepared to understand the social changes occurring both locally and globally after the cold war and the fall of the Berlin Wall (Mejia, 2002; 56-57). The absence of a strong journalistic tradition, a lack of attention to ethics in journalism studies in universities, the politicization of the oligarchy and an increased divide between the population and the elite – both further explained in Chapter 2.3 – gave rise to journalists limited in the available possibilities to challenge authority (Meza D., 2014). This gave rise to increased interest in fame and fortune rather than in being part of the controlling power that is the fourth estate (Mejia, 2002; 58).

2.3 Modern Media Landscape

This brings us to describing the current media landscape, which is dominated by a handful of powerful families, with a dominance of the immigrant families described in the previous part. As Table 1 shows, three of today's four largest newspapers – La Prensa, El Heraldo and La Tribuna are owned and were founded by the Palestinian Canahuati and Facusse families in the 60s and 70s. The fourth, La Tribuna, also belongs to one of Honduras' biggest oligarchs (Meza, 2002; Gutierrez, 2013). As Table 1 shows, the media moguls of the larges media companies are often businessmen with private interests, be they in pharmaceuticals, food industry, the financial industry, or other consumer goods.

Table 1. *Families owning the largest media companies of Honduras*
Sources: (Central America Report, 2009; Censura Sutil, 2008)

Family	**Media Company**	**Other Businesses**
Canahuati-Larach (Headed by Jorge Canahuati)	**La Prensa**, El Nuevo Dia and **El Heraldo**, DIEZ (Magazine), Estilo (Magazine)	Pharmaceuticals, textiles, maquilas, media, wood, insurance, bottled water, sodas.
Rosenthal Hidalgo (Headed by Jaime Rosenthal Oliva).	Tiempo , Canal 11, Cable Color	Controls Grupo Continental: banks, media
Flores Facusse (Headed by Carlos Flores Facusse, ex president of Honduras).	La Tribuna	Textiles, pharmaceuticals, agroindustry, African palm, telecommunications, banking

		sector, construction.
Riceno and Ferrari and Villeda Toledo (Headed by Rafael Ferrari and Manuel Villeda and their respective families).	Emisoras Unidas Group, Radio America and HRN , Centroamericana de Television, Corporacion Televicentro, Multivision	food, pharmaceuticals, lottery, coffee
Miguel Andonie Fernandez	Audio Video	Real estate, production of medicines and pharmacies, founders of the PINU party.
Sikafie	La Voz de Centroamerica	
Victor Bendeck	Radio Industrias de Honduras Group, Hondured, Canal 13	Banco Corporativo
Rafael Nodarse	Canal 6	*Alleged weapons*
Jorge Sikafie	Canal 9, Vica Television, Honduvision	Cement, construction, retail, wine imports
Kawas	Canal 21, Telered, Mayacable	
Ubaldo Garcia	Canal 45, Radio Comayaguela (RCN)	
Atala Faraj	Canal 54	Ficohsa financial group, retail

The relationships between the owners of these media companies and the national political powers was characterized – throughout the 90s and into the new millennium- by economic interests, as modern media will put itself at the service of the governing party if it was convenient for the owners (Meza, 2002; 12). This comfortable relationship media had with the powers changed soon after Manuel Zelaya took office in 2006. After signing into ALBA, Zelaya made a trade agreement with Cuba in order to import medical supplies more cheaply. This has fuelled claims, most notably by the Central American Social Observatory (2009), of pharmaceutical companies in Europe and the US being implicated in the 2009 coup.

With a large part of the Honduran pharmaceutical industry being controlled by the Canahuati, Kafati and Facussé families, who also own El Heraldo, La Prensa, El Nuevo Dia, DIEZ , La Tribuna, it comes as no surprise that the media began attacking Zelaya on many fronts. The Liberal Party, which had supported Zelaya's presidency at first, quickly turned against him after taking office. And witnessing the mounting criticism from the oligarchy, many saw Zelaya's demise as inevitable (Third World Report, 2009). He was eventually ousted on June 28, 2009.

Directly following the coup, many broadcasters were shut down and raided and journalists were prevented from covering the demonstrations, making it difficult for the international community to know what was going on. While the government and elite-owned media were downplaying the events, justifying the coup and arguing it was protecting the constitution, anti-coup media were silenced. (HRW, 2010; PEN, 2014). I mention anti- and pro coup media here because the media companies were forced to take sides in the conflict. Journalists who wanted to give voice to anti-coup sources were shut down by their pro-coup media owners, sometimes resigned as a result.

Journalists, like the entire Honduran population, were thus divided after the coup (New York Times, 2010; CPJ, 2013) aligning with either pro- or anti-coup media. Using journalist Claudia Mendoza's words about its influence; "one suddenly knew who is who." But with increased polarization also came increased repression. The statistics show murders of journalists –the clearest indicator of repression of journalists- have increased dramatically, with 46 killed since the coup with a 91% impunity rate (Meza, D; 2015). The Human Rights Watch characterized the coup as representing 'the most serious setbacks for human rights and the rule of law in Honduras since the height of political violence in the 1980s' (HRW, 2010), due to ongoing violence, intimidation and human rights abuses. However, in comparing my data with the writings about journalism in Honduras prior to the coup, the dynamics between the media and the powers (both private and public), has stayed much the same as before the coup.

"How is it possible that among all powers that rule national life, only the press has escaped the web of corruption and now it's free to denounce it?" (Carvalho, 1994) asked the Brazilian philosopher Olavo Carvalho. As one might expect, especially having gone over Honduras' history, the Honduran press hasn't escaped the web of corruption. Or as Lucila Funes put it "the relationship between the political power and the press is a reaction to complex processes of political, economic, and social interactions driven by a pragmatism that subordinates ethics to other primary interests" (Funes, 2002; 3). Though some individual media owners mentioned by respondents of this study, despite their business interests, were open to independence and criticism of the powers, there was a consensus that the business and political interests mostly win over individuals. And as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the 'power' always has tried to privilege the 'friendly press' (Meza, 2002) and to co-opt or repress the 'unfriendly press', that is to say, criticism. In this way, "the democratic state has its own ways of obtaining control over the press that differ from the more direct and more brutal ones of totalitarianism, but which as equally dangerous and worrisome" (Meza, 2002; 4)

Alberto Arce, Spanish correspondent in Tegucigalpa from 2010 to 2012, provides a more recent insight about corrupt journalism saying that "the purchase of favors, extortion, bribes and the 'bite' have become a fundamental part of journalism in Honduras and goes back at least four presidential periods" (Arce, 2015, 159). The 'bite' refers to the moment a journalist succeeds in extorting their source with information. That is why, as explained by Mejia (2002; 99) "in journalist jargon these journalists who negotiate with information are called 'sharks.'" Sharks, according to Mejia (2002), know who the others are and gather to discuss tactics in achieving 'the bite'. Rather than being passively co-opted, these 'sharks' take matters into their own hands. Mejia illustrates this phenomenon by writing about a conference outside the capital where journalists get together to discuss extortion tactics (2002; 99). This points to the market of information where journalists sell their services to the highest bidder while actively seeking out damaging information and selectively publishing or not publishing according to the market.

