

The Finnish Freedom of Speech: An Illusion?

Qualitative research on the positioning of Finnish journalists in reference to
reporting on Russia

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Abstract

As Finland experienced a long and complex history of “oppression” by Russia, it is interesting to explore whether the history is reflected in the way journalists shape the existing ideology and image of Russia. According to the literature the Finnish history of “domination” by Russia and the former Soviet Union, is reflected in the existing journalistic content on Russia. Moreover, over the last five years Finland holds the number one position worldwide on the Press Freedom Index this in contrast to Russia, who is ranking 148th on index. This was different during the Soviet Union era when Finland exerted self-censorship. Considering the history of self-censorship, it is interesting to explore to what extent Finnish journalists are able to maintain their high level of freedom regarding the coverage on Russia. Accordingly, the aim of this research is to examine how journalists position themselves in reference to Russia. In order to examine this, the following main research question was designed: *What is the position of Finnish journalists when it comes to reporting on Russia?* In exploring the research question, a qualitative interview study was conducted among 18 Finnish journalists from 12 different newspapers that are based in Helsinki. Although Finland has the freest media environment worldwide and Finnish journalists claim to feel free in writing about Russia, the findings of the research show that in some way they are restricted in their reporting on Russia. It appears that Finnish journalists do approach Russian sources in a different way than they approach sources from other countries. They approach the Russian sources more carefully. This is reflected in their writing on Russia. Finnish journalists feel they carry an extra load when writing about Russia. Some journalists even choose to write anonymously to guarantee their privacy to prevent themselves from becoming a victim of the Russia cyber-war (i.e. Russian troll attacks) or the restrictions (i.e. being denied to get a Russian visa). The journalists feel they take a risk by reporting on Russia, as they can become victims of the Russian restrictions. Nevertheless, the cyber-war does not stop Finnish journalists from writing critically about Russia.

KEYWORDS: *Finland, Russia, journalism, freedom of speech, public image*

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	2
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. HISTORY OF FINLAND	3
2.1 SWEDISH AREA.....	4
2.2 RUSSIAN AREA	4
2.3 INDEPENDENCE OF FINLAND	5
2.4 RECENT HISTORY.....	5
3. THE EFFECT OF JOURNALISM ON THE NATIONAL IDEOLOGIES.....	6
3.1 FRAMING: THE INDIVIDUAL EFFECT	6
3.2 FRAMING: THE COMMON SENSE	7
3.3 PRIMING.....	9
3.4 AGENDA-SETTING	10
3.5 FRAMING, PRIMING, AND AGENDA-SETTING.....	11
3.6 IDEOLOGY	12
3.7 CONCLUSION	14
4. THE FINNISH NATIONAL IDENTITY REFLECTED IN THE MEDIA.....	14
4.1 RUSSOPHOBIA.....	14
4.2 OTHERING.....	15
4.3 MARGINALITY	16
4.4 WESTERNIZATION.....	17
4.5 FINNLANDISIERUNG	18
4.6 CONCLUSION	19
5. THE PRODUCTION OF FINNISH MEDIA IDEOLOGIES	19
5.1 JOURNALISTIC ROLE PERCEPTION	20
5.2 GATEKEEPING	21
5.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE JOURNALISTIC PRACTICE.....	21
5.4 FINNISH MEDIA SYSTEM	23
5.5 SUB-QUESTIONS.....	25
6. METHOD.....	26
6.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	26
6.2 DATA COLLECTION	27

6.3 RESPONDENTS	28
6.4 TOPIC LIST	29
6.5 CONSTANT COMPARISON.....	31
6.6 VALIDITY & RELIABILITY	32
6.7 ETHICS.....	33
6.8 OPEN CODING & AXIAL CODING.....	34
7. RESULTS.....	36
7.1 THE KEY ASPECTS OF JOURNALISM IN FINLAND.....	36
7.1.1 <i>Journalism in Finland: Values & role perception</i>	36
7.2 THE FINNISH REALITY	39
7.2.1 <i>Ideology of Finnish journalists</i>	39
7.2.2 <i>Underdog Identity</i>	41
7.2.3 <i>Nationalistic narrative</i>	42
7.2.4 <i>The history of wars</i>	43
7.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE WORK OF JOURNALISTS.....	44
7.3.1 <i>Reliance on (international) media</i>	44
7.3.2 <i>Supervisors or older colleagues</i>	46
7.3.4 <i>The public opinion</i>	47
7.3.5 <i>Politicians and officials</i>	50
7.3.6 <i>Agenda-setting process</i>	51
7.4 THE FINLAND-RUSSIA RELATIONSHIP.....	52
7.4.1 <i>Finnlandisierung</i>	52
7.5 FINNISH IMAGE-BUILDING ON RUSSIA	55
7.5.1 <i>Threatening narrative</i>	56
7.5.2 <i>Negative labelling</i>	57
7.5.3 <i>The ordinary Russians</i>	58
7.5.4 <i>Generation gap & historical perspective</i>	58
7.6 FINNISH JOURNALISTS MANAGING RUSSIA	60
7.6.1 <i>Russian expertise</i>	60
7.6.2 <i>Freedom in reporting on Russia</i>	62
8. CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION.....	64
8.1 AIM OF THE RESEARCH	65
8.2 SUB-QUESTIONS	65
8.2.1 <i>How do Finnish journalists see their profession?</i>	65

8.2.2 How do Finnish journalists contribute to the image of the reality?.....	66
8.2.3 Which (external) factors have an influence on the work of Finnish journalists?.....	67
8.2.4 How do Finnish journalists interpret Finnlandisierung?.....	68
8.2.5 How do Finnish journalists contribute to the existing image of Russia?.....	68
8.2.6 To what extent do Finnish journalists feel free in writing about Russia?.....	68
8.3 CONCLUSION	69
8.4 DISCUSSION.....	70
8.5 LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH	72
REFERENCES	74
APPENDICES	82
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE PROFESSOR	82
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE JOURNALISTS	84

1. Introduction

On December 6, 2017, a year from now, Finland will be celebrating its hundred years of independence. It was not before 1917 that Finland gained its independence and only since January 1992 that a treaty on good relations was signed between Finland and Russia. In the past Finland was first dominated by Sweden (1239-1809), followed by the dominance of Russia (1809-1917) (Zetterberg, 2014). According to the literature on Finland, the history with Russia has been a decisive factor in the construction of the current image of Russia (Laine, 2015). In other words, the history has shaped the way the Finns see Russia today.

Various studies have implied that the history of Russian dominance left its marks. It is assumed that, at present, Finns persist on being disapproving towards, or at least anxious about, Russia (Laine, 2015; Vinayaraj, 2011). To illustrate, an international survey in 2004 (Laine, 2015) suggested that, out of 60 countries, Finns had the most negative attitudes towards Russia. The ghost of the Soviet Union is still very much alive among the Finns (Laine, 2015). The image the Finns have regarding Russia is based on the characterization of the former Soviet and communism as oddity, mystery, and very strange. It is assumed that this negative attitude towards Russia is evident in the media as well. In line with this is the argument that a person without any personal experience may easily accept negative attitudes from media. Subsequently, it is believed that the Finnish newspaper editors appear to suspect that their audience is opinionated, if not hateful, towards Russia. This results in that journalists report on what (they assume) the public wants to hear (Laine, 2015).

Several studies showed that the existing negative perception on Russia is kept alive by the media, by how Russia is covered by Finnish journalists (Laine, 2015). In their writing journalists reflect more general societal debates. Moreover, they act as a medium that promotes particular kinds of ideas and ideologies (Ainamo, Tienari, & Vaara, 2006). As journalists can exercise significant power in society, it is important to focus on the role of journalists in exploring the ideological struggle, in Finland, that underlies the existing image of Russia.

When conducting a historical analysis, something that is in general easily overlooked is the, often subtle, influence journalists can exert on society (Ainamo et al., 2006). For this reason, with reference to this research, it is important to take in account that during the postwar period as well as from the 1960s onwards the Finnish press did not operate on the basis of the Western tradition of freedom of speech (Salminen, 1998). Finland was in this period “Finlandized”, their freedom of speech was controlled, and thus the journalists wrote

nothing that might upset the Soviet Union. During that time the Finnish press was viewed in Western countries as genuinely Finlandized, particularly in the 1970s, as the journalistic ideals were pushed to the background. The reporting of Finnish journalists was merely practical because they had to serve the national interest (Laine, 2015).

As argued, in this research the focus lies on the role of Finnish journalists in the ideological struggle that underlies the image Finland has concerning Russia. The reason why this research focuses on journalists is threefold: journalists through media act as an arena that reflects the public opinion and ideological debates of society; journalists perform significant power in the promotion of ideas and ideologies; and this power is mostly subtle and thus easily overlooked (Ainamo, et al., 2006). In other words, journalists are thus able to shape values and views and consequently contribute to the social construction of reality (Luhman, 2000). Journalists decide on the importance of issues; which ones to bring forward and which ones to hold back (Ainamo et al., 2006). As McCombs and Shaw (1972) explain, the receivers of the news learn about a presented issue as well about how much importance to ascribe to that particular issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position. This consequently shapes their world view (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). According to Bourdieu (2000) journalists duplicate “the usual” (i.e. commonplace), the content the audience already knows and wants to hear.

To summarize, according to the literature it can be argued that the Finnish history of “domination” by Russia and the former Soviet Union, is reflected in the existing journalistic content on Russia. Specifically, in reference to the history, nowadays Finnish journalists seem to portray Russia in a more critical, negative way (Nshom & Croucher, 2014). However, can this claim be verified? In exploring this, it is interesting to analyze the underlying ideologies that shape the media image of Russia. That is why the main research question is as follows: “*What is the position of Finnish journalists when it comes to reporting on Russia?*”

The significance of this research is that as journalists are able to exert influence on their public by shaping social reality through their content. They are able to shape existing ideologies and the image of particular issues or countries. Since Finland experienced a complex history of oppression by Sweden and especially Russia, it is important to explore in what way this history has shaped the national identity of Finland. Furthermore, it is important to explore if and how the image of Russia at present is reflected in the content Finnish journalists deliver. Journalists might play an essential role in sustaining and shaping the critical image that exists among the Finnish society towards Russia. An example is that if a

person has never traveled to Russia or talked with someone who has been there, most of what that person knows about Russia (i.e. the “social” reality of Russia) originates from the mass media in the country of origin, and thus at least partly from the content the journalists provide (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Furthermore, since 2010 Finland holds the number one position on the Press Freedom Index of Reporters Without Borders (April 20, 2016). Finland appears to enjoy the freest media environment of the world (Freedom House, 2015), especially in contrast to Russia. Russia is ranking 148th (out of 180 countries) on the press freedom index. This freedom aspect was different during the Cold War era when Finland exerted self-censorship (Laine, 2015). Considering this Finnish history of self-censorship, it is interesting to explore to what extent Finnish journalists are able to maintain their freedom in reference to writing about Russia.

Deriving from these arguments, in answering the research question, it is important to discuss how journalists can have an influence on the social reality of a country, in particular of Finland. This will be discussed in the following chapters. First, in chapter 2, a short reflection on the history of Finland will be given. This is because in understanding the present relationship between Finland and Russia it is important to deliberate on the history of Finland. Subsequently, in chapter 3, the general media theories will be discussed to explain the effect journalistic content can have on how people see the reality (i.e. the image of a particular country). Specifically, chapter 3 explains how the existing image of Russia has been constructed in Finland. In chapter 4 the existing ideologies that are spread by Finnish journalists are discussed. Chapter 5 explains the production of the content by Finnish journalists by referring to gatekeeping, external influences and role perceptions. As the existing theories, with regard to the topic of this research, have been discussed, chapter 6 and 7 elaborate on the research method and analysis. This is followed by discussing the results in chapter 8 and the conclusion and discussion in chapter 9.

2. History of Finland

For the reason that the relationship between Finland and Russia cannot be completely understood without understanding the past, in chapter 2 a brief history of Finland with regard to their neighboring countries will be described.

The history of the current Finland can be subdivided into three periods; the Swedish period before 1809; the Russian period from 1809-1917; and the independent period from

1917 until present. The history will be shortly discussed by means of these three periods and the most important events.

2.1 Swedish area

The peace treaty of 1323 decided on assigning eastern Finland to Russia and west and south to Sweden and the Western European culture (Zetterberg, 2014). During the Reformation period (1617-1721) in Finland, Sweden extended, due to the weakness of Russia, the Finnish border further east. In this period, the 16th-18th century, Swedes appointed high offices in Finland, which consequently strengthened the status of the Swedish language. However, in the early 18th century, the pressure of Russia on Finland increased. Russia obtained Finland in the 1808-1809 war against Sweden (Zetterberg, 2014).

2.2 Russian area

During the Swedish area, Finland existed of a group of provinces that were governed from Stockholm. Finland was not a national entity (Zetterberg, 2014). When in 1809 Finland "joined" Russia, it became an autonomous Grand Duchy. The Governor General was the representative in Finland of the Grand Duke of the Russian Emperor. The highest governing body in Finland was the Senate that existed of Finnish members. The administration of Finland was handled directly by the Finnish Minister Secretary of State and the Emperor in St. Petersburg, Russian authorities were not able to interfere. Alexander I (Grand Duke of Finland 1809-1825) gave Finland extensive autonomy and in this way, he created the Finnish state, including from 1812 the capital city Helsinki.

In 1863 Alexander II announced the Language Decree which marked the beginning of Finnish as an official administrative language. This was followed by the Conscription Act in 1878 that gave Finland an army of its own.

The "Finnish separatism" (i.e. Russification) started in 1899-1905 during the "first era of oppression" and continued during the second era in 1909-1917. In 1906, after the Revolution in Russia, the old legislative body was replaced by a new one and thereby Finland moved in one bound from a four estate regime to a unicameral parliament (i.e. with only one legislative house) and universal legal rights (i.e. the right to vote) (Zetterberg, 2014).

2.3 Independence of Finland

On December 6, 1917, the Parliament approved the statement of independence that was composed by the Senate under the leadership of P.E. Svinhufvud, the first Minister of Finland (1861-1944) (Zetterberg, 2014). In the summer of 1919, after a Civil War between the left and right parties, Finland became a republic and the first president K.J. Ståhlberg (1865-1952) was elected.

On August 23, 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed a “nonviolence” pact (German-Soviet Treaty of Nonaggression), which contained a secret protocol downgrading Finland to the Soviet sphere of interest. When Finland refused the Soviet Union to build military bases on its territory, the Soviet abolished the nonaggression pact with Germany, and on November 30, 1939, the Soviet Union attacked Finland. The "Winter War" ended on March 13, 1940, and the South-Eastern part of Finland became part of the Soviet Union.

In the summer of 1941, Germany attacked the Soviet Union. Finland cooperated (without a formal treaty of the military alliance) with Germany in this war. The "Continuation War" ended in September 1944 with a ceasefire. Along with the areas that Finland had already lost to Russia, Russia also conceded Petsamo (North-West Finland) on the Arctic Ocean.

In 1955 Finland joined both the United Nations and the Nordic Council. The Nordic Council is the official inter-parliamentary body in the Nordic region (i.e. Finland, Norway, Iceland, Denmark, Faroe Islands, Åland, Greenland, Sweden) (norden.org/en/Nordic-council). The Nordic co-operation established a joint Nordic labor market (1954) and a passport union (1957) (Zetterberg, 2014).

2.4 Recent History

At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s a revolution took place. The revolution included the turning point of the Finnish government (a government was formed by the Conservatives and the Central Party) and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The revolution was evident in the intellectual atmosphere which became more liberal and the high level of freedom in foreign policy Finland enjoyed (Zetterberg, 2014). Finland recognized Russia's position as the successor to the Soviet Union by concluding a treaty on good relations between Finland and Russia in January 1992. In November 1994 the Parliament approved Finnish European Union membership. However, it seems the Finns are developing opposing attitudes to Russia again.