This dynamic is similar to the co-opting described by van der Borgh as "the process by which a person or several persons are persuaded or lured to join an agency, party or system of an opponent. In these processes, offers of material gain for the "co-opted" person or group play an important role in these moves." (Van der Borgh and Terwindt, 2014; 47). Journalists might be co-opted in much the same way, submitting to the powers. Lucila Funes and Thelma Mejia commented on its prevalence saying "Of all the interferences and public abuses against the right to information, one of the most generalized practices is the payment of journalists, who are co-opted to prevent their messages from affecting the government's image," (2008; 66).

Claudia Mendoza explained the phenomenon as follows:

> *"A lot of journalists have to be rented brains because of the fragile labor situation in journalism. The conditions are bad, the salaries very low. You have a time of entry but not of exit [in a work day], and there is no payment for extra hours. There are no sufficient salaries so they let you live like a beast, so what happens.. If you don't have the ethical and moral values well positioned within yourself, you are susceptible to be caught by the hands of corruption of the state entities, which originated years ago."*

2.4 Legal Framework

Having outlined the current media landscape it is necessary to look at the legal context in which it has developed; the constitution, approved 11 January 1982. Article 72 specifically states that all inhabitants of Honduras may freely express their thoughts in any way without prior censorship;

Article 72 of Honduran constitution:

> *Expression of thought shall be free, and may be expressed through any means of dissemination, without prior censorship. Those who abuse this right, and those who by direct or indirect methods restrict or limit the communication and circulation of ideas and opinions shall be liable before the law.*

Article 73 also clearly begins by defending broadcasters right to express their thoughts and ideas:

Article 73 of the Honduran constitution (first part):

> *Printing shops, radio broadcasting, television stations, and any other means of broadcast and dissemination of information, as well as their machinery and equipment, may not be seized or confiscated nor may their work be closed down or interrupted by reason of an offense or misdemeanor relating to the dissemination of thoughts and ideas, without prejudice to the liabilities incurred by these reasons in accordance with the law.*

However, the freedom described in article 73 remains conditional to 'prejudice to the liabilities incurred by these reasons in accordance with the law' meaning that unless there is a law that says otherwise, the freedom of disseminating information should be upheld. This clause has been put to use especially in recent years. Under the guise of national security, the Eavesdropping Law, the Slander Law and the Law of Classification of Public Documents all limit freedom of expression in Honduras in their own ways.

The eavesdropping law, passed in 2011, is a law which congress (then under current president Juan Orlando Hernandez) makes it easier for authorities to intercept and record any communication by phone, email, or any other means. The law also established the Communications Interventions Unit (UIC), in charge of phone tapping. In 2005, Honduras placed slander laws into effect making offending high public officials or the president a criminal offense punishable by 2 to 4 years in prison. The OAS recommended abolishing the crime of defamation, or 'desacato' as it provides unnecessary protection to public officials in the exercise of their functions (OAS, 2012).

On January 24, 2014, Honduras officially adopted the Law of Classification of Public Documents related to Security and National Defense (also known as the Secrecy Law). It says that the media cannot report information that the state regards as "classified" under the new regulations. It enables public information on defense and security affairs to be kept secret for up to 25 years.

Not surprisingly within Honduras' legal context of freedom of expression, the Special Rapporteur visiting Honduras in 2012 had the necessary criticism. His report states that "the law governing the expression of thought [Article 75 in the Honduran constitution] may provide for prior censorship, which is in contradiction to article 13, paragraph 2, of the American Convention on Human Rights, which states that the exercise of the right to freedom of thought and expression "shall not be subject to prior censorship but shall be subject to subsequent imposition of liability" (UN, 2012; 6).

Article 75 of the Honduran Constitution:

> *The law which regulates the expression of thought, may establish prior censorship to protect the ethical and cultural values of the society, as well as the rights of persons, especially those of childhood, adolescence and youth.*

In short, though Honduras does seem to recognize journalists' constitutional rights to free expression to some extent, creating reasonable de-jure political space, several new laws have shrunk this space. More importantly, this is in contrast to the much smaller de-facto political space due to the weak implementation of the existing legal protections.

3. Pressures and Strategies

3.1 Introduction

Table 2. Adapted from Chris van der Borgh *Figure 5.1* Response strategies of NGOs (with examples) p. 137.

	Defensive	**Pro-Active**
Individual	Immediate reactions of a singe journalist to cope with experienced pressures Cases: All	A rights-based claim on other actors for longer term protection, accountability or reforms Cases: 1,6,9,10
Coordinated	The effort to provide direct self-help in coordination with other actors Cases: 1,2,4,7,13	Cooperation and networking between journalist and other journalists/organizations with a view to push for structural change Cases: 1,6,9,10

In this chapter the various response strategies used by journalists will be discussed. The chapter will be divided according to the four cells in Table 3. I will first introduce the sample and the pressures the respondents encountered, in order for the chapter to build on that in dealing with the various defensive strategies journalists used. In doing so, the chapter on defensive strategies will be divided into the individual and coordinated defensive strategies. Secondly, the pro-active strategies will be discussed while making the same distinction. The choice to divide the chapter in this way stems from the finding that the defensive strategies are the most widespread and diverse, as they respond directly to all kinds of pressures, and the pro-active responses had more in common and stemmed especially from the

individual journalists' conviction and determination to change the status quo as they responded to more general repression.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the sample consists of 16 journalists, all of which self-identify as critical journalists. In most cases, this meant they questioned the powers that be. In two cases this meant that they went further in their investigations of social phenomenon such as gangs, than the mainstream media. Though all respondents at some point primarily worked for Honduran media (newspapers, radio, television), some had, at the time of the interview switched mainly to foreign media or had started working on the side as 'fixers' for visiting –mostly western-journalists. A fixer is a local contact who arranges logistics, local meetings and access to various places for visiting journalists. A fixer is generally knowledgeable about and connected in the field they work in; thus providing a visiting journalist with the best possible know-how to make decisions. It was only the independent journalists that sought this as a (side) job.

The respondents who worked predominantly for Honduran media were from various political backgrounds. Radio, television and newspapers were distributed equally, with various journalists working in multiple kinds of media. The more independent journalists used online journalism. An exception was the publication Revistazo.com, which several of the respondents had worked for. Though sponsored by the U.S., this publication is read mostly by Hondurans and is thus regarded as a Honduran medium. Several journalists worked for Globo TV and/or Radio Globo, Honduras' biggest opposition (anti-coup) medium. Others worked or had worked for El Heraldo, which is one of Honduras' biggest newspapers and often aligned with the current government of president Juan Orlando Hernandez. The experiences and anecdotes that lie at the root of this chapter are from both journalists' current and past jobs which also include La Prensa, Vica TV, Televicentro, Canal 6, Canal 45 and Hondured.