3. The effect of journalism on the national ideologies

This chapter explores how the media are able to contribute to the collective consciousness, the “common sense”. This contribution will be explained by means of the following theories: framing, agenda-setting, and priming. In addition, deriving from these theories, it will be discussed in what way ideologies are constructed.

3.1 Framing: The individual effect

Framing refers to the process by which people develop a specific concept of an issue or reconsider their thinking about an issue (Chong & Druckman, 2007). As Entman (1993) puts it: “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p.52). The two keywords that are linked to the concept of framing are; "selection" and "salience" (Entman, 1993). Framing will first be discussed by means of the individual effect it can have, followed by the framing influence on the collective consciousness.

According to Goffman (1974), for processing new information efficiently, individuals employ interpretive schemas or "primary frameworks" (Goffman, 1974). Via these primary frameworks they are able to categorize and interpret information. These primary frameworks are, among other things, constructed through media content. In deciding what to say, communicators construct the “everyday reality” by deliberating conscious or unconscious framing judgments (Entman, 1993; Tuchman, 1978). Through framing, communicators can exert an effect on the attitudes and behaviors of the public (Chong & Druckman, 2007). By emphasizing some aspects of the reality while blocking out other aspects, frames might lead the audience to exert distinct reactions. In addition, Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) argue that the way in which an issue is typified in a news report, influences the way in which the audience understands this issue. In other words, a frame can be interpreted as an invitation or an incentive for an individual to read a news story in a particular way (Van Gorp, 2007).

In essence, the media presents the public both with information on the event itself as with information referring to how it should be interpreted. In other words, the meaning the audience allocates to a text is not solely decided by its manifest information but also by the latent information between the lines (Gurevitch & Levy, 1986). This information between the lines is called “meta communication”. It could be argued that with regard to the “receiver”

(i.e. the audience) the frame offers a context within which the news message can be understood (Capella & Jamiezon, 1997).

A culture refers to an organized set of ideas, myths, codes, stereotypes, norms, values, frames, etc. that are joint in the shared memory of a society or group (Van Gorp, 2007). Media content adopts elements of this culture, exaggerates them, frames them, and delivers them back to an audience (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). An individual is not able to change these cultural phenomena. Individuals apply these cultural phenomena in the same way as media workers display them, in their content, to their audiences (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

According to Van Gorp (2007), it is during the interpretation of the message that journalists and audiences make the link between the reasoning tools in a text on the one hand and the actual frame on the other hand. The idea of framing inclines that the frame restrains the receiver from applying to schemata that are in conflict with the frame that is used in their understanding of the message. Subsequently, this may lead to elements in the text that do not resonate with the frame package, being selectively excluded, adjusted, or isolated (Van Gorp, 2007). In other words, as Entman (1993) puts it; schemata and closely related concepts like scripts, categories, or stereotypes imply clusters of ideas that are mentally stored and guide the information processing of information.

3.2 Framing: The common sense

Now that the individual effect of frames is explained, this section will elaborate on how frames contribute to the collective consciousness. An important event can lead to activation of alternative frames in media, especially when the event becomes part of the collective memory (Brosius & Eps, 1995; Scheufele, 2004). For the reason that a lot of media turn to the same information sources, and actually function as an information source for each other, the same frames may emerge in different media outlets. Consequently, the persuasion power of the frames increases, because media seem to serve the audience with a single voice.

According to Van Gorp (2007), the “selection” of a frame is an essential choice on the side of the journalist. This choice is made through the presence or absence of particular keywords, stereotyped images, stock phrases (i.e. habitually used phrases by a group), sources of information, and sentences that present a thematically reinforced collection of facts or judgments (Entman, 1993; Van Gorp, 2007). In addition, Shoemaker and Reese (1996) argue that media content may adopt the worst attributes of a society and exaggerate them to such a large amount that they are reinforced and made difficult to change.

Every frame a journalist uses can be defined as a “frame package”, a collection of logically organized instruments that serve as an identity kit for a frame (Van Gorp, 2007). These frame packages present a central organizing idea or frame, that “help” by making sense of relevant events, by means of indicating what is at stake (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). The frame package implies an explanation, a definition, a problematization, and an evaluation of the event and eventually bring about a number of logical conclusions (i.e. who is responsible for the recognized problem) (Van Dijk, 1988).

For the reason that journalists experience a constant pressure for space and time, they often reproduce generally held views (i.e. building on stereotypes) and by doing this they place their issues in a specific discursive frame (Risberg, Tienari, & Vaara, 2003). As a consequence of the lack of time Risberg et al. (2003) argue that journalists think in clichés, in beliefs they have acquired, in conventional, banal, common ideas that are acquired generally. Specifically, journalists write about what their audience already knows, and what their audience expect journalists to write. This idea is what Bourdieu (2000) has called “commonplaces”. According to him, these commonplaces work because readers consume them right away and their very triviality makes them something the journalist and the reader have in common. In addition, when journalists choose to frame the story with what the audience already knows, the journalist limits the uncertainty concerning how the story will be picked up and interpreted by the reader (Risberg et al., 2003). It is suggested that in reference to reporting on (dramatic) events, it is tempting for journalists to refer to sentiments and stereotypes. By doing these journalists are able to reinforce national portrayals and stereotypes in which its nonchalance, in another situation, could be challenged.

Similar to Van Gorp (2007), Risberg et al. (2003) conclude by stating that cultural sensemaking with reference to (re)constructing national identities is an explanatory action which reflects historical legacies; myths, stereotypes, and stories that exist in various social spheres. It concerns the construction and reconstruction of “us” and “them” in the routine use of everyday language. Moreover, they argue that the post-colonial lens is essential in explaining the “wider context” of (symbolic) power relations (Risberg et al., 2003). Narratives and identities do not appear without a reason. The (re)construction of national identities concern various processes in which contemporary events are linked to existing cultural ideas.

Frames are thus relatively stable as they are part of a culture (Van Gorp, 2007). They compromise broader interpretative definitions of the reality and they interact to a high amount with dynamic schemata. These schemata exist to help individuals to deal with the

overwhelming flow of new information and to help them with retrieving the “saved” information from memory (Graber, 1988). These schemata are referred to as priming, which will be discussed in the following section.

3.3 Priming

Priming can be seen as a process that increases the accessibility of a particular category or composition in the memory (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) argue that priming appears when the news content proposes the audience to use particular issues as reference points for assessing the acting of governments and leaders. It changes the benchmarks people use in assessing politics (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987).

Priming is not only related to governments and leaders, as Appel (2011) argues, media priming can also relate to social groups. He argues that priming is the enduring, mostly unintended result of media exposure to biased information of social groups on the consequently related judgments, perceptions, and behaviors with regard to these social groups (i.e. stereotypes). These stereotype-related outcomes of priming (i.e. stereotypical associations in memory) are likely to be activated in following situations regardless of whether a person recognizes these activated associations as correct or incorrect (Arendt, 2013). For the reason that mass media generate and replicate stereotypes, according to Ramasubramanian (2007), this biased information unavoidably becomes integrated into "common knowledge" or schemata of the audience concerning stereotyped groups. Once these biased elements are formed, they can be reactivated (i.e. primed) through media exposure (Arendt, 2013). Subsequently, this is likely to influence following judgments, perceptions, and behaviors toward social groups presented in a stereotyped way.

Individuals develop memory fragments (Tulving & Watkins, 1975) or activation tags (Collins & Loftus, 1975), based on the receiving and processing of information. Issues or concepts are thus primed and made more accessible in the memory of an individual. Collins & Loftus (1975) explains this very clear by stating that: “When a concept is primed, activation tags are spread.... When another concept is subsequently presented, it has to make contact with one of the tags left earlier and find an intersection” (p. 409). This metaphor of activation tags or memory traces could be replaced by the concept of “accessibility” (Scheufele, 2000). Accessibility refers to the basis of a memory-based model of information processing that indicates that individuals form judgments about other people or issues based on information that is readily available and acquired from memory at the time the question is

asked (Hastie & Park, 1986; Iyengar, 1990). In accordance with this memory-based model, judgments and attitude construction are directly linked to the ease in which associations or situations could emerge in mind (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973). The majority of researchers on this subject argue that when the media highlight a certain issue this increases the accessibility of that issue in a passive way (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

Framing and priming sometimes seem to be interchangeable processes. For the reason that framing tools are able to activate a schema that matches with the frame message, this temporary activation and heightened accessibility of deliberations is pointed to as priming (Jo & Berkowitz, 1994; Roskos-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen, & Carpentier, 2002). Besides, priming concerns a cognitive device that is part of the primary message processing in the framing model. Consequently, the receiver allocates meaning to a news story. A theory that is linked to framing and priming is agenda-setting. Where framing can shape how people think about a particular issue, agenda-setting can shape what people think about.

3.4 Agenda-setting

For the reason that journalists and editors are limited by time and space, most of the time they can only select a handful of stories while neglecting dozens of others (Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004). The selection of news is at the heart of agenda-setting process. According to Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) “agenda-setting” concerns the belief that a strong equivalence exists between the emphasis that mass media place on particular issues (i.e. the amount of coverage or relative placement they give to these issues) and the significance that is ascribed to these issues by mass audiences (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). As Cohen (1963) has put it: “Media may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about” (p.13). Moreover, the media may not be successful in telling the public what opinions to take; they are in general quite effective in telling us what to have opinions about (Brosius & Weimann, 1996). The public thus learns the relative importance of issues from the amount of coverage supplied to the issues in the news media (Wanta et al., 2004).

As argued, the basic function of the agenda-setting theory explores the link between the public agenda and the media agenda (Kligler-Vilenchik, Tsfati, & Meyers, 2014). In examining the study of collective memory, Kligler-Vilenchik et al. (2014) discuss the correlation between the “media memory-agenda”: the past events that are highly noticeable in the media, and the “public memory-agenda”: the past events that are considered most

important by the public. They refer to this process as “memory-setting”. Additionally, they argue that the abundance of the collective memory cannot be fully described by referring only to past events (Kligler-Vilenchik et al., 2014). In other words, Steiner and Zelizer (1995) state; “events give memory a platter on which to serve historical accounting” (p. 231). Both agenda-setting and memory setting can be referred to as operating on two levels. As for agenda-setting, a differentiation can be made between "first-level agenda-setting", which concerns the decision which issues are most salient, and "second-level agenda-setting", which refers to the analyzing of the salience of elements by which these issues are examined (Kligler-Vilenchik et al., 2014). Likewise, the media can be referred to as shaping public memory in two complementary ways. First, by emphasizing or marginalizing what is remembered, and, second, by shaping the essence of these memories. Media are thus able to shape the different narratives of past events (Kligler-Vilenchik et al., 2014).

When comparing agenda-setting with priming, it is often assumed that the concept of priming is a direct extension or outcome from the concept of agenda-setting (Scheufele, 2000; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). Van Gorp (2007) explains that agenda-setting mostly examines to what extent people believe issues to be important as a result of the emphasis media put on this issue (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Contrastingly, priming shows the influence these issues have on the selection criteria individuals use in evaluating political actors (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987) or on electoral voting behavior (Sheafer & Weimann, 2005). The similarity between agenda-setting and priming is that both concepts are based on the assumption of attitude accessibility and, especially, a memory-based model of information processing (Scheufele, 2000). Media are able to influence the salience of particular issues and thus the ease with which these issues can be acquired from memory.

3.5 Framing, priming, and agenda-setting

To conclude on the three media theories of framing, priming, and agenda-setting, it can be argued that these theories share that they all are able to shape the construction of reality of individuals and the common sense in society. While the three theories contribute to each other, they also differ from each other. Based on the aforementioned arguments, agenda-setting and priming are distinct from framing in reference to their assumptions and how they are transferred (Scheufele, 2000). Agenda-setting and priming both rely on the idea of attitude “accessibility”. The media have the power to make issues seem more important for their audience. They do this by increasing the salience of issues or make the considerations

easy to acquire from memory (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Contrastingly, framing relates to the “applicability” effect, the idea that profound changes in the way a situation is described might affect how the audience members interpret the particular situation (Scheufele, 2000). Put differently, instead of making certain aspects of the issue more salient, framing thus influences how the audiences think about issues by appealing to interpretive schemas that influence the interpretation of incoming information. It links two concepts in such a way that, after exposure, the audience agrees upon the fact that they are linked (Price & Tewksbury, 1997).

Price and Tewksbury (1997) have outlined the difference between framing, agenda-setting, and priming as follows: “Agenda-setting [sic] looks on story selection as a determinant of public perceptions of issue importance and, indirectly through priming, evaluations of political leaders. Framing focuses not on which topics or issues are selected for coverage by the news media, but instead on the particular ways those issues are presented” (p. 184).

Framing, priming, and agenda-setting thus are able to exert influence on the construction of reality. As for cultural sensemaking (i.e. the identity building), frames can be joined in the shared memory of a society through a set of ideas, stereotypes, myths, and values. Journalists are able to reinforce this cultural sensemaking by making this set of frames more salient. This is especially the case when there is a lack of time. Due to the lack of time journalists refer to the same information sources and thus end up using the same frames. Consequently, media replicate the same stereotypes, and in this manner increase their silence, which causes biased information being integrated into the common knowledge or schemata of a society. This way, through a set of frames, media are able to influence the cultural sensemaking or identity building and thus how people see the world. This set of frames together forms the ideology.

3.6 Ideology

This section will elaborate on the theory of ideology and national identity. These theories are relevant to this research as media play an essential role in the construction and reconstruction of national identities (Risberg et al., 2003). Moreover, ideology refers to the unified set of frames of reference through which people see the world and to which they adapt their actions (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

The idea of social identities is based on the belief that people define themselves as

members of social categories and collectives (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1985; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Identity building concerns an essential fixation on sensemaking (Weick, 1995) where actors construct portrayals of the self (and others) in relation to others (and themselves). In other words, the “social” identities of individuals are enclosed in social relations. Furthermore, identity building is dependent on the situation, as the portrayal of the self is constructed in relation to distinctive others. Identities are thus not permanent, stable features. Individuals continuously redefine their identities in order to distinguish themselves from others (Czarniawska, 1997). Lastly, the concepts of identity and power are interrelated since ideology mirrors and reconstructs broader discourses, defining and redefining social arrangements and structures of superiority (i.e. in terms of nations and national collectives) (Risberg et al., 2003).

Related to the concept of identity is nationalism. The concept of nationalism is relying on a series of profound images of historical time and community (Risberg et al., 2003). Central to the discursive construction or reconstruction of nationalism are narratives of inevitability and origin. The construction and reconstruction of national identities by communicators include a process of connecting occurring events with existing cultural ideas (Fiske, 1989a). Prasad (1997) has argued that in understanding the “wider context” and (symbolic) power relations, a post-colonial theoretical lens might be useful. The reason is that the ideas are historically founded and reflect the broader discourses that (re)define symbolic structures of superiority.

In reference to the role of media in the (re)construction of ideology and the concept of national identification, it appears that media exert a great influence, among others, in politics and business (Fairclough, 1995). Journalists create images that consequently are able to shape public views on the phenomena reported and commented upon. They make sense of the “realities out there” (Risberg et al., 2003, p. 123), and accordingly signify and explain this reality to their audience by commenting and reporting about it (Fiske, 1989b; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Weick, 1995). As explained when discussion framing, when presenting and reproducing certain versions of “reality”, journalists thereby promote specific voices and diminish and ignore others (Vaara & Tienari, 2002). Even though media presentations may demonstrate power relations as they exist, they also may assure that no other types of relations are convincing (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). One of the classic tricks is that the media contrasts various voices in texts to construct what they believe will appeal to their audience as good stories.

3.7 Conclusion

To conclude on the four theories that are discussed in this chapter, framing, priming, agenda-setting, and ideology, the main message is that through these theories the media are able to contribute to the construction of reality. They are able to influence what people think as well as how people think about particular issues. When applying these theories to the Finnish case, it can thus be argued that Finnish journalists are able to contribute to the construction of the image of Russia. By doing this, journalists shape the ideologies and the Finnish national identity (i.e. nationalism). As ideas are historical founded, the Finnish national identity, through existing narratives, relies on a series of profound images of historical times (i.e. the historical times with Sweden and Russia). These narratives are promoted or diminished by the media and thereby demonstrate the existing power relations between Finland and Russia.