Within the sample, some journalists had celebrity status in Honduras; especially Globo journalists Cesar Silva and David Romero, and to a lesser extent Julio Alvarado. Their individual rise to fame came from their level of critique against the post-coup governments and the military. Where Silva and Romero both became very popular quickly, Alvarado, who has a more cautious reporting style, did not rise to such extreme levels of celebrity. Those journalists whose primary mode of reporting was in print were more likely to use higher level of caution in their reports and also did not have or wish to have celebrity status.

In journalists' style of reporting, levels of critique and the subsequent pressures encountered, a constant factor that came back was the support mechanism the journalist had in place. These mechanisms include the "transnational advocacy networks" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998; 4) mentioned in Chapter 1. A journalist with connections in these networks more easily mobilized other actors to coordinate responses to pressures when necessary. A robust support mechanism however could also mean enjoying the backing of one's boss or the owner of the media company. When a journalist experienced pressure as a result of their reporting, a supportive media organization could subdue the intrigue and give the journalist the necessary credibility for the pressure to diminish. Having powerful connections, be it in government, the judiciary or businesses, might also protect journalists from pressures, and thus also constitutes having a good support network. In particular, David Romero felt protected by having powerful friends. Siegel (2011), who was referring to social leaders, put forward the importance of individual's social networks when repressed by governments. Though journalists are not necessarily social leaders, several of those included in our sample have developed into opinion makers who through their relentless critical reporting and subsequent celebrity status have –like strong social leaders- developed a loyal following. This study finds that journalist connections to their followers are important when blunting the effectiveness of state repression (Siegel, 2011; 1008) and can thus constitute a robust support mechanism. Journalists who lacked any of the support mechanisms mentioned, were more vulnerable to repression and were more easily silenced.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, this study categorizes repression put on journalists using Chris van der Borgh's model (van der Borgh, 2014 ; 42, figure 2.1) of 'Actions and policies that restrict political space'. The five types of repression used are; physical harassment and intimidation, criminalization, prosecution and investigation, administrative restrictions, stigmatization and negative labeling. Table 3 lays out which journalist encountered which categories of repression. These categories are divided into Targeted and Generalized Repression, based on David Siegel's assertion about government repression that there is repression that falls upon all participants – of a movement - with equal likelihood, and repression that falls upon certain more influential participants (Siegel, 2011; 994). While David Siegel takes on the notion that those with the highest connectivity are most likely to be subject to targeted repression (Siegel, 2011; 998), this study found that in the case of individual journalists, targeted repression does not affect an individual constantly and does not depend solely on connectivity, but very much on the timing (election times are sensitive) and level of critique of their reporting and the level of power of those they criticize in any given moment in time. Though intimidation sometimes also occurred randomly, this study found that it especially occurred

following specific reports. The table thus outlines whether journalists had experienced targeted repression at any moment in time, which was the case of most respondents.

Table 3. Actions and policies that restrict journalists' political space, divided by Targeted and General repression. (Based on Van der Borgh, 2014 ; Siegel, 2011)

	Targeted Repression			**Generalized Repression**	
Journalist	**Physical harassment and Intimidation**	**Criminalization: Prosecution and Investigation**	**Stigmatization and negative labeling**	**Participation under Pressure**	**Administrative Pressures (co-opt/closure)**
1. Dina Meza Independent	X		X		
2. Cesar Silva – TV Globo	X	X	X		
3. Robert Marin – El Heraldo	X	X			
4. Claudia Mendoza - Independent	X	X			
5. Itsmania Platero - Independent	X	X	X		
6. Thelma Mejia – ex El Heraldo	X	X	X		
7. Julio Ernesto Alvarado – TV Globo	X	X		X	X Given Sponsorship
8. Andres Molina – RDS, ex Radio Juticalpa	X				
9. Felix Molina –	X	X	X		

Radios Comunitarios					
10. Hector Longino Becerra - CLibre	X				
11. David Romero – Radio Globo	X	X	X		X Denied Sponsorship
12. Paulo Cerrato – La Prensa	X				
13. Juan Almendarez - CPTRT	X				
14. Jenniffer Avila - Radio Progreso	X				
15. German Andino – Insight Crime / Revistazo					
16. Leonel Espinoza – Canal 5				X	

Van der Borgh and Terwindt (2014) define the categories of pressures as follows, physical harassment refers to threats, injuries and killings as well as impunity and lack of protection. This study found that at times one was especially critical of government/security officials, journalists encountered physical intimidation and threats. Most journalists told stories of varying degrees of seriousness about these experiences, from being threatened and followed to being attacked and tortured. Independent journalist Itsmania Platero experienced one of the more serious acts of physical harassment after reporting on police torture practices in prison. She described it as follows;

> *"A grey double cabin vehicle with 4 armed men with vests inside stopped, and the man in the back opened the door grabbed my hair and pulls me in the car, and held my head between his legs. The hours were eternal. I thought about the*

worst. I thought there would not be another opportunity for me. And I was allergic and panicking, when we got to a house. He pulled me out, didn't ask me but did it brutally by force…. They put me in a chair. While I was sitting there another comes from the back. They put a bag over my head and isolating tape over my mouth and they only opened holes for my nose to breathe. I can't explain what went through me… I couldn't even hear what they were saying, and the fear was even worse. I think a person who is victim to such torture can't reason in that moment, it is incredible. … There was a woman talking to me and she burnt my hair. … And the woman said, we should pull out her eyes, or burn her hair or things like that. But one man said; "look it is enough, with this we have shut this bitch up."[2]

After reporting on a high impact government corruption case, Radio Globo's David Romero, a self-described watchdog journalist who regularly denounces government wrongdoing (especially concerning human rights and corruption) describes experiencing the following act of intimidation representative of those described by others:

"One day at 5 am a grey pickup parked on the other side of the road, [from the office] at an hour when there never are cars, only us and taxis. I saw the car, I parked, I looked and grabbed the gun obviously, I figured the person sitting in the driver's seat couldn't shoot, because the driver can't shoot, and the one who is in the passenger's seat is on the other side from me. He would have to get out. So I was worried about the back seat windows. If they open the back window I would have to shoot, because I am already parked, I don't want to get out. I did open the window of my car, if this was something against me they needed to know it's me. So I waited for the back window to open, and if it did, it was a hit against me. They can only shoot from there. I was looking at the window. If it goes down I'd shoot. Then I got out with the gun in my hand. And when they saw I got out with the gun in my hand they sped out of there. There were three in the car because the one in the back's job is to warn. There was a passenger, a driver and someone in the back. I felt it was an act of intimidation, there wasn't the intention of killing me."[3]

Physical harassment also occurred when a journalist touched on those behind individual killings while Paulo Cerrato was working on the crime beat of the La

[2] Author's interview on April 9 with Itsmania Platero, independent journalist.
[3] Author's interview on April 28 with David Romero, director of Globo TV and presenter at Radio Globo.

Prensa newspaper, he was briefly kidnapped in a car by two armed men before he managed to fight his way out of the driving vehicle. Criminalization consists of prosecution and investigation as well as preventive measures such as being put on terrorism lists. This study found that criminalization occurred mostly in the form of slander lawsuits by those in power following reporting accusing them of punishable offenses. Julio Alvarado saw himself with one foot in prison after letting someone on his TV show bring incriminating evidence against a powerful figure, and David Romero is embroiled in a slander lawsuit filed by a politician he accused of corrupt practices in buying real estate and cars. Stigmatization and negative labeling refers to 'discursive acts that stigmatize certain groups or legitimize pressures' (van der Borgh and Terwindt, 2014; 41). Various journalists had suffered from stigmatization, especially those journalists who actively and structurally denounced the government. Thelma Mejia, was during her time as editor in chief at El Heraldo, (among various other things) said to be an "infiltrator, communist, egoist, blackmailer, assassin, having a rotten heart soul and spirit, frigid and also 'terrorist of the state'" (Mejia, 2002; 12). Similarly, Dina Meza was labeled 'enemy of the state' after denouncing the government of corruption or human rights abuses. Both their claims were labeled irresponsible and dangerous for the national autonomy and reputation. These pressures often were made through the press subsidized by the government and were often the first to occur in a sequence of more repressive pressures.

The pressures categorized as generalized repression are administrative restrictions and participation under pressure. The first refers to bills and measures that restrict operations in general. Though van der Borgh and Terwindt speak about NGOs, this study also finds this applies to individual journalists, for example through legislation restricting freedom of speech, which was further outlined in Chapter 2. Through conversations and documentation I found it is common for journalists in Honduras to be co-opted by a corrupt system. An example of this is being bribed, which falls under van der Borgh and Terwindt's 'participation under pressure'. This category of pressures for journalists refers to the general atmosphere of corruption in Honduras, which restricted all journalists' political space, and is described in more detail in Chapter 2.3.

I did not find direct evidence of respondents having been co-opted. Understandably, they would not self-report to be corrupt, but I also suspect that because I focus on more critical journalists, it is likely they were at least on the lower end of the scale of corruption, as this is not black and white.

3.2 Defensive Strategies

In discussing journalists' defensive strategies I will distinguish between individual and coordinated strategies. In doing so, I will repeatedly come back to the support networks described both in chapter 1 and 3.1. Generally, if journalists are well connected they more readily turn to coordinated defensive strategies, while a journalist that is less well-connected turns to individual defensive strategies. However, every journalist I spoke to engaged in individual defense strategies.

3.2.1 Individual Defensive Strategies

Respondents in this study employed a wide range of strategies that were both defensive and individual. Though I agree largely with van der Borgh and Terwindt's three categories; security measures, withdrawals and adaptations (2014; 140-141) I find it necessary to structure the individual defensive strategies more specifically as they mostly refer to journalists different reporting styles in response to pressures. I thus add three strategies to their model that fall under adaptation, which they describe as choosing to adapt to a situation by changing approach, style, or language, while not giving up the mission (2014; 141). The adaptive strategies I will expand on are preventive cautionary measures, self-censorship and 'playing the game'.

All journalists reported consistently engaging in security measures such as protecting their premises, avoiding entering or leaving the office alone, avoiding going out at night or taking public taxis, hiring private bodyguards, taking different routes to work and not talking on the phone to avoid eavesdropping. They especially heightened these measures when having reported on sensitive topics.

Withdrawal refers to choosing to stop critically reporting by changing jobs, quitting, and even changing professions. Self-censorship differs from withdrawal in that a journalist doesn't quit or change jobs but simply chooses his/her words wisely, omitting information or chooses not to report on certain dangerous truths for his/her own safety. But withdrawal also refers to less accepted measures such as being co-opted by the corrupt system by being bribed or engaging in extortion, both of which imply no longer practicing critical journalism.

3.2.1.1 Preventive Cautionary Measures

This category of measures points to the professionalization of some journalists, who as opposed to simply performing as the Watchdogs (Waisbord, 2000) are adhering more to Anglo American practices of unearthing information which is not to be found easily on the surface (Negrine, 1996) and strategic publishing practices to control the flow and hence the impact of information (Blumler, 1990), which not only results in more investigative journalism, but in protection against possible pressures.

"Timing is of the essence when you're publishing a polemic piece", says Robert Marin of El Heraldo, who only publishes investigative reports under the name 'investigative team', to avoid being targeted directly. "Don't give the accused time to pressure you not to publish, so only ask for his or her comment right before you go to print. If he or she was not available, that's what you put in the report. And once you publish, then you back off, in order not to attract unnecessary attention to you and your team." Timing is also important in choosing when to publish. Thelma Mejia currently avoids writing or making television reports about the subject of whether or not president JOH should be able to be re-elected. "That topic is too sensitive now and his government is very critical. Rather than risking being shut down if we sound too critical about re-election, I prefer reporting on other important topics," she says, pointing to the fine line between self-censorship and preventive cautionary measures. Using preventive cautionary measures doesn't mean avoiding a topic, but in this case to simply publish the bare minimum to get the necessary information out there or to choose the right moment.

Equally if not more important as timing and keeping a low profile is the amount and quality of evidence and documentation gathered to support the critical claims made in reporting. About her current job making investigative reports for television Thelma Mejia jokes "I tell the boys [her investigative team] when we have a good case of corruption, with everything [all the necessary evidence] and that we know we will touch the power and we know we will take them out of power, we also know that we will leave [be fired]," adding "it has to be something very good". In doing so, Mejia shows that one needs to choose their battles wisely, which may mean not reporting on one thing so that another story gets the space, or to refrain from publishing or broadcasting unless a case is extremely well documented. Evidence and documentation saved Julio Alvarado from being sent to prison in a libel suit brought by a university dean, Dina Meza, Claudia Mendoza and Robert Marin were acquitted of defamation and slander thanks to their gathered evidence when they

accused private security companies of labor rights violations and human rights abuses.

Caution was also practiced when gathering information. Journalists reported not wanting to rely on the Institute for Access to Public Information (IAIP) because the government funds it and they feared exposure. The law on official secrets, described in chapter 2, does not help either as journalists feel any information damaging to the government will be held back. Journalists therefore prefer relying on personal sources and trusted connections.

3.2.1.2 Self Censorship

Though all journalists reported having self-censored in order to protect their personal safety, some did so on a more regular basis than others. Those journalists that had less robust support networks self-censored more often than well-connected respondents and journalists who felt supported. I found that most self-censorship occurred through the mechanism of financial sponsorship, where a journalist refrained from criticizing those he or she received funding from, be they in the private or public sector.

Julio Alvarado for instance is the only TV Globo journalist (an anti-coup medium) who receives government sponsorship and reports he gets government money because he has changed his style from being accusatory and attacking, to more indirect and subdued.