4. The Finnish national identity reflected in the media

In the fourth chapter, the Finnish media ideologies, developed in relation to the history with Russia, will be discussed. Deriving from a historical perspective, it will be explained how Finnish journalists have contributed to the Finnish national identity building. The Finnish national identity building will be explained by five different perspectives, namely: “Russophobia”, “othering”, “marginality”, “Westernization”, and “Finlandisierung”.

4.1 Russophobia

The first perspective on the Finnish identity construction by journalists is “Russophobia”. This term refers to the notion that Russia and Finland cannot live in peaceful co-existence (Browning, 2002). When referring back to history, during the Grand Duchy period the Finnish image of Russia was in general favourable (Paasi, 1996). According to Paasi (1992, 1996), the Finnish identity was primarily constructed by means of the opposition to the dominant Swedish culture. In contrast, the public attitudes towards Russia were controlled during the Finnish autonomous period under Russia. The anti-Russian feelings were not raised until the "years of oppression" during the end of the 19th century. These feelings were a reaction to the “Russification” policy (1899-1917) that was directed at restricting the Finnish freedom. After Finland gained its independence in 1917, Russia became an enemy and the opposing attitudes turned into hatred. The newly formed border between Finland and Russia became a manifestation of difference, a manifestation that was essential to the national identity and pride of the Finnish citizens (Paasi, 1992, 1996).

During the Second World War, the Cold War and the aftermath these attitudes of Finnish hatred with regard to Russia were oppressed. However, in the last two decades of the 19th century, the anti-Russian attitudes were recognized again (Nshom & Croucher, 2014). In 2004 Vihavainen (2004) stated that “the fear stemming from the apparently asymmetrical setting pitting a small Finland against the all-powerful Soviet Union has been seen as the root cause of Finn's attitude towards Russia” (p. 96). The younger Finnish generation criticized the elder generation after being confronted with the stories of their struggles concerning their Russian oppressors, for their *laissez-faire* (i.e. non-intervening) manner in dealing with the Russians, and even being able to hate the country. Consequently, traditionally, Russians that have been living in Finland, have experienced discrimination and ethnic prejudice (Protassova, 2008). This negative stereotypical perception of Russian immigrants, among both the older and younger generation, are according to Nshom and Croucher (2014), related to Finnish collective identity.

The phenomenon of Russophobia thus refers to the Finnish hatred towards Russia as well as that it emphasizes the difference between the two countries, as “the border between Finland and Russia became a manifestation of difference”. This emphasis on the difference between Finland and Russia is related to the phenomenon of “othering”. In the Finnish perspective, othering is related to the construction of the Finnish identity through opposing and comparing Finland to the other: Russia.

4.2 Othering

As argued, in this section the phenomenon of othering in relation to the construction of the Finnish national identity is discussed. At the end of the 19th century, during the process of Finnish nation building, Finland labelled Russia as an external “other” (Brambilla, Laine & Bocchi, 2016). The only way to build a consistent nation was to define “us” and “ours” by comparing it to the “other”. This way Finnish identity was explicitly built on the differences with its neighbors. In other words, Finns were something Russians and Swedes were not.

Brambilla et al. (2016) argue that there seems to be a continuous need to feed and keep the image of Russia as “them” being a threat to Finland. Thereby placing the Finnish-Russia relation in a “natural” conflict rhetoric. All content concerning Russia, positive and negative, seems to be interpreted through a problem frame (Brambilla et al., 2016). This framing is even visible through word choices. When writing about Russia negative verbs are followed by an epithet such as “again” or “as usual”. These words suggest inherent problems

when it comes to Russia. Moreover, the aggressive image of Russia remains through language by referring to Russia as a “bear” that does offensive things like hitting, growing, and trampling. Besides, it relates to Russia being barbarian, slow, aggressive, and headstrong. According to Brambilla et al. (2016), it could thus be concluded that Finland, the “we” group, is positively defined through othering, which is based on national pride. This concept of othering evokes a powerful feeling among Finns, a feeling of superiority being a counterpart of Russia, the neighbor who can be depicted as powerful and non-civilised. A perspective that is related to this feeling of being superior, the idea of power and nationalism, is “marginality”.

4.3 Marginality

In this section, the marginality perspective will be discussed. This perspective is linked to the idea of nationalism, power, and identity (Browning & Lehti, 2007). In reference to the history, the frames of marginality were both related to the escape from the Swedish and Russian power and dominance, as well as that they were central to the way the Finns positioned themselves relative to the western civilization (Browning & Lehti, 2007). The Finnish uniqueness, subjectivity, and national dignity were emphasized through the positive emphasis on marginality. On the one hand, the naturalistic notions of the Finns as a nation that emerged from the wilderness (i.e. the orientalising of Finnish culture) were expressed. The cold climate and the “northerners” were emphasized to highlight the Finnish uniqueness in relation to nations with a long history of “civilization” (Valenius, 2004). On the other hand, the marginality was expressed in a positive way by highlighting the youthfulness and vitality of Finland (i.e. being “young” in comparison to other “old” established European nations). These positive marginalities became a dominating notion in the construction of the Finnish national identity. Finland presented itself as a “nation of the dawn”, claiming that the next century would belong to their nation.

The “mindscapes of marginality” refers to the web of concepts that make it possible to identify a narrative even when the concept itself is not explicitly named. During the interwar period (1918-1944) the mindscapes of marginality shifted from a cultural frame of reference to a more geopolitical one (Browning & Lehti, 2007). This geopolitical frame was more focused on “size” and the position of Finland in the relation between East and West (i.e. concepts such as North, West, smallness, borderland, etc.). As argued, during this period the border between Finland and Russia became to dominate the Finnish national imagination and

was seen as a state border as well as a border that separated different cultures and political systems, a dividing line between Europe and Asia (Browning & Lehti, 2007). The national mission was from now on strengthened by heroic historical narratives that were introduced to indicate that Finland was a Soldier Nation with a great heritage of military achievements (Meinander, 1999, as cited in Browning & Lehti, 2007).

During the Cold War period (1947-1991) Finland engaged in a neutrality policy in order to isolate itself from the war (Browning & Lehti, 2007). This way it was assured that Finland was restrained from the international spotlights while at the same time sending a message to the Soviet Union that it did not have any reason to worry about Finland. To express its “psychological relationship with the Western world” Finland presented itself as being a “Nordic” country (Browning & Lehti, 2007). Being a Nordic country became associated with the evolving, progressive way of life that was built around the welfare state. From the 1960s on, Finnish citizens could be proud and could feel like they had won the lottery by being born in Finland (Browning & Lehti, 2007). As Finland developed itself into a wealthy welfare state, this national dignity was supported as well as a bridge-building role. Finland had the role of bridge builder within international politics (Jakobson, 1987), building the bridge between the Soviet block and the Western democracy (Luostarinen & Suikkanen, 2004). The “between East and West” theme became a trademark for the identity politics of Finland, both during the Cold War period as during the aftermath of the Soviet’s disintegration. With this transformation, the “neutrality” discourse thus became the main source of the Finnish national dignity.

4.4 Westernization

As already referred to when discussing the marginality perspective, the end of the Cold War activated the strong Finnish narratives of “Westernization” (Ruokanen & Nurmio, 1995, as cited in Browning & Lehti, 2007). This Westernization narrative was synonymous for the fact that after the Cold War Finland should return home to its Western heritage as this heritage was denied throughout the war (Browning, 2002). In this section, the Westernization narrative will be further explained.

Even after the end of the Cold War the danger among the Finns, of being left outside in the “grey zone”, remained (Browning & Lehti, 2007). This was emphasized by Finnish media during the Finnish referendum campaign, in 1994, on joining the EU. *Helsingin Sanomat*, the most prominent newspaper of Finland, argued that not agreeing on an EU

membership would cause Finland to be stuck “between chaos and stable conditions, between poverty and wealth, between democratic and undemocratic regimes”. By rejecting the membership, the perceptions of Finland as an “Eastern” country would be enhanced (Kuisma, 2003). They further stated that Finland was known in the past as a “retarded” and inward looking country. Consequently, it appeared that what was previously criticized as an excellent isolation and as a pride of being ahead of the “old” European countries, was now seen as something that was shameful and marginal and which could be escaped from through Westernization. Accordingly, being part of Europe was from then on seen as necessary for a national survival, instead of being interpreted as a threat (Browning & Lehti, 2007).

4.5 Finnlandisierung

The last perspective that will be discussed is “Finnlandisierung”. This perspective is linked to the Westernization perspective in the sense that it is related to the struggle of Finland between joining the West while remaining good relations with the East.

The idea of Finnish neutrality in foreign policy was over 50 years so intensively drummed by the whole publicity in the country that it became a cornerstone of the social identity of its citizens (Luostarinen & Suikkanen, 2004). Additionally, Finland grew into the neutral and moral actor in international affairs. This neutrality perspective is related to the term “Finnlandisierung” (Suomettuminen in Finnish).

Regardless of the fact that the origin of the term can be argued upon, Finnlandisierung was used to explain the influence of a powerful country (the Soviet Union/Russia) on the policies of a smaller neighboring country (Finland) (Kortti, 2014). In other words, with Finnlandisierung, Finland demonstrates how it was possible to be both West and East at the same time (Antonsich, 2005).

Although the term Finnlandisierung could be interpreted as a positive concept in that Finland accomplished to establish itself as a small country next to its powerful neighbor Russia, it is mostly interpreted as a negative term. It is seen as an unfair concept that, referring to the history, represents a false description of Finland’s relations with the Soviet Union (Moisio, 2008). Especially within Finland itself, Finnlandisierung was (and is still) seen as an annoying and embarrassing term.

With the ending of the Cold War Finnlandisierung transferred from functioning as an external label for Finnish policies to being an internal tool of distinction (Moisio, 2008). It is argued that even today the concept of Finnlandisierung is alive. It is believed to be part of the

future political choices of Finland, in reference to its Cold War history, such as whether Finland should join the NATO or not.

4.6 Conclusion

To conclude on the ideologies that are carried out by the Finnish media (i.e. journalists), it can be argued that the five perspectives are interrelated. Russophobia refers both to the hatred towards Russia as well as that it emphasizes the difference between Finland and Russia. Related to this highlighting of the difference, is the perspective of othering. By means of othering, Finland defined itself by comparing "us" and "ours" to "them" (Russia). Othering evoked the feeling of being powerful, the feeling of Finland being superior to others. This feeling of being superior is related to the perspective of marginality. From a historical perspective, marginality is related both to the Finns escaping from the Swedish and Russian power and dominance as well as to how the Finns positioned themselves relative to the West. In reference to marginality, the manner in which Finns positioned themselves, the neutrality discourse became the main source of the Finnish national dignity. Related to the Finnish position in reference to the West is the perspective of Westernization. After the Cold War era, in which Finland successfully had isolated itself from the outside, the aim was to become part of Europe. While being part of Europe was previously interpreted as a threat, from that time on it was seen by Finland as something that was necessary to survive. Lastly, the term that is used to explain the influence of the powerful Russia on the politics of small Finland is *Finnlandisierung*. Specifically, *Finnlandisierung* reflects how it was possible to be both West and East at the same time. It is believed that the term is still relevant today, in reference to Finland's Cold War history, and as part of the future politics of Finland.

5. The production of Finnish media ideologies

Now that the effect the media can exert and the ideologies that exist within Finland in reference to Russia are discussed, it is important to explain how these ideologies are produced by Finnish journalists. That is why in this chapter the focus is on Finnish journalists. The aspects that will be discussed concern the role of Finnish journalists; the manner in which the Finnish ideology is produced by Finnish journalists; and how the identity frames are spread by Finnish journalists. To explain these aspects, the Finnish media systems will be discussed. Moreover, it will be explained how Finnish journalists function within these media systems and how they produce their content.

The chapter will start by discussing three general theories that are related to the production of journalistic content. The theories concern the journalistic role perception, gatekeeping, and external influences on the journalistic practice. Subsequently, these theories will be linked to the Finnish media system.

5.1 Journalistic role perception

It is argued that the way in which journalists define their profession has an effect on the content they produce (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). According to Beam, Weaver, and Brownlee (2009) a distinction can be made between journalists as disseminators (i.e. neutral, only factual content), interpreter (i.e. not neutral, critical, interpretive content), adversary (i.e. sceptical, trying to unmask the government), and populist mobilizer (i.e. bottom up, giving ordinary people a chance to express their views, set the political agenda). These different roles a journalist can obtain, influence the content the journalist delivers.

When referring specifically to journalists in Finland, there appear to be five values that guide their work in Finland: (political) independence, freedom of speech, balance, pluralism, and the watchdog position (Karppinen, Nieminen, & Markkanen, 2011; Ahva, 2012). Pluralism concerns the inclusion of opinions that are different from the main editorial beliefs. Journalists try to strive for balance by monitoring audience feedback and internal discussions. Subsequently, by means of this feedback, it is the aim of journalists to initiate a debate between different perspectives and generate different views (Karppinen et al., 2011). In addition to these values, Finnish journalists believe they present neutral and accurate information, exercise political and industrial monitoring and choose the side of the underprivileged (i.e. the underdogs) (Niskala & Hurme, 2014). They claim to refrain from reflecting their own opinions and beliefs, and instead act as advisors, and inform the public about scandals (Niskala & Hurme, 2014). In other words, one of the essential functions of Finnish journalists is to act as a watchdog, meaning that their aim is to criticize and evaluate official decision-making (Karppinen et al., 2011). These role descriptions reflect the professional characteristics of public service and objective/neutral roles (Volek & Jiráček, 2007), the disseminator role (Beam et al., 2009), as well as the adversarial role.

5.2 Gatekeeping

According to the literature, it appears that Finnish journalists interpret their role as being a disseminator and advisor, in a neutral, objective way. Deriving from this role perception, how does the news selection take place?

Journalists as gatekeepers select information because of its newsworthiness or audience interest and present it in ways that meet the needs of the audience (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). The term “gatekeeper” refers to the fact that given the number of stories and the lack of space, decisions must be made on how the many news events can be brought down to only a few, in a funnel shape. Gatekeepers actively construct reality through their routines of deciding which events should be interpreted as news and thus could pass through the gate. Journalists are essential as gatekeepers as they affect particularly how the original news event is interpreted and covered in the media (Alasuutari, Qadir, & Creutz, 2013). The issues that fail to pass through the gatekeeping process of news selection will also fail to give salience cues concerning the relative importance of the issue (Wanta et al., 2004).

Considering the current state of gatekeeping in Finland, according to Salovaara-Moring (2009) the gatekeeping role of Finnish journalists is being eroded. According to him the reason for the "poor" journalism is the increase of user-generated content and blogs. This enables the politicians to communicate directly with the audience without having to rely on the traditional media. This development moves the process of editing and controlling of messages and accumulates the audience in a superior way. This has led the political elites to permit a free card regarding the critical surveillance.

5.3 Factors influencing the journalistic practice

Now that the process of gatekeeping is discussed it is relevant to elaborate on the (external) factors that can have an influence on the news selection and on how issues are framed. In reference to the (external) factors that can exert an influence on journalists, both factors outside the news organization as well as factors within the news organization and personal factors will be examined. These influence will be linked to the situation in Finland.

In reference to personal factors, it is argued that the more power communicators have over their messages and the fewer constraints they have over their work, the more likely their personal attitudes, beliefs, and values will influence their content (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Gans (1985) confirms this by arguing that the routines and constraints demanded by media organizations possibly contradict the influence of personal attitudes, beliefs, and

values. When linking this to the Finnish case, in Finland the principle of journalistic autonomy is highly respected, both among the journalists and the owners of media organizations (Karppinen et al., 2011).

For ideas, journalists rely heavily on their colleagues (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Consequently, the news might become more similar across media and more self-reinforcing since all journalists follow the same routines. National news agencies in Finland have a quite dominant position in determining the news agenda and administering content (Karppinen et al., 2011). In addition, it frequently happens that news items are recycled. In Finland, issues and perspectives circulate between media outlets (Karppinen et al., 2011). A reason for this “copying” is that journalists rely on each other’s reporting as a standardized practice, for story ideas as well as for confirming their own judgments (Sigal, 1973). The narrowness enables journalists to act in an otherwise uncertain environment through providing them a particular level of certainty.

Concerning the influence of the journalistic routines, routines refer to the patterned, repeated, routinized practices and forms that media professionals use in practicing their profession (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). These routines form the context within and through which media professionals do their job. The aim of these media routines is to deliver a sufficient product to the consumer in the most effective manner, within the limitations of time and space. In Finland, it is argued that the lack of time combined with an increasing workload, is a factor that influences the routines of journalists (Karppinen et al., 2011). It restricts journalists both from performing in-depth journalism as well as from generating professional discussion.

When considering factors external to the media organization that can have influence, the government appears to be an essential factor (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Although some countries experience a lower level of control by the government, all governments control the mass media at least to some extent. This is also the case in Finland (Karppinen et al., 2011). However, it is not believed to be a problem as journalists enjoy a high level of independence. Another factor external to the media organization that can exert an influence is the commercial factor. Although they are regularly contacted by external lobbyists, the Finnish editors-in-chief argue that they do not get involved with advertisers or other external parties (Karppinen et al., 2011). Furthermore, the lack of openness and the strict information management of large corporations in Finland can have an influence. These large corporations do not pursue the same transparency demands as public authorities (Karppinen et al., 2011). This way journalists are limited in their reporting.

Ultimately the media owners are the ones that have the final say in what the organization does (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). If their employees are not agreeing on their ideas, they can quit. This is to a certain extent also true for Finland. In Finland, the work of the newsrooms is in general coordinated by the leading editors (Karppinen et al., 2011). However, as argued, these leading editors seldom get involved in the individual decisions of the journalists concerning the manner in which news items are framed.

It must be highlighted that most of the findings on the media production can be applied to the majority of Western democracies. One finding might be unique to Finland, the fact that Finnish journalists explicitly choose the side of the underprivileged (i.e. the underdogs). This might be related to the Finnish history of being inferior to Sweden and Russia.

5.4 Finnish media system

As the target group of this research concerns Finnish journalists, it is important to shortly discuss the media system and the media landscape in Finland. It is argued by Ahva (2012) that nowadays the Finnish journalist have become more liberal. Traditionally, the Finnish media system belongs to, what Hallin and Mancini (2004) refer to as, the “democratic-corporatist” model (Reunanen, Kunelius, & Noppari, 2010). In explaining the Finnish media system, it must be considered that until the end of 1980, a somewhat cooperative relationship between the media and different decision-making elites existed (Reunanen et al., 2010). The democratic corporatist model will be explained by discussing the following aspects: the freedom of the press; the journalistic independence; the consensus culture; the press council; and the media ownership (i.e. media interventions).

There are two things the Finnish media are famous for, their high level of freedom and their independence. Since 2010 Finland holds the number one position on the press freedom index of Reporters Without Borders (April 20, 2016). Finland appears to be one of the freest media environments worldwide (Freedom House, 2015). Related to this is the high level of journalistic independence. In reference to the developments within media, from 1960-2000 dramatic changes took place in Finland concerning the independence of newspapers (Nord, 2008). In 1960 85% of the newspapers were politically affiliated, while in 2000 only 5% of the newspapers remained politically affiliated.

In accordance with Finland enjoying a high level of freedom and independence, the country acknowledges a consensus culture. Meaning that Finland recognizes a high level of

“confidence and trust” between actors in policy networks. This, in turn, forms the common relationship between media (i.e. journalists) and these networks (Reunanen et al., 2010). However, on the other hand, it implies that the influence of journalists over the relationships between actors in policy networks is minimal. This “trust culture” makes it less useful for actors in policy networks to rely on journalists and this leaves the journalists with less power. The trust culture reduces the power of journalists to influence the agenda. Meaning that the ability to provoke a critical public discussion depends on the different opinions that exist among elites (Bennet, 1990).

The independence and freedom of journalists are also reflected in the fact that Finland shows a strong support for a well-established, democratic and transparent press council: “The Council for Mass Media in Finland” (JSN) (Nord, 2008). This system is not connected to the government. What they do, is they exert a corporatist structure; they make decisions concerning issues that are bound to media ethics in public; and they publish reports on a regular basis containing their considerations and explanations concerning the policy position (Nord, 2008). The JSN has been able to set clear ethical boundaries without using financial sanctions. Suppose a media company is blamed for something, they have to publish the whole law judgment of JSN on their website (Uimonen, 2015). Additionally, they have to refer to the decision of JSN in the media where the mistake was originally made. The prominence of the adjustment must resemble the seriousness of the original error. Since journalists and editors do not like to put their credibility in danger in the public eye, these “shame punishments” work in Finland. Everything and everyone (i.e. publications and journalists) is treated in the same way (Uimonen, 2015). All members pursue the same goal: to keep the media powerful, reliable and alive.

Related to the freedom and the transparent, democratic way of controlling the media, is that Finland does not have any media ownership regulations. They only enjoy selective press subsidies (Nord, 2008). In the article “Finland of the Free”, Uimonen (2015) argues that the Finnish media know that it is their own concern to keep the government far away from the press. Media are aware of the fact that if they do not keep their own house in order, someone else will come and do it for them. The JSN guidelines state that the person that is primarily responsible to the reader is the journalist (Uimonen, 2015). The readers have the right to know what is going on in society. That is why journalists must strive to present truthful information and when the information is acquired, it must be verified as carefully as possible, even when it has been published before. Furthermore, Uimonen (2015) argues that the Finnish press, as argued, have the freedom to act as watchdogs of the powerful and

criticize the all mighty. In their turn, JSN is expected to be transparent and plausible.

To conclude on the media system, most of the discussed findings can be applied to Western democracies in general. However, what characterizes the Finnish media is their high level of freedom, independence, and transparency.

5.5 Sub-questions

In understanding how Finnish journalists position themselves when it comes to Russia, it is important to explore the key characteristics of the profession of journalism in Finland. Moreover, it is argued that how journalists define their profession has an effect on the content they produce. For this reason, the first sub-question concerns: *How do Finnish journalists see their profession?*

By framing the reality, journalists emphasize the ideologies and the Finnish national identity (i.e. nationalism). It is argued that the national identity, through existing narratives, relies on a series of profound images of historical times. As Finland experienced a complicated history with Russia, it is interesting to see how Finnish journalists, based on the national identity and their ideologies, frame the image the Finns have about the reality. That is why the second sub-question is as follows: *How do Finnish journalists contribute to the image of the reality?*

According to the literature there are different factors, both within and outside the media organization that can have an influence on the news selection and on how issues are framed. As these (external) factors can have an influence on the work of journalists, and thus possibly on how journalists position themselves towards Russia, these factors are important to take in consideration. Considering this argument, the third sub-question is: *Which (external) factors have an influence on the work of Finnish journalists?*

It is argued that at present the concept of Finnlandisierung can be applied when explaining the acting of Finland in relation to Russia. It is believed to be part of the future political choices of Finland, in reference to the Cold War history, such as whether Finland should join the NATO. However, since nowadays the situation in Russia has changed it is interesting to explore how Finnlandisierung, at present, is interpreted by journalists and how journalists describe the relationship between Finland and Russia through Finnlandisierung. The fourth sub-question is thus as follows: *How do Finnish journalists interpret Finnlandisierung?*

In the literature, the relationship between Finland and Russia is mostly discussed from a historical perspective. However, are these different perspectives (i.e. Russophobia, othering, marginality, Westernization, and Finnlandierung) on how Finland has established itself in relation to Russia, at present, underlying the relationship and thus contributing to the image of Russia? For this reason the fifth sub-question is: *How do Finnish journalists contribute to the existing image of Russia?*

Finland has the freest media environment worldwide (Freedom House, 2015), especially in contrast to Russia. Russia is ranking 148th (out of 180 countries) on the press freedom index. This freedom aspect was different during the Cold War era when Finland exerted self-censorship to satisfy the Soviet Union. Considering this Finnish history of self-censorship, it is interesting to explore to what extent Finnish journalists feel fry in writing about Russia. That is why the sixed sub-question concerns: *To what extent do Finnish journalists feel free in writing about Russia?*

6. Method

In this chapter the method of this research will be discussed by explaining the following aspects: the aim of qualitative research, the data collection process, the research sample (i.e. the respondents), and the topic list. In addition, the analysis will be described by explaining the Grounded Theory, the validity and reliability of the research and the possible ethical dilemmas that could appear.

6.1 Qualitative Research

The aim of the current research is to explore the role of Finnish journalists, how they position themselves in relation to the reporting on Russia. The objective of this research is to explore and develop theories. By means of a qualitative interview study it is possible to analyze social relationships and subjective meanings (Flick, 2009). Moreover, it consists of an exploratory way of conducting research whereby social phenomena are understood and interpreted from the life world of the respondent. This is as well regard to as “interpretivism”. The aim is to give meaning to the subjective experience of the respondent. Furthermore, by means of qualitative research reality is constructed from the inside-out, also known as “constructivism” (Bryman, 2008). As the subject of the research could be interpreted as a sensitive subject, conducting interviews is a good method to use. By means of qualitative interviews it is possible to explore understanding and meanings in depth. Moreover, it is possible to examine

the context of feeling, thought and action and to explore relationships between different situations and aspects (Arksey & Knight, 1999). It is a powerful method of helping people to make explicit things, which were previously implicit – to express the unspoken perceptions, understandings and feelings.

6.2 Data collection

To answer the research questions 19 in-depth interviews were conducted among one professor (from the Aleksanteri Institute of the University of Helsinki¹) and 18 journalists. In order to explore the field of the research in question and to shed light on the topic, the first interview was conducted with a professor who has an expertise in research on the political history, the Cold War, state socialism, systematic change, history of Eastern Europe, and post-communist change. This professor can declare and explain the historical and existing perspectives on the relationship between Finland and Russia.

All respondents were approached by means of an e-mail. Their contact information was obtained through the personal network of the researcher and through the interviewees themselves (i.e. snowball sampling). All interviews were conducted in a setting the respondents preferred, as long as the setting was suitable for conducting an interview (i.e. a quiet place). In order to prevent the journalists from being biased in reference to the main topic of the interview, before the interview started they were not aware of the ultimate aim of the research. They were told that the interview would be focused on the journalistic profession in Finland, on how Finnish journalists see their job, and the content they deliver. As the interview unfolded they became aware of the main topic of the interview, namely the relationship between Finland and Russia. Although the main topic of the research came as a surprise for the journalists, all journalists agreed on discussing the topic without any one complaining.

The first interview, with the professor, was conducted two or three months before the interviews with the journalists. The 18 interviews with the journalists were conducted within a time period of three weeks.

¹The Aleksanteri Institute is the Finnish national center of research, study and expertise pertaining to Russia and Eastern Europe, particularly in the social sciences and humanities and thus is relevant for the subject of this study.

6.3 Respondents

A total of 19 respondents participated in the qualitative interview study (see table 6.1). On average the interviews took 54 minutes. As the interview with the professor will not be included in the results, only the demographical characteristics of the 18 journalists will be discussed. In reference to gender of the respondents, 50% of the interviewed journalists were men and 50% were women. The age of the respondents varied from 22 to 60 years old, of which ten were between 20-30 years old and eight were older than 31. The years of journalistic experience varied from 1-38 years, seven journalists enjoyed 1-9 years of experience while the other eleven journalists had over ten years of experience. The 18 journalists were working for twelve different Finnish news media organizations, namely: *Iltasanomat*, *Helsingin Sanomat*, *Iltasanomat*, *Freelance*, *STT news agency*, *Uusi Suomi*, *Suomen Kuhvalehti*, *Kansan Uutiset*, *MTV news*, *Lännen Media group*, *Hufvudstads blad*, *Talouselämä*. All news media organizations were based in Helsinki.

Table 6.1: List of Respondents

	Expertise	Age	Experience (Years)	Gender	Minutes
1. Professor	Political history, Cold War, State Socialism, Systematic Change, History of Eastern Europe, Post-Communist change	-	-	Woman	61:01
2. Journalist	Domestic news	24	5	Man	56:00
3. Journalist	Foreign news	28	10	Man	83:00
4. Journalist	Lifestyle, former all around youth news	29	10	Man	49:26
5. Journalist	Foreign news	39	12	Man	53:00
6. Journalist	Foreign news	34	9	Woman	62:00
7. Journalist	Lifestyle, former domestic news	54	30	Woman	41:21
8. Journalist	Domestic and all-around news	22	1	Woman	48:30
9. Journalist	Domestic, politics	26	5	Woman	55:31

10. Journalist	Foreign, domestic, 24- hours news	26	5	Woman	48:00
11. Journalist	Politics, economics, science, technology	35	11	Man	73:00
12. Journalist	Politics, EU-Finland, foreign news	28	1	Man	46:00
13. Journalist	Foreign news	60	38	Man	49:36
14. Journalist	Foreign news, all-around news	49	25	Man	40:00
15. Journalist	All-around news, foreign and cultural news	27	10	Woman	62:00
16. Journalist	Politics	56	33	Woman	55:31
17. Journalist	Economics	53	30	Man	48:00
18. Journalist	Common news (history, culture, politics, society)	30	9	Woman	57:32
19. Journalist	Foreign news	29	10	Woman	44:23

6.4 Topic list

Two different topic lists were designed including different questions, one for the exploratory interview with the professor and one for the ultimate interviews with the journalists. All questions concerned open questions. Follow-up questions were used to enable the respondents to present a complete and explicit answer on the different topics with the ultimate goal of obtaining a comprehensive answer to the main research question of this research.

The interview that was designed to be conducted with the professor concerned questions that were focusing on the relationship between Finland and Russia from an historical perspective as well as from a contemporary perspective. The questions concerned the development of Finland as a country throughout the history (the Swedish period, the Russian period, the construction of the national identity, and the image of Russia); how Finland as a country and Finnish citizens position themselves when it comes to Russia (the public discourse as well as the media discourse), and lastly how Finland interpret its role as a country in general (its geographical position from an ideological, political, economic, and national and current perspective) (see Appendix A for the interview-guide).

It was attempted to formulate the interview questions for the journalists as objective as possible in order to obtain a non-biased answer. The interview questions were designed in such a way that the respondents were unable to discover the underlying media theories. The interview for the journalists was constructed in a funnel shape from general question to more specific questions, concluding by asking specific questions with reference to the aim of the research. In order to answer the main research question by means of the interview, the main research question was made observable or measurable through nine indirect questions. The nine indirect questions are the following:

1. *How do Finnish journalists see their profession?(i.e. How they see their role and what they believe are important values)*
2. *Where do Finnish journalists base their news selection on? What are (external) factors that influence their work? Who sets the agenda in Finland?*
3. *How do Finnish journalists contribute to the construction of reality?*
4. *How do Finnish journalists reflect public opinion?*
5. *What are the ideologies underlying the work of Finnish journalists? In what way do Finnish journalist believe to shape the national identity of Finland? (i.e. Narratives);*
6. *How do Finnish journalists describe the relationship between Finland and Russia? How do Finnish journalists label Russia?*
7. *How do Finnish journalists contribute to the existing image of Russia?*
8. *How do Finnish journalists interpret Finnlandisiering?*
9. *To what extent do Finnish journalists feel free in writing about Russia?*

The interview was structured by means of three different initial questions (see Appendix B for the interview-guide). The first initial question concerned the exploring of the journalistic profession in Finland. In this first section the aim was to explore the journalistic profession in general in Finland by focusing on the definition of the profession and the description of the journalistic role (i.e. the core values; the construction of reality; gatekeeping; external factors; agenda-setting). The second initial question focused on the ideology and national identity of Finland, which ideologies journalists believe to carry out and promote (i.e. cultural sensemaking and the construction of national identity; reflecting on public opinion; defining the relation between Finland and neighboring countries; minority groups covered in media). The third and last initial question focused specifically on the relationship between Finland and Russia and how it is translated by journalists (i.e. construction of reality of Russia;

negative perspectives on Russia; interpretation of Finnlandisierung). The interview was completed by asking to what extent the journalists feel free in writing about Russia.