> *"He [the president] didn't see it [my new style of reporting] that dangerous to him and said 'we have to sponsor the program of Alvarado, I want to give him the ads'. He is a dictator right and he says I want you to give him the publicity and in whatever moment suspend it, … you probably know the atmosphere here, you have to be very careful right because they could kill you even if they give you publicity right, or someone says to the president, the show of Julio Alvarado said that the government was stealing the money from the health ministry … and then; persecution. Of course my situation is very sensitive right, because I am in a medium that is an archenemy of the government. They don't give it publicity; they give it to me, but not the rest, I am the only one."*[4]

[4] Author's interview on May 8, 2015 with Julio Alvarado, news presenter on TV Globo.

Alvarado's dependence on government money, he admits, affects his reporting as he avoids topics that could anger the president, and has him feeling severely limited in his political space. I don't feel good because there are so many things to talk about in depth about how things work here. I would rather get sponsorship from a private company," he says. Yet even in the case of private sponsorship, self-censorship is widespread.

Most journalists in this study agreed that drug trafficking and crime were issues they all rather didn't touch, due to the low threshold for criminals to kill. Both crime reporters German Andino and Paulo Cerrato reported having to leave out information, especially locations and names, in order to survive. This was not for their sake, but mostly for his own protection, says German. "If they find any reason not to trust me, I'm dead," says Andino. Though censorship mainly came from higher up when it concerned lower level reporters, Cerrato reported being surprised he could only write a few lines about each killing and wasn't allowed to ask 'why' or interview the families, he soon learned the reason;

On one of the crime scenes he described, a killing inside a school, a group of journalists quickly gathered to report on the murder, including him. But as they stood there, before the police even showed up, a large SUV without license plates arrived. A large man in a flawless Italian suit, and wearing flashy golden jewelry got out of the car and stepped into the circle of journalists and onlookers. "I want to thank you all for your hard work in reporting on crime, but I think in this case it is in your own best interest that you do not pay attention to what happened here," he announced. The journalists nodded in agreement, and Cerrato did not file the article.

3.2.1.3 Withdrawal

This category of responses refers to a journalist who stops being critical by quitting, changing jobs or changing professions. The case of Journalist at RDS radio Andres Molina points to the fine line between self-censorship and withdrawal (which we discuss in Chapter 3.2.1.3) as he reports trying not to anger the authorities too much and to speak about social issues and respect for human rights in general rather than denouncing specific cases. He says that his experiences in the past especially after the 2009 coup d'état have left him disillusioned with journalism in Honduras and would rather change professions. On July 21 2009, Molina – then working for Radio Juticalpa – reported having received a phone call telling him to "take care of himself, not to get into things that are not my business and that I should remember that I have four children" (C-Libre, 2009). After the threats he quit the program in 2010. Coming from a humble background in the slums of Tegucigalpa, Molina doesn't

enjoy having powerful connections, and says that there are two main conditions when he doesn't report; when he was recently threatened and when the report involves the government, the military or the president, saying that the reason is that he has nowhere to hide. Molina is hereby close to engaging in complete withdrawal from critical journalism, as he is currently moving closer to working with local communities to empower their radio stations and engaging less in reporting itself.

Molina's weak support network, perhaps partly stemming from his humble background, points to my observation that those who had less robust support networks more readily withdrew after encountering pressures. By the same token, journalists with robust support networks were able to activate those support networks to defend them after immediate threats (we discuss this further in Chapter 3.3). Both the severity of the pressure and the strength of one's support network are important factors in deciding to withdraw. Individual differences such as financial resources and skill also mattered.

Independent journalist Itsmania Platero for instance stopped reporting on police brutality in prisons after being kidnapped. She instead decided to focus on aiding foreign journalists in their reporting in Honduras. Both journalists had relatively weak support networks; Platero wrote for her own blog and felt weak in her ability to mobilize others to help her, saying that she thought nobody would be able to help her. Andres Molina, from a poor background and also with a relatively weak support network, after receiving threats in 2009, is now gradually withdrawing from journalism. Though I realize a journalists inherent resilience matters in these cases, it is still notable that those who withdrew were those with less personal connections in power, financial resources and fame.

For Paulo Cerrato, who quit his job as a crime reporter after being attacked by two men who tried to kidnap him, financial matters played a large role. After becoming a fixer for foreign reporters in order to stay out of Honduran media for a while, Cerrato found that he could make more money by helping foreign journalists.

There were also journalists with more robust support networks who still withdrew, though not permanently. Well-connected journalists thus determined whether to selectively withdraw or self-censor on a case-by-case basis. The celebrity journalist Cesar Silva changed jobs after the de-facto government shut down his station, as did Julio Alvarado when he was censored. Claudia Mendoza quit at Revistazo.com when refusing to apply favoritism in her reporting on the president who sponsored an NGO tied to the paper Thelma Mejia quit journalism for ten years after being pressured out of her job at El Heraldo, but eventually came back, and Hector Becerra

turned away from political journalism but started working at the free speech NGO C-Libre, and thereby still denouncing injustices.

Through third hand accounts in interviews and documentation referenced in Chapter 2 (Arce, 2015; Mejia, 2002; Funes, 2008; Meza, 2002) I identified another type of withdrawal I refer to as co-optation, where a journalist stops being critical by succumbing to the influence of corruptors, accepting bribes, dealing in information and engaging in blackmail themselves. I want to stress that I did not find direct evidence that respondents had been co-opted, but Chapters 2.2 and 2.3, give ample evidence of this phenomenon and its historical roots.

3.2.1.4 Playing the Game

The fourth individual defensive measure I identified is 'playing the game'. In trying to navigate the hostile media environment and facing regular pressures, some journalists may at times choose to go along with these 'rules of the game' by adapting to the information market described in Chapter 2, or to boost their personal status or reputation. This strategy differs from co-optation in that the individual has an active role in deciding what to report on, pointing to the increased role of agency in this strategy. Like with the previous strategy, journalists may assess whether to 'play the game' on a case by case basis.

Though I did not find direct evidence of this strategy through self-reporting, one journalist worth noting here is David Romero, whose main strategies did not seem to fit neatly into any other category. He was the only journalist who invited me to his office for the interview. His wall was plastered with awards, diplomas from foreign universities and photos where he stands next to various left wing Latin American presidents. Even though he has been a self-proclaimed leftist militant since he was an adolescent, and active in the Partido Liberal, he pointed out he has powerful friends in the conservative government in Honduras. But, he says, he separates those friendships from his professional goals of tackling state corruption and organized crime with a team of investigative journalists.

After being denied government subsidies by president JOH after his election, says one respondent, Romero started attacking the president "hard, hard hard", adding that he didn't stop. Romero himself comments that the government blackmailed private companies not to sponsor Globo TV or Radio Globo. So he went on the offensive, criticizing the government even more, instilling fear in those pressuring his channel, those limiting his political space. Even those he had personal

connections with. He says **"**I am friends with the official but not with the power," adding "I am not a friend of the powers, I differentiate." This differentiation justifies Romero going on the offensive rather than waiting to be attacked again, a dynamic which restores one's sense of agency (Jasper, 2012; 2). after being affected by the power structures out of one's control.

Thanks to his powerful connections and loyal following, the denial of government subsidies did not silence Romero. Instead, they allowed him to go on the offensive, a strategy that we did not see as clearly manifested in any other journalist. A series of critical reports recently culminated in Romero's latest and most severe investigation against government corruption. One that has resulted in such mass protests all over Honduras that some international news media are comparing it to those in Guatemala and are speaking of a 'Central American Spring' (Reynolds, 2015).

Through his critical reporting Romero has thus created a massive loyal following and thereby strengthened his already strong support network. It is then no surprise that unlike other respondents, Romero reported having absolutely no fear in denouncing powerful individuals, saying;

> *"I thought I'd live till 50 something. These are extra hours. I live with the trust that they won't do anything to me because if those in charge of security of the state are intelligent they will avoid that, because the conflict will not be for me, I'd be dead, it would be for them in the end. I live with that. With that trust generated by that I have managed to position myself as point of reference of a permanent fight against corruption, against abuse of power and human rights violations."*[5]

It is clear that David Romero has an active role choosing his reporting, pointing to the increased role of agency in this strategy. He proudly told me about all the injustices he had tackled and how he refused a suitcase of bribe money from the military at one point and in stead actively denouncing their post-coup abuses. Again, I noticed that it was his robust support network combined with his confrontational personal style resulting in status and prestige (he has been praised by Honduran human rights NGOs (Criterio, 2015)) that allowed him to dodge the proverbial bullets pointed at him.

[5] Author's interview on April 28 2014 with David Romero, director of TV Globo and presenter at Radio Globo.

3.2.2 Coordinated Defensive Strategies

Coordinated Defensive Strategies are efforts to provide direct self-help in coordination with other actors (van der Borgh and Terwindt, 2014). When it comes to defensive strategies, the journalists interviewed rarely applied them in a coordinated way. Individual measures are generally easier and faster to take and aimed at protecting oneself against the constant generalized repression they experience. But when situations arose where journalists experienced heightened threats targeted at them, journalists in this study who are less well connected applied individual strategies such as withdrawal or self-censorship, while well-connected journalists activated their support networks. Those journalists that had studied abroad, for instance, had better access to and connections in transnational advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink, 1999).

This dynamic showed clearly when reporters Claudia Mendoza, Robert Marin and Dina Meza, working for the online newspaper Revistazo.com, partnered with ASJ (Association for a more Just Society) in 2004 (NGO Association for a More Just Society) publishing evidence of harassment, labor rights violations and human rights violations in the North American companies Delta Security and Setech. They all got death threats in the surrounding weeks. Mendoza says the pressures started with a lawsuit, but after being acquitted of slander charges a lawyer working with the group got killed and the president of ASI got a message saying: "You are the next because you are the heat [sic – head]" (Amnesty International, 2006). This form of repression, according to Siegel, where important links are eliminated, would have a massive repressive effect on participation by the other members of the team. "Networks that rely on a handful of individuals to achieve significant levels of participation are more vulnerable to targeted repression, but less vulnerable to random repression" (Siegel, 2011; 1004). But Claudia Mendoza and her colleagues were well connected through ASJ and responded by activating their transnational advocacy network (Keck and Sikkink, 1999).

Another example where a clearly targeted form of pressure pushed a journalist to act in a coordinated manner was when the former dean of the National Autonomous University of Honduras Belinda Flores Padilla sued TV Globo presenter Julio Alvarado. She accused him of 'defamation and insults', after he let Carlos Gustavo Villela, a professor at the UNAH, come on his TV program 'Mi Nacion' (My Nation) to make accusations against her. Villela presented a report[6] which showed that Dean

[6] A report by an investigative commission about irregularities in granting students of the university material compensation.

Belinda Flores had committed 'irregularities', had engaged in the 'trafficking of titles' (Conexihon, 2014). Responding to the immediate threat of a 16 month prison sentence, Alvarado contacted Dina Meza, who in turn set in motion a chain of events within her transnational advocacy network, preventing Alvarado from going to prison and cautionary measures to be requested by the Inter American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH).

Even David Romero, who, during our conversation, expressed his disdain for relying on NGOs, turned to transnational advocacy networks for protection when the threat got too close.

Following the evidence that surged in his latest revelation of government corruption, one after the other public official and businessman started being arrested, and Romero was getting increasing threats. After he publicly stated having recordings of president JOH discussing the corruption scheme with other officials and businessmen, he reported being watched by government forces at his home. On June 17, 2015, the Observatory of the International Human Rights Federation (FIDH) called for support and protection for Romero, the FIDH describes the direct threat as follows:

> *On May 14, 2015, police commissioner Mr. Wilmer Cruz, on instructions from senior police officer told Romero that "a hit is planned against him, and that the police has hired two gang members from the 18th street gang to kill him in the workplace or at home. " (FIDH, 2015)*

Soon, other organizations joined the outcry in support of Romero (COFADEH, C-Libre, among others).

3.3 Pro-active Strategies

This study found that journalists who engaged in pro-active strategies were, more than others, inherently aware of their surroundings, the threats they face and the limitations they have in reporting, and also had a passion to change the status quo. There were only four journalists in this study that could be identified as pushing for longer term protection, accountability or reforms. The analysis made in this section is thus based on these four individuals and can merely give an initial idea about where to look for further insight in choosing this type of strategy.

3.3.1 Individual Pro-active Strategies

As Table 3 shows, an individual pro-active response strategy is "a rights-based claim on other actors for longer term protection, accountability or reforms" (van der Borgh and Terwindt, 2014). Though several journalists had at one point in their careers, made rights based claims, mostly based on their own requests for protection, only one journalist consistently called for structural government accountability on their own. In this study widely named as both a respondent and the author of relevant publications, Thelma Mejia not only co-founded the freedom of expression NGO C-Libre, but has herself published widely about freedom of expression in Honduras and beyond. In her book 'Historias Inéditas de una Sala de Redacción' (Untold Stories from a Newsroom) (2002) she explains in detail the daily challenges of trying to run an independent and objective newspaper. Her reports 'Se nos rompió el Amor; elecciones y medios de comunicación – América Latina' (love has broken; media and elections – Latin America) (2006) , 'Censura sutil en Honduras; Abuso de publicidad official y otras formas de censura indirecta en Honduras' (Subtle Censorship in Honduras; Abuse of publicity and other forms of indirect censorship in Honduras) (2008) she documents in minute detail the limits to freedom of expression in Honduras and the pressures journalists face. The goal, she says is to register the stories of Honduran journalism because "only then can one understand the multiple facets of the profession and the journalists, especially in a country like Honduras, where preserving the historic memory is not a priority" (Mejia, 2002; 22).