6.5 Constant Comparison

To process the data, the interviews were transcribed. All respondents were recorded (former to granting permission) and verbatim transcribed. The coding of the transcripts was conducted in accordance with the coding method outlined in the “Grounded Theory” approach. In other words, only the coding method according to the Grounded Theory was applied, not the Grounded Theory itself. First the Grounded Theory will be shortly explained followed by an explanation of the process of analysis.

The aim of the Grounded Theory approach is to develop theories that explain the working of certain aspects of the social world (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The purpose is to generate a theory that arises from and is therefore related to the phenomenon under study. A method of analyzing data for generating a grounded theory, is the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). According to Strauss and Corbin (1990) there are certain flexible guidelines for coding data when conducting an analysis according to the Grounded Theory approach.

The first step of the analysis is “open coding” in which the data will be clarified, examined, compared, conceptualized, and categorized (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this first process every passage of the interview is examined in order to decide what exactly has been stated, develop categories and to label each passage with a sufficient code (Boeije, 2002). As the Grounded Theory explains, the transcribing process started by assigning codes to the transcribed data, the open coding stage. This way it was possible to explore the text in an “open minded” way. The codes were assigned by means of the computer program Atlas.Ti. As a result of the open coding, a list of codes remained.

The second step is “axial coding” in which after the open coding the data will be put together again in a new way by means of connecting the categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The way this is done is by employing a coding paradigm concerning conditions, context, action/interactional strategies and consequences. In this second step the fragments of different interviews the researcher has defined as handling the same theme and thus have been assigned the same code, are compared (Boeije, 2002). Regularly codes are linked to other codes and subsequently form a pattern (i.e. a family). With axial coding two aims should be accomplished: the aim to search for indicators and characteristics for each concept in order to

explain that concept; and the aim to determine the existing combinations of codes. Subsequently these steps generate clusters or a typology. Based on the theory of axial coding, during the specification stage, the central concepts were formed, the patterns or families. By means of these lists of families the central themes were explored.

The third step is “selective coding”. This is the process of selecting the essential category, systematically connecting it to other categories, confirming those relationships, and inserting categories that need further clarification and development (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This step results in the expansion of the total of codes, the “code tree”. The expansion of codes will be continued until the codes are sufficient to include all the different, relevant themes incorporated in the interview (Boeije, 2002). By means of the list of families and the corresponding themes, the results could be discussed.

6.6 Validity & Reliability

First it needs to be considered that qualitative research is a research method that concerns interpretation of the content of data. The systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns is based on the choices of the researcher. It is not possible to overcome this critique of subjectivity, however, it is possible to reduce it. In this chapter will be explained how it has been attempted to generate the validity and reliability of this research.

According to Long and Johnson (2000) reliability is related to the confidence in the data collection. Reliability describes ‘the consistency or constancy of a measuring instrument’ (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 1998, p. 558), and ‘refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions’ (Hammersley, 1992, p. 67). Traditionally, reliability is related to the standardization of data collection instruments (Long & Johnson, 2000). However, the non-standardization of qualitative research makes it impossible to assure reliability (Hammersley, 1992). According to Brink (1991) there are three tests that could assure reliability in qualitative research. The first one is “stability”. Stability could be aspired by asking the same respondent identical questions at different times. The second one is “consistency”. Consistency concerns the sincerity of the issues that are discussed within a single interview or questionnaire, so that the answer of a respondent on a given topic remains consistent. The third one is “equivalence”. Equivalence can be tested by asking a question with the same meaning in alternative forms during a single interview, or by two researchers

observing each other. For the current research, only the second and third reliability test could be applied. Consistency was generated by making sure that the questions that were asked were clear to the respondent and that they were asked in a similar manner in the different interviews. Equivalence was generated by making sure that the most important questions, the different initial questions, were both presented to the respondents in the form of a main, overarching question (i.e. the initial question) as in the form of indirect sub-questions, that were part of the initial question. This way a full and clear answer could be given to the different initial questions.

As argued, concerning qualitative research, it appears to be difficult to measure the validity and reliability of the data that has been analyzed since it is a subjective way of conducting research. The researcher has to sensitize himself into the experiences and opinions of the respondents. However, a way to test the internal validity is by comparing the results to existing theories and literature, to search for contrasting cases and to provide a thick description of the data (i.e. an extensive description of the data possibly by providing quotes) (Zohrabi, 2013). Besides, by conducting the interview with the professor, the results of the interview with the journalists could be “verified” by comparing their statements to the statements of the professor (i.e. peer examination) (Zohrabi, 2013). The validity of the research is sufficient as the research includes the personal experiences of the respondents, which they explain themselves.

6.7 Ethics

In the introduction of each interview the aim of the research was discussed; followed by explaining that the respondent could report freely; the respondent was asked whether he or she is still agreeing on the fact that the interview would be recorded; it was explained that the interview would be used for a master thesis research at the University of Rotterdam (in the Netherlands); and lastly it was stated that when the respondent did not want to answer a particular question, the question would be illuminated. The introduction was completed by asking whether the respondent had any questions before the start of the interview.

By means of the statements in the introduction the aim of the research was explained to the respondent. By this the respondent was aware that he or she would be recorded and that he or she could feel free in denoting when a question was undesirable. Through these statements it was aimed to prevent ethical dilemmas. As stated by Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2001) the participants’ rights are recognized, including the right to be informed

about the study, the right to freely decide whether to participate in a study, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty (p. 95). By using the informed consent, the autonomy of the respondents is recognized (Orb et al., 2001).

By means of the quotes it is not possible to trace back the media organization the journalists work for. If needed, the names of the respondents and the company they work for were excluded. This to guarantee the privacy of the interviewees. Taking the privacy of the respondent in consideration is what Orb et al. (2001) have referred to as “principle of beneficence”: the moral obligation of overseeing the potential consequences of revealing participants’ identities.

6.8 Open coding & Axial coding

Table 6.2 illustrates the open and axial codes that were applied to the different passages of the interview data. An example has been given for each essential theme.

Table 6.2: Example of open and axial coding

	Open Coding	Axial Coding
Journalistic profession	<i>Give the truth</i> <i>Providing facts</i> <i>Being neutral</i> <i>Being objective</i> <i>Being transparent in your work</i> <i>Honesty</i> <i>Reliable</i>	Being truthful, factual, and objective
Framing the public image of reality	<i>Journalists write from a highly educated/elite perspective</i> <i>Young urban educated journalists</i> <i>Journalists do not reflect whole society</i> <i>Socially/economically weak groups non-existing in media</i> <i>Media picture reality not as complex as in real life</i>	Journalists write from an elite perspective for elites
Factors influencing journalism	<i>Rely on (international) news agencies</i> <i>Other (international) media</i>	Rely on (international)

		media - source
Finnlandisierung	<i>Term is negative</i> <i>Finns were going too far</i> <i>Term is used as accusation</i> <i>Finns give up autonomy</i> <i>Historically: self-censorship</i> <i>Give up independence</i> <i>Close eyes for bad things</i> <i>It is humiliating</i> <i>It is coward to give power to someone else</i> <i>It is backboneless</i> <i>Finns not doing something cause Russia</i> <i>might get angry</i> <i>Term is shameful</i> <i>Trying to please Russia too much (fear)</i> <i>Term to mock Finland</i>	Term is negative – It is shameful
Finland framing Russia	<i>Threat frame Russia</i> <i>Russia is unpredictable</i> <i>People are afraid now</i> <i>Russia is feared</i> <i>Russia indirect threat lately</i> <i>Suspicious about Russia</i> <i>Anxiety Russia confiscates ground</i> <i>Finland defence strategy</i> <i>Defence frame – Russia</i> <i>Russia is scary</i> <i>Scary to live next to Russia</i>	Threat frame – Russia is feared
Freedom of writing about Russia	<i>Russian troll actions should not affect Finnish journalistic work</i> <i>Jessikka Aro example of troll attack</i> <i>Russian trolls</i> <i>Finnish journalists are aware of Russian trolls</i>	Russian troll attacks

*Russian trolls try to harass, push,
blackmail journalists
Russian trolls write negative feedback
(personal info)
Russian trolls really can get aggressive
Russian trolling still recent/new
Try to prevent troll operations through
policies/technical measures*

7. Results

In this chapter, the results of the qualitative interviews will be discussed. The main research question of this research concerns: *What is the position of Finnish journalists when it comes to reporting on Russia?* The results will be explained in a funnel shape, this means that the analysis begins more general and eventually works towards a more specific perspective. The chapter will start by discussing the key principles of journalism as a profession in Finland and the way Finnish journalists influence the image Finns have concerning reality. Then, the chapter elaborates on the external factors that potentially have an influence on the work of Finnish journalists. In the second part of this chapter the specific findings on the main research question will be discussed. In this way, there will be analysed whether the findings of the main research question can be explained by or traced back to the general characteristics of the journalistic profession in Finland. Consequently, this research discovers and clarifies the differences in the self-positioning of Finnish journalists when it comes to reporting in general versus their self-positioning when it comes to reporting on Russia.

7.1 The key aspects of journalism in Finland

In discussing the results on the self-positioning of Finnish journalists when reporting on Russia, it is relevant to start with discussing the key principles of journalism in Finland. Subsequently, it might be possible to discover a relation between the key principles of journalism (i.e. the values and role perceptions) in Finland and the way Finnish journalists position themselves when it comes to Russia.

7.1.1 Journalism in Finland: Values & role perception

It appears that Finnish journalists attach importance to the following values: truthfulness;

factuality; objectivity; neutrality; honesty; reliability; and transparency. To simplify; they want to be reliable and honest by reproducing the ‘truth’. The Finnish journalists try to obtain this by providing facts, being neutral, objective and transparent in their work. As one journalist illustrates:

“Truth. I mean the objective truth. You have to be truthful to your audience and to yourself. As a journalist, you need to say everything you think. This way you can be transparent in your work. At present Finland is facing a crisis within journalism. I believe it to be a trust issue. Considering content, some people lost their trust in the media” (Interview 10, p.4).

As it is part of the national identity, independence is an essential value for Finnish journalists. However, critical, independent journalism is still fairly new in Finland. Only since the beginning of the nineties, since the ending of the Cold War, Finnish journalists were able to write freely and from a more critical perspective. Before, they experienced that they had to take into account the relationship with Russia and assure that they would not write critical about the country in order to maintain a relation without conflict with Russia. Independence as a value for Finnish journalists refers to freedom of speech and the intention to be independent. They want to make their own decisions without being restricted by any party or person. As one of the journalists explains:

“You, as a journalist, want to write the stories yourself. You do not want the stories to be written by someone else and then subsequently transmit it to your audience. You are the one that compiles the information and subsequently confines it. (...) Instead of being the one that is typing what someone is telling you, you are the one that contextualizes information” (Interview 18, p.2).

The aim of Finnish journalists is to help their readers understand the world through the information they provide. However, they are convinced that solely presenting certain information is insufficient. In addition, journalists need to provide context and background knowledge to the information they provide. As one of the journalists explains:

I believe that nowadays it becomes increasingly more important for journalists to provide a background and context when reporting on events. (...) If you consider what

is happening in society and in the world right now, it is quite complicated. I believe that people want to have a bigger picture or better understanding of what it all means, what the background is of certain events or issues and how it relates to other events or issues. It is important as the world has become more complex nowadays and as there is much more information available (Interview 15, p.1).

Furthermore, journalists want to help people understand issues or events by providing different viewpoints and integrating different opinions. In other words, journalists try to help their audience to gain a wider understanding of certain events by offering new insights. They provide the tools to think about a certain issue so people are able to form their own opinion. As one journalist explains

“It is important to inform and (...) to give people the opportunity to mobilize themselves (...) in a way they prefer. This enables them to be informed enough to act upon something. It is thus their own opinion. I do not provide my own values but I help them to form their own opinions” (Interview 18, p.1).

Nowadays, increasingly more information is available originating from various sources. As a consequence, Finnish journalists believe that they have to be critical to the sources they rely on and to the information they attain. They feel like they have to adopt a critical attitude towards presented opinions and politicians. Some journalists consider themselves as a ‘watchdog’ of politics as they feel the need to safeguard the democracy by scrutinizing what is going on. This aim of journalists is highlighted by one of the journalists who states that they always have to question their sources and the information they receive:

“As a journalist I always need to be critical. I believe that I need to be critical towards (...) all information and sources I am confronted with. As well as to everything I am (...) observing. I need to think twice and ask myself: ‘Is this true, is this right? What is the background of this information, why [are these people] saying these particular things? Why is [this person] saying these things?’” (Interview 17, p.2)

In conclusion concerning the values and role perceptions of Finnish journalists, it appears that the most essential values journalists want to pursue are: truthfulness; factualness; objectivity; neutrality; reliability; honesty; transparency; and independence. As stated above, being

critical and independent are fairly new pursued values for Finnish journalists. These values manifest itself as journalists try to be independent from any party (i.e. make their own decisions) and enjoy freedom of speech. Furthermore, Finnish journalists see it as their task to help their readers (i.e. the Finns) to understand the world by providing information. Not solely conveying this information but also explaining and contextualizing it by offering a background to these issues or events. By providing different angles and opinions on issues or events they aim to give their readers more insight on information or sources. Consequently, they want their readers to be able to mobilize themselves, to form their own opinions by means of the tools journalists offer them. Another essential task for Finnish journalists is to adopt a critical position towards the sources they use (e.g. politicians and officials) and incoming information (e.g. opinions). Some journalists feel like they need to safeguard the democracy by acting as a watchdog for politics. These findings on the key principles of journalism in Finland are to a great extent in line with the existing literature. The analysis thus substantiates both the theories on journalism in Finland as theories concerning journalism in general.

7.2 The Finnish reality

In order to make a comparison between how Finnish journalists frame reality in general and how they frame reality with regard to Russia, it is essential to elaborate on the way in which Finnish journalists frame the image that Finns have of the reality (i.e. their worldview). The framing of reality relates to how journalists by means of their content shape and influence their reader's vision on for example, a country, issue or event. Journalists choose from which angle they discuss a certain topic and how to label certain subjects by using particular words. The framing of the public image of the Finnish reality will be explained by elaborating on the ideology Finnish journalists pursue and how they believe the national identity is shaped.

7.2.1 Ideology of Finnish journalists

The most apparent finding is that, according to the interviewed journalists, the majority of Finnish journalists write from a young, highly-educated, elite perspective. The journalists argue this stands in the way of reflecting on the Finnish society as a whole while only a certain perspective will be revealed. The social or economic weak groups in society are not or to a lesser extent represented in journalistic content. Consequently, the interviewed journalists believe that the image of reality most Finnish journalists create, is less complex

then in real life. Only the ideas of people with power and expertise are reflected in media. This is illustrated by one of the journalists:

"I think that [the construction of reality] is linked to the ones with power (...). The groups in society that are or socially or economically weak, do not exist in the media in the way they exist in real life. So it is a construction, it is not corresponding to the reality. Of course, there are good reasons for this. It is important to report on what those who have the power are doing. But maybe the picture of the reality the media show is not as complex as it is in real life" (Interview 15, p.3).

Finnish journalists appear to be subjective in their reporting concerning politics. The reason is that the interviewed journalists believe that the vast majority of journalists in Finland have more liberal conceptions. By showing and emphasizing these liberal values Finnish journalists influence the public image of reality accordingly. As one journalist states:

"(...) We are not always objective about politics. The Finnish journalists are rather left-wing and liberal in their values so they might be more critical towards right-wing political parties. So I think that is the perspective the readers usually get confronted with" (Interview 7, p.1).

The argument that the majority of Finnish journalists represent a liberal ideology is highlighted by the statement that only a small part of Finnish journalists are conservative. According to one of the journalists, mostly the tabloid newspapers are more conservative. The journalists believe that the political situation is critical nowadays and this allows for alternative, right-wing media to arise. The journalists express their concern with reference to the increasing influence of these right-wing, alternative media:

"At present we have a depression going on. The political situation in the world is bad, people are talking about a new Cold War era. As a response to the current situation, alternative media arise. The most famous ones are established by obscure organizations. I (...) believe the only thing they do is selling lies. Their content is mostly based on hate speech and anti-immigrant news. (...) According to their conspiracy theories, everything the mainstream media communicates is a lie (...). It is

a troublesome phenomenon because the worse the situation gets, the more people start to believe in the nonsense they sell" (Interview 2, p.2).

To summarize the findings concerning the ideology of journalists, it can be stated that the interviewed journalists argue that Finnish journalists write from a liberal, highly educated, elite perspective. As a consequence, they do not reflect the Finnish society as a whole and thus, the image journalists create of reality is less complex than real life. The fact that the majority of journalists pursue a liberal ideology is ratified by the fact that it is believed that only a small part of Finnish journalists are conservative.

7.2.2 Underdog Identity

As previously mentioned, independence is believed to be a national narrative; it is part of the national identity. The Finnish journalists argue that while Finland is still struggling with independence, the country has low self-esteem that in turn explains their underdog identity. In addition, one journalist argues that the press have played an essential role in this struggle for independence since journalists can contribute to building the nation:

"From the moment Finland gained its independence, the press was very important for building a new nation. I think that the media have been important as well in giving the impression that Finns are the best in everything. For example, that all the products that are made in Finland are the best quality and everything we do is the best" (Interview 12, p.4).

On an individual level, supporting the underdog can be related to the liberal ideology. Liberal journalists strive for equality between people and they want to support the underdog in protecting them against the big companies or authoritarian people, and democracy is essential for them. This is illustrated by one of the journalists:

"(...) I believe that Finnish journalists are liberal in that most of the journalists think that they have to defend the ordinary people. It is part of the Finnish mind-set (...) to be suspicious towards, for example, huge companies and towards (...) authoritarian people. I think it is (...) a national feature: (...) We want to protect the people without power, the underdogs, against the powerful people in society. I think the underdog effect that is something that is quite strong in Finnish media. (...) I think democracy is

quite important for journalists as well as equality (i.e. sexual equality) (...), these are quite liberal values” (Interview 10, p.6).

The need to support the underdog in society can be seen from the fact that journalists seek to empower people. They want to speak for the underdogs. As one of the journalists explains:

“I would say that in a social democracy (...) people are equal and everybody has the same rights. I believe that these are the aspects (...) journalists, in general, are aiming for. I think (...) there is a tendency (...) to speak for the people who (...) do not have the power, to give them a voice. That is very, very important” (Interview 6, p.4).

To conclude the subject of the underdog identity, Finnish journalists want to help building the nation and therefore tend to frequently emphasize Finland's superiority. Their aim is to discard the Finnish national underdog identity. Moreover, on an individual level, journalists seek to support the underdogs in society by protecting them against big, powerful companies and authoritarian people. Thus, on an individual level, they attempt to empower the unheard.

7.2.3 Nationalistic narrative

As mentioned, the emphasis on the belief that Finns are superior is part of the Finnish nation building process. According to the interviewed journalists, Finnish journalists try to create a national identity by focusing on Finnish values and their true characteristics. Rarely, Finland is subject of international media. Some journalists state that Finnish values, 'Finnishness', are mostly highlighted by right-wing and conservative media. According to these sources, especially the top of these media is more nationalistic and right-wing oriented. The following quote illustrates the enthusiasm when Finland is mentioned in international media:

I believe that in Finland many newspapers highlight elements of the Finnish national identity. We actually have a meme about it: "If Finland is mentioned outside its national borders, everyone celebrates". Subjects that are usually referred to when Finland is covered outside its borders, are stories about ice hockey, the welfare system or the maturity package. We really like to write about the fact that Finland is something (i.e. that it is recognized) outside its national borders. We are happy to write: "Yes, Finland has been mentioned in the Dutch news! This is great!" (Interview 1, p.5-6).

To summarize, it appears that Finnish journalists try to raise a national identity by focusing on Finnish values and when Finland is internationally remarked. This is mostly visible by right-wing oriented and conservative media. Other, less conservative newspapers tend to neglect the Finnish nation building.

7.2.4 The history of wars

The Finnish journalists state that the Finns clearly remember the wars with Russia. Yearly, on Independence Day, the war is commemorated. The hero stories of the war focus on the fact that Finland defended itself during the Winter War (1939-1940) against Russia. This history has shaped the Finnish national identity and is commemorated either by experiences of elderly or by written stories (e.g. testimonies). In other words, the older Finnish generation remembers the wars due to their experience with the war and, the younger generation gets to hear these stories from the older generation or by the media. As one journalist explains, the tabloid newspaper regularly publishes special war editions:

“The Winter War times are still covered frequently and get a lot of attention. Every year around Independence Day the position of those who fought in the War, the veterans, is highlighted and widely discussed. I think that it is a good thing. However, the yellow newspapers (i.e. tabloid newspapers), still publish their own Winter War papers from time to time. These Winter War papers are (...) included in the normal newspaper and cover war events” (Interview 9, p.6).

Although it was many years ago, the fact that Finnish journalists remember the Russian oppression creates a critical attitude towards Russia. They try to pursue their independence and consequently are openly critical concerning Russia. This critical attitude is for example visible in reference to the Russian troll operations. The phenomenon of Russian trolls are believed to conduct a cyber-war on Finnish journalists. This subject will further be explained when discussing the Finland–Russia relationship. However, according to one of the journalist, Finnish journalists have to learn to unmask these trolls and discover the people behind it as well as to understand the logic behind their statements:

“We are aware that Russia, and the ones supporting Putin, through trolling try to shape the debate and transmit their vision of the world to the Finnish society. (...)

According to others, as a journalist you (...) have to learn how to uncover these people: Who are they? Why are they saying this? (...) Journalists have to fight them, (...) they have to (...) make people aware that it is Russian propaganda (...). (...) They have to think critically” (Interview 13, p.4).

Concluding, as stated by the interviewed journalists, the history of Finland has shaped their national identity. Finnish journalists appear to write from a liberal, elite perspective. In their reporting they seek to help building a nation by focussing on (inter)national recognition and successes. By doing this they try to raise a national identity in order to defeat the Finnish underdog identity. Journalists believe they need to represent the voice of the people and in turn empower them. In this way, they attempt to protect the powerless people in society against the powerful individuals or companies. It is argued that the tendency of nation building and supporting the underdog can be traced back to the history of Finland. The Finnish history of wars and battle is reflected and remembered in the journalistic content today. It appears that journalists still report on war stories from time to time, especially during Independence Day. Journalists tend to cover the hero stories and stories concerning the battle against Russia. Moreover, this history has shaped the critical attitudes Finnish journalists have towards Russia. At present this attitude is reflected in how journalists respond to the Russian troll operations.

7.3 Factors influencing the work of journalists

The work of Finnish journalists is determined by their personality and beliefs as well as by certain external factors. It is relevant to discuss the possible (external) factors that influence their work while these factors might influence how Finnish journalists position themselves in their reporting on Russia. The (external) factors that might have an influence on the work of journalists are the following: (international) media; supervisors or older colleagues; business factors (i.e. time, money, and clicks); the public; politicians and officials; and the process of agenda-setting.

7.3.1 Reliance on (international) media

Finnish journalists mostly use national or international media or on news agencies when they report international news. In the past, Finnish media had a larger network of correspondents and thus were able to provide their own international news sources. However, due to budget

cuts, Finnish media companies were forced to cut expenses and in turn fire employees. This caused them to rely more heavily on (inter)national news agencies (e.g. Reuters) and other media. Moreover, Finland is a small country and thus does not own big media outlets with correspondents reporting worldwide. The journalists that work for foreign news desks explain that they follow the international wires and big international news agencies on a daily basis. They start their day by reading various international newspapers (e.g. New York Times). The fact that international media are an essential source is illustrated by one of the journalists:

“I believe that (...) international media are essential as a source. When you are working in the media business long enough, you can become more certain on what sources to trust. For example, BBC and Reuters they are pretty trustworthy. Contrastingly, if you, for example, consider Russian media it is essential to scrutinize what you are reading and where the source is originating from. Russia acknowledges different values, a strong nation is for example more important for Russians than a democracy or the truth” (Interview 2, p.2).

As one journalist argues, Finnish journalists are very much depending on other media and the subject these media report on. When journalists report on a subject that other media already reported on, they seek to find a new angle. For the reason that Finland is small and thus acknowledges a high competition, as a journalist, you need to keep up with other media and write about the same topics. As one journalist explains:

If a newspaper gets a scoop and they report on it, other journalists have to join the race and find something related to that subject. As readers are interested in that particular subject, other journalists have to concentrate on that subject as well. They have to try to find a different angle to the subject or new sources to interview (...). At present, if a media outlet has a scoop, they can publish it right away. In the past, journalists had to wait for the next paper to publish a scoop and then the day after the paper was published, others were quoting this newspaper. However, at present, if some news media publish a scoop, than other journalists need to get involved right away. In that way journalists are pretty affected by other media (Interview 7, p.3).

It thus seems that due to a lack of correspondents, Finnish journalists rely heavily on international media as a source for foreign news. Furthermore, Finnish journalists keep track

on what other national media are writing about. As competition between media outlets within Finland is severe, journalists have to assure that they write about the same topics others report on, however, offering a new angle.

7.3.2 Supervisors or older colleagues

Many journalists claim that the most important factor that influence their work are their employers. The supervisor exerts influence by deciding what and what not to publish. This restricts journalists from making important decisions while their supervisors have the ultimate responsibility and decides what becomes a news topic. Furthermore, since some colleagues have been in the business for a longer time and thus have more experience, they influence other colleagues by advising the others. In general, it is argued that colleagues affect each other by discussing their work within their particular news office. The fact that supervisors and (older) colleagues influence the work of journalists is described by one of the younger journalists:

“The most important influence is of course my supervisors. He or she decides what stories are being published or not. Of course I can come up with ideas on what I would like to report on. In general the supervisor approves these suggestions. (...) In addition, especially the older colleagues, who have been working as a journalists for a longer time than I do, can have an influence on my work. I can always ask them for their advice and I do that quite often” (Interview 1, p.3).

Another factor from within the media that influences the work of journalists is the business factor. Due to budget cuts within media outlets, journalists experience salary cuts. However, at the same time the workload has increased. So journalists are limited both in money as in time. Furthermore, in many media outlets it is expected that journalists generate “clicks” (i.e. readers clicking on their article), in other words, to generate readers. For this reason it occurs that journalists need to write a story that might not be that relevant or important but just to generate clicks. Journalists are worried that these trends have a negative influence on the quality of journalism. One journalist illustrates:

“I think the profession of journalism has changed a lot over the recent years. When I just started we had way more staff than we have today. However, the number of articles we write nowadays is way more than it used to be. At the same time we have

less reporters (...). I believe that what probably most affects the work of journalists (i.e. the external factors) is that the media business is reducing costs while at the same time (...) the workload for journalists increased and journalists have less money to travel” (Interview 5, p.3).

To summarize, an important factor that influences the writing of journalists is the fact that supervisors have the ultimate responsibility for the media organization. The journalist therefore does not decide whether a certain story enters the news; this implies that they depend upon the decision of their supervisor. Furthermore, the younger journalists believe that the advice of more experienced journalists influence their work. Another factor that possibly exerts influence is the business factor. Journalists argue that due to budget cuts, journalists are limited in time and money and they sometimes feel forced to focus on generating clicks over the relevance of the news. Consequently, this influences the quality of the content journalists produce.

7.3.4 The public opinion

Through comments on social media and by sending feedback via e-mails, readers are able to exert influence on the work of journalists and shape the discourse. One journalist explains that emails of readers and feedback of ordinary people function as a source for new ideas or subjects to write about. Journalists use social media, like Facebook feeds to see what subjects people are interested in (i.e. what people talk about). This way social media serve as platforms where journalists can find information or sources outside the media houses and official sources. As one journalist explains, social media are an easy way to discover what subjects people are interested in:

“Social media is easy because journalists can see what the public is talking about: the public conversation. That is why journalists quite often follow social media and subsequently write stories about what people have been discussing online” (Interview 7, p.4).

According to the journalists in the interviews, it is essential to be aware of how the audience thinks about contemporary important issues. They believe that journalists have to monitor the interests of the public constantly and report according to these interests. In the process of writing, journalists should consider how the audience might react to these issues and what

their possible opinions might be. As one of the journalists explains that as a journalists you have to listen to your audience:

“I think that journalists reflect what their audience want. It is important to know your audience and to know what they think, and what they want. If we do not provide people content they want to read, we do not have an audience. So we have to write about the things people are interested in” (Interview 3, p.4).

When certain figures in social media gain popularity, they have the ability to create and shape the dominant discourse. Social media, like Facebook, is an important channel through which the public influences the work of journalists. In the process of deciding what themes or topics journalist want to discuss, journalists have to consider the interest of the audience. However, one journalist argues that journalists have to keep in mind that not everybody uses social media and that just certain topics or issues are being discussed on social media. In other words, it can cause a biased view:

“I think that over the last years social media has played an important role. However, it is easy to forget that not everybody is (active) on social media and that only certain things actually become popular on social media. I believe that is something we should be aware of. Social media influences journalists to a large extent. If a story is popular on social media, I believe it becomes popular in the media too” (Interview 15, p.5).

Important to note is that not everything social media publishes is newsworthy. One journalist explains that it is essential to consider whether the source is safe, as social media sources are not protected like a political or official source. In the light of privacy, it is the role of the journalist to protect their references. According to the journalist, it is essential not to endanger sources by publishing hazardous information. Furthermore, journalists filter social media sources and their content while they want to have control over what gets published and what not (i.e. retaining the power to direct). Journalists need to verify the information they find online and on social media. In addition, they do not want to create a platform for extreme opinions while racism may emerge. This is explained by one of the journalists:

"Journalists reflect on the public opinion. But when it concerns, for example, the refugees, especially last Autumn, people were considerably negative about the

refugees on social media. In that case, the media reflects only the more moderate or tolerant opinions. (...) The respectable media do not give room for these extreme opinions. I think the reason is that Finnish journalists believe that they cannot reflect the extreme opinions. It is our responsibility to be tolerant and moderate" (Interview 12, p.5).

When covering public opinion, journalists argue that it is important to provide different viewpoints. Furthermore, public opinion can be integrated as a background to give a context to what is happening. By doing this, journalists seek to give their audience a wider understanding of news stories. As one journalist argues, as a journalist you need to help readers to clarify the news and therefore be a highly experienced guide:

"Journalists want the audience to understand the whole conversation and the different viewpoints that are included. (...) By providing these different viewpoints, journalists can (...) widen the understanding of their audience. I am not sure whether I would call it gatewatching, it is a gatewatchers role but I believe that journalists should be a [highly experienced guide] that helps people to make up their minds" (Interview 10, p.2).

According to the interviewed journalists, there are two criteria that are essential in selecting issues or events to write about. Most essential is that a topic needs to be relevant for all Finns so that every Finns can relate to the topic. Furthermore, it needs to concern an issue or event that occurs geographically close to Finland. Journalists believe that politics is an essential topic that concerns all Finns. For this reason journalists primarily cover politics:

"In our newsroom, we mostly cover news about politics because politics is a topic that concern all Finns (...). For me personally, it is important to report on topics that are interesting to the Finnish society as a whole, topics every Finn can relate to. I cannot report on events that are solely focused on Helsinki " (Interview 14, p.3).