No other journalist structurally demanded long-term reform and accountability on an individual basis like Thelma Mejia. The rest of the journalists that really pushed for change did so primarily in a coordinated manner, and sometimes made ad-hoc individual claims or efforts (speeches, articles, official demands) for reform as part of a larger coordinated effort.

3.3.2 Coordinated Pro-active Strategies

Hector Becerra, Felix Molina, and Dina Meza clearly engaged in coordinated pro-active response strategies. Becerra was leading the main Free Speech NGO in Honduras C-Libre, which in coordination with other free speech organizations publishes both news and human rights reports to push for both measures to be taken in individual cases to protect journalists and for long-term reform. Molina spoke at length about a new project he had started called which connects rural radio stations with each other in order to act in a unified way in response to threats and pressures. Though this study focuses on the urban journalists, I recognize the

importance of Molina's new efforts, as rural journalists are arguably more vulnerable to pressures (Aguilar, 2014).

Finally, independent journalist Dina Meza can be seen as a clear example of a journalist who consistently and successfully engages in pro-active coordinated response strategies to pressures. Due to her unique successes in advocating free speech, I will look at the reasons of her success more closely.

First of all, Dina optimally used her network and mobilized it actors. Soon after the threatening events surrounding the ASJ investigation transpired (Described in Chapter 3.2.2), Dina Meza says she got the idea of starting her own independent newspaper, in which she could denounce cases of violations of freedom of expression. Or as Keck and Sikkink would describe the strategy; engage in information politics- the ability to move information quickly and credibly to where it will have the most impact (1999, 95). This is a strategy by which, after having taken the individual defensive strategy of spending six months at York University following workshops surrounding Human Rights defense in order to escape the death threats she was receiving, Meza returned to Honduras and started the collective effort of working with international Human Rights organizations. This was not only to support her new initiative, but also to provide more direct defense mechanisms for journalists under pressure. In other words, she immediately recognized the opportunity of mobilizing the connections made in York to help further her goals. As Jasper and Poulsen would say, she was alert to changes that gave her a new advantage (1993).

Every successful network link Dina established provided new opportunities for other links, thus creating a domino effect in her networking. She became president of PEN Honduras, a correspondent for Reporters without Borders, Columnist for the online free speech magazine Sampsoniaway.org, and she personally accompanies victims of Human Rights violations and participates in various international forums to better Honduras' situation. When doing her work she is often accompanied by Peace Brigades International, who give her ground protection by being a foreign presence at events. Additionally, Amnesty International, the University of York and the Sigrid Rausing Trust provide small support for her newspaper, allowing Dina to position herself at the center of a network of international actors within which she maneuvers according to the necessities of those she defends, herself or the larger cause of changing Honduras.

Dina by nature acts on the notion that within a network the centrally located are enabled by their position to accomplish their purposes, but the peripheral actors are

constrained by their position, (Stevenson, 2000) and that centrally located people can better assist others in pursuing their agenda (Laumann and Pappi, 1976), as she shifted from a peripheral player in the policy world of freedom of expression - a journalist - to a central player - a representative advocate - with both national and international connections supporting her in pursuing her own goals as well as helping journalists respond to pressures. But besides her efficient use of connections, Dina is also one of the most passionate, brave and determined people I've met, as she continues doing her work despite constant threats and financial constraints, making her personality one of the main driving forces behind her (networking) success; an argument for the importance of agency in network mobilization.

Conclusion

Chapter 2 showed how the Honduran media landscape developed from a banana republic where only foreign capital published through pamphlets with propaganda to a partial democracy where a small group of families control the biggest media companies (see Table 2.2). In between there have been ups and downs, with a brief sign of hope in the 80s, when there was a never before seen thirst for truth-telling after the cold war, but which quickly gave way to apathy while the oligarchy grew ever more powerful and intertwined. The Honduran elites have found new ways of controlling the media, both with legislation (the slander, secrecy and telecommunications laws) and with more subtle means such as financial pressures and extortion. The 'rules of the game' are thus pressing on Honduran journalists heavily, and the interplay between these 'macro mechanisms' of state structure with the 'micro opportunities' (Jasper, 2012) experienced by individual journalists grow ever more important.

Having set out to find out how journalists under pressure in Honduras strategize in order to manage within, defend or expand their political space, one particular resource that turned out to be a major determinant factor in strategy making across the board was having a robust support network. Journalists with a robust support network such as Dina Meza, Cesar Silva, Claudia Mendoza, Robert Marin more readily chose coordinated responses, and were less likely to withdraw or self-censor. Yet they still assessed this on a case-by-case basis. If we borrow Jasper's vocabulary (2012); journalists 'macro networks' thus informed their 'micro-strategies'. Those formerly outspoken critical journalists quitting, self censoring, changing jobs or being co-opted, point to Lucila Funes' point that 'watchdog journalism' (Waisbord, 2000) is sometimes replaced by a 'journalism of resignation' (Funes, 2002).

When repression constituted an immediate and credible threat such as a death threat or a possib;e prison sentence journalists mobilized their networks and where possible created new network links in order to directly address the repression. The example of Julio Alvarado's libel case shows that those who got direct threats and

did not have an established support network, set out to one actor or organization that could link them into a transnational advocacy network as described by Keck and Sikkink (1998). Yet as the examples with Itsmania Platero's kidnapping and Paulo Cerrato's attack showed, not everyone was equally able to mobilize support for oneself. The lack of network thus was a social constraint on action (Stevenson, 2000), in particular to their strategy making, resulting in having to choose more individual measures such as withdrawal and self-censorship.

Additionally, this study found that only those with a strong personal conviction to structurally improve journalists' political space engaged in coordinated pro-active responses. Independent journalist Dina Meza made the most visible and successful of these efforts. Instead of navigating the political space available when working for the big media bosses, who are governed by private and political interests, Meza was able to become independent by carefully building a large transnational advocacy network (Keck & Sikkink, 1998) of Human Rights and Free Speech organizations to support her, and maximized her impact of increasing political space by positioning herself at the centre of it (Lauman & Pappi, 1976).

Besides networks, a journalists reporting skills or reporting style was also important in strategy making. The distinction between watchdog journalists and investigative journalists in the Anglo-American tradition herein mattered. The 'watchdog journalist' described by Silvio Waisbord (2000) as a critical journalist that doesn't necessarily employ the rigorous investigative measures of the Anglo-American style journalism, but rather relies on 'leaks' in order to denounce wrongdoing, provided they had a sufficient support network, may become more critical in response to pressures. David Romero, director and presenter of Radio and TV Globo assumed the strategy of going on the offensive with damaging information obtained through a personal connection after experiencing financial pressures after the election of president Juan Orlando Hernandez, thus pressuring the repressor in return. Though somewhat of an outlier in the study, Romero's access to (information about) a large network of powerful individuals point to the notion that a robust support network in the form of social connections may pave the way for bolder and more daring journalism, while purely professional networks especially enable coordinated defenses to pressures.