It thus appears that the demand of the audience can exert influence on the work of journalists as well. By sending feedback and posting comments on social media, readers are able to shape the discourse. Journalists believe they have to take this feedback and comments in consideration while this helps in providing readers information that meets their interest. In

covering what the audience is interested in, journalists have to be aware that only a selection of people is active on social media. According to the interviewed journalists this could generate a biased view as only certain issues or topics become popular on social media. Furthermore, not every topic that is being discussed on social media will eventually be discussed as news. In referring to social media sources, journalists believe it is necessary to consider whether their source is safe. They do not want to put their source in any danger by publishing hazardous information. Besides, as journalists want to retain power to decide on what information or opinions get published, journalists filter the social media content. The decision to write about a particular topic is based on two essential criteria: the issue or event needs to occur geographically close to Finland and the topic has to be relevant for all Finns. For this reason Finnish journalists primarily cover politics.

7.3.5 Politicians and officials

In Finland journalists believe politicians and officials are a trustworthy source. According to the interviewed journalists, the reason for that is the fact that worldwide, Finland is the least corrupt country. Furthermore, it is argued that journalists depend on the information that comes from the government; the ones with power in society. However, one journalist explains that these powerful people became more discreet in sharing information and therefore they rarely leak relevant information:

“(...) At present, officials and politicians have become quite careful with what they say. (...)They cannot make any mistake as the financial authorities are constantly monitoring them (...). I believe the government exerts influence as well. In general, they have an uniform way of commenting on things so you know what to expect from them. Nowadays you seldom get any scoops from the high officials. (...) They will not leak any relevant information. You need to have very good connections to get more inside information”(Interview 16, p.3).

In short, Finnish journalists are depend on the information that the powerful sources provide. However, at present, it is more difficult for journalists to obtain information from these sources as they have become more cautious in leaking information.

7.3.6 Agenda-setting process

Lastly, a process that is important in deciding what issues, topics or events are newsworthy is the process of agenda-setting. The agenda-setting process refers to the selection of news and mostly circulates between aforementioned actors: journalists, politicians and the public. The majority of the interviewed journalists believe that the agenda-setting process is balanced between these actors.. Journalists are believed to influence the agenda by deciding what topics to write about or and what topics to ignore. As one journalist argues: “*journalists still enjoy a sort of gatekeeper role*” (Interview 11, p.2). Politicians are believed to influence the agenda by means of press releases. Since journalists are limited in time and as they trust the government, journalists usually accept the information from these press releases while they trust the government. Readers have influence on the agenda because they create the demand side and this implies that when journalists do not take into account the interests of their readers, they lose customers. In addition, journalists have to react on the online comments readers provide. The fact that journalists believe the agenda-setting process is not dominated by one party, is illustrated by the following quotation:

“The big players, such as politicians and people from the business world, try to set the agenda. They try to get their message covered by journalists. Of course, journalists still have a gatekeeping role but because of social media, because of the internet, many (powerful) people can address their audience directly without using the media. So it has become more complex” (Interview 11, p.2-3).

To conclude, it appears that there are five factors that potentially influence the work of journalists in Finland. The first factor concerns the reliance on international media and the monitoring of national media in order to compete with their colleagues. The second factor concerns the pressure that the newspaper company exerts on the journalists. The supervisors exert influence while he or she has the ultimate responsibility and therefore decides whether a story gets published. Furthermore, younger journalists argue that they have to take into consideration the advice of more experienced colleagues. This influences their work as well. In addition, journalists are confronted with a lack of time and money and they are expected to generate clicks. These factors influence the quality of the content journalists produce. A third factor regards an external factor: the public. The public is able to exert influence through social media and e-mails. Journalists believe they have to take the input and critique of the public (i.e. the public opinion) in consideration in order to serve the interest of their readers..

Simultaneously, journalists should filter the public opinion while they do not want to become a platform that represents extreme opinions. The journalists aim to give their public a wider understanding on issue and events and thus integrate a variety of opinions. In selecting a topic to report on, Finnish journalists need to consider whether the topic relates to all Finns and whether the issue or event happens geographically close to Finland. For this reason, the primary topic Finnish journalists report on is politics. A fourth factor concerns the highly trusted politicians and officials. Journalists are depended upon these politicians and officials as a source for their information. However, it has become more difficult for journalists to obtain information from these sources as, nowadays, these sources appear to be more cautious in leaking information. The last and fifth factor is the process of agenda-setting. This process is of major importance for the news selection. The interviewed journalists argue that it is no longer one party that dominates the agenda setting process in Finland. The agenda-setting process is balanced between journalists, politicians and the audience.

7.4 The Finland-Russia relationship

The aim of this section is to elaborate on how Finnish journalists, by framing the reality, are able to influence the existing image Finns have of Russia. The existing views of Russia will be discussed from three different perspectives. The first perspective focuses on the relationship between Finland and Russia. The relationship will be explained by elaborating on the following underlying historical term: Finnlandisierung. The second perspective focuses on the narratives and labels journalists use when discussing Russia. Both the negative labelling and the positive labelling concerning Russia will be discussed. In addition, the apparent generation gap in combination with the historical perspective on the relationship with Russia will be explained. The third perspective regards the Finnish expertise on Russia and to what extent Finnish journalists experience that they can write freely about Russia.

7.4.1 Finnlandisierung

With regard to the relationship between Finland and Russia, there is an important term that Finish journalists often refer to: Finnlandisierung. In this section the interpretation of Finnlandisierung will be discussed from a historical and contemporary perspective.

Reasoning from the historical times of war, Finland has always tried to maintain a good relationship with its eastern neighbor, Russia. Finland tries to maintain both good relations with Russia as with the West. As a result, Finland in general seems to have a better

relationship with Russia than many other countries in the European Union (EU). Finland is constantly aware of the presence of Russia and the (political) decisions Russia makes. During and after the wartime, the foreign policy strategy of Finland focused on remaining good relations with the East (Russia) and the West (EU). This strategy is referred to as “Finnlandisierung”. From a historical perspective, Finnlandisierung is often linked to the Finnish president Kekkonen (1952-1982) who was in office during (most of) the Soviet Union period. During this period, Kekkonen asked the Finnish media not to write critically about Russia. The Finnish media were loyal to the political leader and polite towards the Soviet Union. This resulted in the fact that the media did not rock the boat. The interviewed journalists believe that Finnlandisierung is mostly a historical term that it is not only related to the media but also, and maybe even more important, to the government. This is reflected in the statement by one of the journalists:

“Well, in general it is a historic term. It is related to the time that (...) the Soviet Union was ruling. It dates back to the time when Finnish media really could not write any negative content on the Soviet Union. During that time the Finnish government was "Suomettunut" (conjugation of Finnlandisierung in Finnish). The government carefully considered every decision (...). They considered what the Soviet Union might think about their decision” (Interview 1, p.11).

Finnlandisierung is interpreted as a negative term and people are ashamed of the time when Finnlandisierung was applied. According to the Finnish journalists, the Finns exaggerated their pleasing behaviour towards the Soviet Union. They accuse Finland for giving up their autonomy as it relinquished its independence and applied self-censorship. They further argue that Finland fault its eyes for the bad things Russia did and prevented itself from doing things that might anger Russia. According to the Finnish journalists it is humiliating and cowardly to give a certain amount of power to another country (Russia). As one journalist highlights the concept of Finnlandisierung is interpreted as something negative:

“Finnlandisierung is definitely a negative term because (...) it refers to the fact that Finns were going too far [in their acting towards Russia]. (...)You do not want to [provoke] a war with Russia in any circumstance but you can be a polite, good neighbor and aspire good relationships with Russia while remaining your independence as a country (...). But (...) if we believe that we cannot say or do

something because of Russia, it will limit our freedom: The freedom to express ourselves. That is something that is really dangerous” (Interview 11, p.8).

Nowadays, according to the Finnish journalists, Finnlandisierung is often used as an accusation and to mock Finland. However, the majority of the journalists still believe the term is very relevant and should be referred to once in a while. A subject that is often linked to Finnlandisierung is the discussion of joining the NATO. The reason for this is that the idea of Finland to join the NATO shapes a very complex debate; Finland again has the fear to anger Russia. As a consequence, the NATO discussion is going back and forth. This is illustrated in the statement of one of the journalists:

“Finnlandisierung is not often used anymore, but of course from time to time there are some phrases of it. (...) Sometimes with particular issues or topics Finland makes sure that it takes in consideration how Russia would react. (...) Sometimes it even happens that (...) Finland decides not to do something because Russia might react badly. For example, if we discuss whether we should join NATO, the Northern Atlantic Treaty, (...) then Finnlandisierung is really, really strong” (Interview 1, p.12).

The strategy of Finnlandisierung is not solely seen as a negative strategy while it functions as a political weapon. According to the interviewed journalists, the strategy can be interpreted as a necessity; a coping method and wise politics in order to survive as a neighbor of the big, bad Russia (and former Soviet Union). As for today, often Finnlandisierung is believed to be a positive strategy while due to that strategy Finland manages to live peacefully next to the powerful eastern neighbor. From an economical perspective, Finnlandisierung can be interpreted as something positive as well. One of the journalists highlights:

“You can also interpret it as a positive thing in that we still manage to live peacefully next to Russia. (...) As I mentioned, trade was very important (...) for all the big companies in Finland. We had a good relationship with the Soviet Union because of that Finland could sell its products and it could have a huge trade with Russia (...)” (Interview 15, p.11).

The minority of the interviewed journalists believe that the term is not relevant today. One

journalist argues that he or she would get angry if Finland would be accused of Finnlandisierung today. The journalists believe that Finnlandisierung is a term from the past as Finland made a clear choice by joining the EU. This is illustrated by the statement of one of the journalists:

“I do not see (...) the term being used today. We are part of the EU now; we stick to the rules of the EU. So we are also boycotting Russian products and politicians. However, at the same time we try to maintain a good relationship with Russia. In general, I believe this strategy is wise politics. To older generation might complain that we are boycotting Russia too much, (...) but we are not diminishing the boycotts. If we would do that we would be Finlandized” (Interview 13, p.7).

Summarizing the subject of Finnlandisierung Finland has attempted to maintain a good relationship with both their eastern neighbor as well as with the West. Finland in general has a better relationship with Russia than many other countries in the EU. The reason seems to be that Finland has always been aware of Russia. Finland takes into account the political decisions the country makes. As a consequence, Finland managed to live peacefully next to its neighbor. Although some journalists argue that Finland has chosen a side by joining the EU, the majority believes Finnlandisierung is still relevant today. They interpret the concept in a way that Finland wants to maintain their good relationship with Russia by being constantly aware of the country. The Crimea crisis has reinforced the use of the term, especially now with the intensified discussion about joining the NATO. Although journalists argue that Finnlandisierung is a strategy that was (and sometimes still is) necessary in order to survive, they believe it is used as an accusation. This implies that the term is used to highlight Finland's inferiority. The journalists state that Finnlandisierung as a strategy is something shameful because it refers back to a time in history when Finland went too far in pleasing the Soviet Union.

7.5 Finnish image-building on Russia

Four perspectives will be discussed in explaining the image building of Russia. Image building refers to the way in which Finnish journalists frame the public image concerning the reality of Russia. The four perspectives are as follows: threatening narrative, negative labelling, the ordinary Russians, and the generation gap and historical perspective.

7.5.1 Threatening narrative

In general, the relationship between Finland and Russia, according to the Finnish journalists, is based on fear. Russia is defined from a threat perspective. In addition, the interviewed journalists argue that mostly tabloid newspapers write from this perspective and that these newspapers use certain terms in their headlines that trigger feelings of fear and threat. In general, journalists tend to highlight that Finns are suspicious of the acts of Russia; the Finns are constantly afraid something will happen. As one journalist explains, the relationship with Russia is like playing hide and seek: Finland is aware Russia is close but it never knows when Russia acts accordingly. The existing dominant discourse among the Finns is that Finland cannot rely on Russia as their words are contradictory with their behaviour. This suspiciousness towards Russia is reflected in the quote of one of the journalists:

“(...) At present the dominating image is that you cannot rely on Russia. (...) Nobody knows what is going on in Putin’s mind; nobody knows what he will do next. (...) It is quite different now than it was before the crisis in Ukraine. It changed a lot, in a negative way” (Interview 15, p.10).

As the abovementioned quote already describes, the threatening narrative has been reinforced by the crisis in Ukraine (Crimea). The occupation of Crimea by Russia shocked the Finns. Just before Russia occupied Crimea, the Finns were convinced that Russia was changing in a positive way; it seemed to become slightly more democratic. However, with the occupation of Ukraine this opinion changed drastically and Russia is considered to be a threat again. At present, Russia is presented as a military threat. Finns are worried about what Russia’s next step will be and they are afraid that Russia will start a war and confiscate Finnish ground just like it did in Ukraine. Two journalists even believe that with the crisis in Ukraine, the Cold War revives (i.e. Cold War II). The threat narrative in relation to the crisis in Ukraine is illustrated by a statement of one of the journalists:

“(...) We are disappointed because it seemed like Russia was changing in the right direction (...). That Russia was opening up. It was almost becoming a free market and economically everything was good. But then there was this change some years ago that culminated in the emancipation of the Crimea. (...) People are worried about what will happen with Finland if Russia would invade. And I think right now the

threatening narrative is really strong (...)" (Interview 10, p.8).

It thus appears that the threatening narrative has been reinforced over the last couple of years due to the crisis in Ukraine. The unforeseen occupation of Crimea by the Russians shocked the Finns and this in turn led to more awareness among the Finns. They became more worried about the ability of Russia to confiscate ground or start a war without warning. This threatening narrative is reflected in the journalistic content, especially in the content of tabloid newspapers covers.

7.5.2 Negative labelling

Aside from the threatening narrative, Russia is defined with the use of negative labels. For example, the news about Russia is primarily negative. In general, Finnish journalists are more negative towards Russia than towards other countries, they particularly cover the anti-Russia perspective. By doing this, they conserve the negative image of Russia. The following negative labels are often used in relation to Russia: big; unpredictable; suspicious; the bear, bad; untrustworthy and violent. Some of these labels are referred to by one of the journalists:

"Russia is and has always been a very difficult topic for Finland. Russia is an enemy because Finland had to fight various wars against the country. It has always formed a threat: The big bear Finland needs to hunt down" (Interview 17, p.5).

Furthermore, according to the interviewed journalists, Russia is believed to be a dictatorship, a corrupted and authoritarian state and a country that does not allow freedom of speech nor equality ruled by a dictator and emperor: Putin. The Russians are believed to be passive underdogs who are oppressed and do not have any opportunities. The quote by one of the journalists illustrates this statement:

"Russia is not a democracy. (...) In Russia they do not strive for (...) equality for all people so there are many poor people (...). (...) Russia does not allow freedom of speech and journalists are treated badly (...). Furthermore, Russia is related to corruption, violence, (...) and lack of freedom in general" (Interview 7, p.5).

It thus appears that Finnish journalists keep the existing image of Russia alive by negatively labelling Russia. Finnish journalists seem to write more negative about their eastern neighbor

than about other countries. They emphasize, among others, the fact that Putin is an authoritarian, corrupted dictator and that Russia is unpredictable, big and suspicious.

7.5.3 The ordinary Russians

The threatening narrative and the negative labelling is in general directed towards the Russian government and the (political) officials. The interviewed journalists emphasize that it is important to make a distinction between the ordinary Russians and the Russian government. They argue that the Russian government is “bad” while the ordinary Russians are “good”. For this reason, it is important to report on the daily lives of the ordinary Russians. The Finns love to read about the ordinary Russian people because they are aware that Russia is not only defined by its dictator; Putin. Since the crisis in Ukraine displaying the ordinary lives of Russians became more relevant. The biggest newspaper of Finland, *Helsingin Sanomat* (HS), covers a daily reportage in which a Finnish correspondent is traveling from St Petersburg to Vladivostok. He stops in small villages and reports on what he sees and talks with “ordinary” people:

“Our Moscow correspondent (...) bought a Russian car, called “Lada”. He is traveling from St. Petersburg to Vladivostok, that is 10.000 km. He stops in small villages to report on (...) what he sees and (...) the conversations he has with the locals. (...) Over the last two years (...) the content on Russia focused too much on the conflict (...), however, the conflict is not the only truth concerning Russia (...). It is important (...) to report on the ordinary life of Russians as well. We want people to read about different things concerning Russia” (Interview 4, p.6-7).