While Romero's style became increasingly critical after intensified post-coup pressures, most journalists turned increasingly cautious after Manuel Zelaya's ousting and reported that things got even worse after president Juan Orlando Hernandez took office in January 2014. Thelma Mejia and Robert Marin, having obtained reporting skills over many years at the country's biggest newspaper El

Heraldo, were two journalists who consistently employed the preventive cautionary measures described in Chapter 3.2.1.1, making them examples of the investigative journalist; working on all levels, unearthing information that is not to be found easily on the surface (Negrine, 1996; 35), strategically publishing to control the flow and hence the impact of information (Blumler, 1990) and thus minimizing pressures and protecting oneself in the case they surge. Both their skills and resources enabled them to successfully employ this strategy. Considering the relative accessibility of many of these methods for a large group of journalists, I suggest more research could be done about effectively applying preventive cautionary methods and investigation in journalism schools. Additionally, Human Rights and Free Speech organizations could use this knowledge to better protect journalists in similar situations.

Finally, having listed how journalists in this sample make use of several micro opportunities to defend their political space against the macro structures of powers using the defensive- pro-active and individual- collective dimensions, it is important to mention that journalist may at times choose to 'play the game' or be co-opted and thus do not always defend their political space. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, journalists did not report having been co-opted. And naturally, they would not self-report as being 'sharks' (Mejia, 2002) or being after 'the bite' (Arce, 2015). Despite the prevalence of this phenomenon as described in Chapter 2 I can therefore not be sure that journalists in this sample have at some point or to some extent been bribed, extorted or whether they have themselves engaged in bribing and extortion.

In the context of a globally declining freedom of the press, significant knowledge would be added to our understanding of critical modern day journalism if future studies would be conducted on the dynamics of interaction between the power structures in various types of regimes and individual journalists and how these have been informed by the neoliberal policies of the 80s and 90s.

Annex I: Tables and Overview of Interviews Conducted

Table 1. *Families owning the largest media companies of Honduras*
Sources: (Central America Report, 2009; Censura Sutil, 2008)

Family	**Media Company**	**Other Businesses**
Canahuati-Larach (Headed by Jorge Canahuati)	**La Prensa**, El Nuevo Dia and **El Heraldo**, DIEZ (Magazine), Estilo (Magazine)	Pharmaceuticals, textiles, maquilas, media, wood, insurance, bottled water, sodas.
Rosenthal Hidalgo (Headed by Jaime Rosenthal Oliva).	Tiempo , Canal 11, Cable Color	Controls Grupo Continental: banks, media
Flores Facusse (Headed by Carlos Flores Facusse, ex president of Honduras).	La Tribuna	Textiles, pharmaceuticals, agroindustry, African palm, telecommunications, banking sector, construction.
Riceno and Ferrari and Villeda Toledo (Headed by Rafael Ferrari and Manuel Villeda and their respective families).	Emisoras Unidas Group, Radio America and HRN , Centroamericana de Television, Corporacion Televicentro, Multivision	food, pharmaceuticals, lottery, coffee
Miguel Andonie Fernandez	Audio Video	Real estate, production of medicines and pharmacies, founders of the PINU party.
Sikafie	La Voz de Centroamerica	
Victor Bendeck	Radio Industrias de Honduras Group, Hondured, Canal 13	Banco Corporativo
Rafael Nodarse	Canal 6	*Alleged weapons*
Jorge Sikafie	Canal 9, Vica Television, Honduvision	Cement, construction, retail, wine imports
Kawas	Canal 21, Telered, Mayacable	
Ubaldo Garcia	Canal 45, Radio Comayaguela (RCN)	
Atala Faraj	Canal 54	Ficohsa financial group, retail

Table 2. Adapted from Chris van der Borgh *Figure 5.1* Response strategies of NGOs (with examples) p. 137.

	Defensive	**Pro-Active**
Individual	Immediate reactions of a singe journalist to cope with experienced pressures Cases: All	A rights-based claim on other actors for longer term protection, accountability or reforms Cases: 1,6,9,10
Coordinated	The effort to provide direct self-help in coordination with other actors Cases: 1,2,4,7,13	Cooperation and networking between journalist and other journalists/organizations with a view to push for structural change Cases: 1,6,9,10

Table 3. Actions and policies that restrict journalists' political space, divided by Targeted and General repression. (Based on Van der Borgh, 2014 ; Siegel, 2011)

	Targeted Repression			**Generalized Repression**	
Journalist	**Physical harassment and Intimidation**	**Criminalization: Prosecution and Investigation**	**Stigmatization and negative labeling**	**Participation under Pressure**	**Administrative Pressures (co-opt/closure)**
1. Dina Meza Independent	X		X		
2. Cesar Silva	X	X	X		

– TV Globo					
3. Robert Marin – El Heraldo	X	X			
4. Claudia Mendoza - Independent	X	X			
5. Itsmania Platero - Independent	X	X	X		
6. Thelma Mejia – ex El Heraldo	X	X	X		
7. Julio Ernesto Alvarado – TV Globo	X	X		X	X Given Sponsorship
8. Andres Molina – RDS, ex Radio Juticalpa	X				
9. Felix Molina – Radios Comunitarios	X	X	X		
10. Hector Longino Becerra - CLibre	X				
11. David Romero – Radio Globo	X	X	X		X Denied Sponsorship
12. Paulo Cerrato – La Prensa	X				
13. Juan Almendarez - CPTRT	X				

14. Jenniffer Avila - Radio Progreso	X				
15. German Andino – Insight Crime / Revistazo					
16. Leonel Espinoza – Canal 5				X	

Table 4. Interviews Conducted

Journalist	**Works or worked for**	Date of Interview D/M/2015	Place of Interview
Dina Meza	Independent	12/3	Tegucigalpa
Cesar Silva	TV Globo	17/3	Tegucigalpa
Robert Marin	El Heraldo	16/3	Tegucigalpa
Claudia Mendoza	Independent, Vica TV, Revistazo, Univision	21/4	Tegucigalpa
Itsmania Platero	Independent	9/4	Tegucigalpa
Thelma Mejia	El Heraldo	17/4	Tegucigalpa
Julio Ernesto Alvarado	TV Globo	8/5	Tegucigalpa
Andres Molina	Radio Juticalpa, CPTRT (Centro de Protección , Tratamiento y Rehabilitacion de Victimas de Tortura)	10/4	Tegucigalpa
Felix Molina	Radios Comunitarios	20/4	Tegucigalpa
Hector Longino Becerra	CLibre	30/4	Tegucigalpa
David Romero	Radio Globo	28/4	Tegucigalpa
Paulo Cerrato	La Prensa	14/3	Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula
Juan Almendarez	CPTRT	2/5	Tegucigalpa
Jennifer Avila	Radio Progreso	3/4	Skype, San Pedro Sula

German Andino	Insight Crime / Revistazo	3/4	San Pedro Sula
Leonel Espinoza	Channel 5	18/3	Tegucigalpa

Additionally, conversations were held with former Human Rights prosecutor Edy Tábora, (21/3).

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