To summarize, the Finns as well as the journalists themselves love to know more about the ordinary Russian way of living. The reason for this is that Finns believe that Russia is defined not only by Putin and his government. Moreover, in general, the threatening, negative perspective of Finnish journalists is directed towards the government. For this reason, *Helsingin Sanomat* started a daily reportage about the daily Russian life. They want to show “another reality” concerning Russia.

7.5.4 Generation gap & historical perspective

The way the Finns perceive Russia is not only determined by journalistic content. Differences between generations as well have enormous influence on the perception of Russia. The

attitudes towards Russia differ between generations. The journalists explain that the older Finnish generation, who experienced the war times (e.g. the Cold War), is more hateful and critical towards Russia compared to the younger generation, who grew up with the idea that a war between Finland and Russia was not possible anymore. However, it is argued that the younger generation is prejudiced in their attitude towards Russia due to stories from the older generation. This generation gap is illustrated by one of the journalists:

“My family is from the eastern part of Finland, from northern Karelia. Russia basically took one part of northern Finland so the people who were living in that part of Finland moved to Helsinki. My grandparents did that too. (...) It is obvious that the attitudes changed between each generation. My generation does not really think about the war” (Interview 3, p.5).

As mentioned, while Finns remember the war times and the behaviour of the Soviet Union, this consequently shapes their opinions about Russia. One of the journalists explains that this remembrance of the Soviet Union is part of the Finnish national identity. As aforementioned, this remembrance is reinforced by the commemoration of the Independence Day. Every year in honor of the Independence Day the wars war stories are repeatedly being told. As one journalist explains:

“At least once a year, during our national day (the Independence Day), the war with Russia is remembered. I (...) believe that the stories, which are told during this day, reflect the fact that the Finns lost their trust in Russia during that war. In my opinion people believe it can happen again (...), that we lose our trust in Russia. And I think that the idea worries people” (Interview 14, p.6).

Concluding the subject of the image-building process of Russia, Finnish journalists primarily pursue a threatening narrative and use negative labels when covering Russia. The crisis in Ukraine reinforced these narratives and labels. The reason for this is that because of the crisis, Finns become more aware of Russia’s power and more worried about the ability of Russia to confiscate ground or start a war without warning. The journalists maintain the negative, threat image by emphasizing these narratives and labels in their content about Russia. As they frequently report on Putin as an authoritarian, corrupted dictator and the unpredictable and suspicious government, the image Finns have concerning Russia is based

on these negative, threatening images. As both journalists and readers are aware that the dominating negative image about Russia's government overshadows the ordinary Russians, the Finns love to know more about the daily lives of the Russians. By means of reportage about the ordinary Russians, journalists try to show "another reality" of Russia. They attempt to stress that the identity of Russia is not only defined by Putin. The Finns are not only influenced in their opinion of Russia by journalistic content, historic stories as well have major influence on public opinion. The older generation of Finns experienced the war times and thus is these experiences have a large impact on their opinion. At the same time, the younger generation of Finns are frequently confronted with war stories and thus prejudiced in their opinion about Russia. The war stories are remembered yearly during the Independence Day and due to this annual recurrence, the stories became a component of the Finnish national identity.

7.6 Finnish journalists managing Russia

The last section that concerns the Finland-Russia relationship, explains how Finnish journalists manage and deal with Russia. In other words, the section focuses on from what position journalists report on Russia. This will be discussed by means of two aspects. The first aspect focusses on the expertise Finland obtained considering Russia. The second aspect focusses on to what extent journalists experience they have the ability to write freely about Russia.

7.6.1 Russian expertise

The Finnish journalists believe it is essential to work with Russian correspondents or experts while these correspondents and experts can offer background information on events in Russia or statements Russians politicians make. For this reason, the largest national newspapers of Finland have at least two correspondents stationed in Russia. Other media organizations have their own Russian experts who have a great amount of knowledge of the country. However, it is difficult for journalists to monitor Russia and to define the facts while Russia often manipulates news or information. Experts have the capability to explain the underlying meaning of statements Russia makes or the actions it performs. They possess the expertise to think a couple of moves ahead and see the bigger picture because they are better informed about the events. Subsequently, Finnish journalists are able to help their readers to understand Russia and to explore the true meaning of statements. As one of the journalists illustrates:

“I think our (...) Russian experts are very knowledgeable. They are frequently interviewed by various media. (...) In Finland journalists can rely on many different experts. (...) This is (...) essential because if a Russian official states something that sounds worrisome, you always have to make sure to ask (...) an expert to explain you the real meaning of it. Because the words Russian officials use, always have a special meaning” (Interview 6, p.7).

In addition, the Russian experts and correspondents are very valuable due to the language differences. The journalists argue that the Russian language forms a barrier and consequently affects the content on Russia. This creates a situation wherein Finnish journalists rely heavily on correspondents that know the Russian language and culture. One journalist argues that it is a huge shame that Finnish people are not qualified to speak Russian because translating information may influence the content:

“There is always the language barrier because Finnish people do not speak Russian. This is a huge shame because there are so many interesting things (...) happening in Russia. (...) I think that as long as this language barrier exists and we indirectly have to translate information about Russia, it (...) will have an effect on the quality of the content we deliver” (Interview 3, p.6).

In sum, the journalists argue that there are a lot of Finnish correspondents and experts who are highly knowledgeable and therefore valuable in reporting on Russia. As it is difficult for Finnish journalists to monitor Russia and to check if the facts are reliable, they heavily rely on these correspondents and experts in providing a trustworthy reality (i.e. a fact-based image). Moreover, these correspondents can offer background information on events that take place in Russia or provide information to clarify statements made by Putin or the Russian government. In this way, journalists are able to publish valuable information about Russia and assist their readers in understanding news and information concerning Russia. Moreover, journalists depend on correspondents for understanding the Russian language and culture while indirectly translating the information deriving from Russia influences the quality of the content. Correspondents are therefore highly valued.

7.6.2 Freedom in reporting on Russia

When keeping in mind the abovementioned feeling of threat towards Russia, the history of oppression, the occupation of Ukraine and the strategy of Finlandisierung, it is interesting to find out to what extent Finnish journalists feel free in writing about Russia. In general, the interviewed journalists argue that have the ability to report freely on Russia. They feel that none of other persons involved in the reporting process, hinders their writing on Russia. Nor their supervisor nor the government interfere and determine in what they can or cannot write concerning Russia. So one could state that there is no form of (internal) censorship in Finland. Moreover, Finnish journalists feel they can be as critical as they want in their reporting on Russia. As one of the journalists explains, the only limitation is the Russian language:

“I personally feel completely free in my reporting on Russia. However, I think my biggest limitation when writing about Russia is that I do not speak the Russian language, and that limits me in applying (Russian) sources. There is no censorship in any kind. My editor in chief would never come to me and (...) tell me not to write about a particular topic. So, at least in our paper, it is not an issue” (Interview 11, p.9).

Although Finnish journalists claim to feel completely free in their reporting on Russia, they feel they carry an extra load and that there is a certain level of risk when reporting on Russia. Journalists believe the possibility exists that they could become the target of (cyber) attacks by Russian organizations. They refer to these organizations as “Russian trolls”. These trolls send feedback by means of comments or e-mails when they notice a certain issue that triggers irritation. Half of the journalists refer to Jessikka Aro as an example of being a victim of troll attacks. This Finnish journalist conducted a research on the Russian trolls and the troll factories. The interviewed journalists explain that the Russian trolls harassed and blackmailed her and put personal information about her online. The Russian troll operations are illustrated by one of the journalists:

“Well, of course there are these "trolls" in Finland, these "Russian trolls". They try to do something, send hate-mails for example. (...) These Russian trolls are pro-Russian people. I could give you certain names from [people or organizations] that are known for these troll operations. They try to harass and push and blackmail journalists but

they are mostly harmless, loved people. They write negative feedback on your content and about you. They even may write about your family and other personal things” (Interview 1, p.13).

Despite of these harassments, the journalists emphasize that these trolls should and do not stop Finnish journalists in writing critically about Russia, especially since Finland is known to have the freest press in the world. The journalists do not want the Russia government or organizations limit their journalistic freedom. All journalists are aware that there is a risk of being attacked by those trolls when writing openly critical about Russia. However, they emphasize the belief that since everybody is aware of it, until now, it did not result in self-censorship:

“If you write openly negative about Russia, (...) everybody is aware that there is a risk that you will be attacked by those Russian trolls. On the other hand, it has not yet resulted in self-censorship as nowadays the problem is recognized. Journalists and media houses take a clear stand against it. (...) Those Putin-trolls are frequently mentioned so everybody is aware of (...) their actions and nobody is really afraid of them” (Interview 9, p.11).

However, some journalists believe that they can be restricted as a consequence of their reporting. Restricted in this sense means that several Finnish journalists have been refused to get a visa and were unable to enter Russia. As a journalist explains, some newspapers provide the choice to publish stories on Russia anonymously. In this way, journalists are able to prevent themselves from becoming a victim of the cyber-war and from being refused to visit Russia or Ukraine. This is illustrated by one of the journalists that has been a “victim” of these practices:

“I will never be able to (...) report from Ukraine again as they (the Russians) put me on a special list now. They are limiting my capability to work. If I would not have included my name in that story, my name would not be on any kind of list and I could still travel to Ukraine. However, now I am not able to go there (...). However, I would include my name again! Definitely! And if it would concern a column, I would include my picture as well. Those Russian trolls can use my picture and name; I do not care. It does not influence me, it just annoys me” (Interview 8, p.8).

The two most important findings referring to how Finnish journalists manage and deal with Russia, are that Finnish journalists claim that Finnish media is highly competent when it comes to Russia and that they feel completely free in writing about Russia. Several correspondents and experts who work for Finnish media are specialized in the Russian culture, politics and language. Since monitoring and thus fact checking in regard to Russia is very difficult, Finnish journalists rely heavily on these correspondents and experts. These experts can provide journalists inside and background information whereby journalists do no longer depend on indirect translations (from Russian to Finnish) that might have negative influence on their content.

Although the majority of the Finnish journalists claim to feel completely free in their writing about Russia, it appears that to a certain extent they are restricted by Russia in their reporting. First of all, Finnish journalists believe Russian trolls constantly monitor them. These Russian trolls try to influence their writing by conducting a cyber-war. They try to restrict Finnish journalists in writing critically about Russia by harassing, threatening and blackmailing them. Secondly, journalists are aware that whenever they write openly critical about Russia or Ukraine, they might be restricted in entering the Russian country. These restrictions can directly influence their writing and reporting while it would disable them to report from Russia or Ukraine. As a consequence, some journalists choose to publish their writings anonymously to prevent themselves from becoming a victim of Russia. However, despite the troll operations and the restrictions by Russia, Finnish journalists claim that they will never give up their critical writing because they want to remain the freest press in the world.

8. Conclusion & Discussion

In this chapter, the conclusion on the different sub-questions will be discussed in aiming to answer the main research question. Subsequently, the implications of the findings will be explained as well as how the findings fit with existing knowledge on the topic of this research. The discussion will be concluded by identifying potential limitations of the research and by making suggestions for future research.

8.1 Aim of the research

As Finland experienced a long history of “oppression” by Russia, the aim of this research is to examine whether the claim that at present Finland seems to portray Russia in a more critical and negative way, could be verified. In order to examine this, the following main research question was designed: *What is the position of Finnish journalists when it comes to reporting on Russia?* In exploring the main research question, a qualitative interview study was conducted in which the following sub-questions were analysed:

1. *How do Finnish journalists see their profession?*
2. *How do Finnish journalists contribute to the image of the reality?*
3. *Which (external) factors have an influence on the work of Finnish journalists?*
4. *How do Finnish journalists interpret Finnlandisierung?*
5. *How do Finnish journalists contribute to the existing image of Russia?*
6. *To what extent do Finnish journalists feel free in writing about Russia?*

The significance of the research is that journalists seem to be able to influence their public by shaping the image of the reality through the content they produce. Taking into account that Finland experienced a complex history of oppression by Russia, it is important to explore whether the history is reflected in the way journalists “shape” the existing image of Russia. Moreover, as for today, Finland has the freest media environment worldwide, especially in contrast to Russia, which is ranked at the bottom of the Press Freedom Index. This was different during the Soviet Union era when Finland exerted self-censorship. Considering the history of self-censorship, it is interesting to explore to what extent Finnish journalists are able to maintain their high level of freedom when it comes to reporting on Russia.

8.2 Sub-Questions

8.2.1 How do Finnish journalists see their profession?

With regards to how Finnish journalists see their profession with reference to their role in society and the journalistic values, it appears that Finnish journalists come up with the following values: truthfulness; factualness; objectivity; neutrality; reliability; honesty; transparency; and independence. Independence as a value relates to critical, independent journalism, which is fairly new in Finland. Journalists aim for freedom of speech and for being independent of any party. Furthermore, they believe they have two essential tasks to fulfil. First, they see it as their responsibility to help their readers understand the world by

providing information. They do not just want to transfer information, they want to explain it by contextualizing it and offering a background to the issues and events they report on. Finnish journalists aspire to give their public the tools whereby they can form their own opinion. Second, Finnish journalists believe they need to be critical towards their sources and the information they obtain. Some journalists even call themselves watchdogs of the politicians as they feel they need to safeguard the democracy. These findings on the essential values and role perceptions of Finnish journalists are corresponding to the values and role perceptions journalists pursue in Western countries (Beam et al., 2009). One value that might be unique for Finland, due to their history of oppression, is the value of being (critically) independent as a journalist.

8.2.2 How do Finnish journalists contribute to the image of the reality?

Journalists are able to frame the image the Finnish society has about the reality by means of their content. There appear to be five perspectives from which journalists frame the image Finns have about the reality; a liberal, elite perspective; the underdog perspective; the nation-building perspective; the history of wars perspective; and the perspective of being critical towards Russia. The frames seem to be based on the ideology journalists pursue and the national identity of Finland. In general, Finnish journalists appear to write from a liberal, young, highly educated, elite perspective. As a consequence, the socially and economically underrepresented groups in society are not reflected in the content of the journalists. Furthermore, journalists want to discard their country from its underdog identity by helping to build a nation. Accordingly, journalists emphasize the fact that Finland is the best in everything. This attempt to raise a national identity is especially apparent at right-wing and conservative media outlets. The journalists working for these outlets like to concentrate on Finnish values and successes such as when Finland is internationally remarked. Media outlets with another ideology seem to care less about empowering Finnish nation building. It is believed that the tendency to focus on nation building stems from the Finnish history and the struggle for independence. Another perspective stemming from the history is that the wars Finland experienced are still remembered and reflected in the media. Especially on Independence Day journalists tend to cover the hero stories of the wars, the stories concentrating on the battle against Russia. Marked by their history, Finnish journalists are more critical towards Russia. At present this is especially visible in reference to the Russian troll operations.

8.2.3 Which (external) factors have an influence on the work of Finnish journalists?

Considering the (external) factors that influence the news selection and the framing of the reality by Finnish journalists, there appear to be five factors; (international) media; within the media company (i.e. supervisor, colleagues, and business factors); the public; politicians and officials; and the agenda-setting process. When reporting on international news, Finnish journalists mostly use international media or news agencies as a source. The reason is that Finland is a small country and thus does not own big media outlets with correspondents reporting worldwide. Furthermore, as competition between media outlets within Finland is severe, journalists are very much depending on other media and the subject these media report on. Within the media organization journalists seem to be influenced in their work by their supervisors, colleagues and by financial aspects. The supervisor exerts influence as he or she has the ultimate responsibility on what and what not to publish. The younger journalists believe they are influenced in their work by implementing the advice of more experienced journalists. The business factors, the lack of time and money and generating clicks over the relevance of the news, seem to influence the quality of the content journalists deliver. Considering the factors external to journalism, the public can exert influence on the work of journalists by leaving comments on social media or sending feedback. Finnish journalists feel they have to consider the interest of the audience and thereby enable the public to shape the discourse. However, journalists want to retain the power to decide on what information gets published by filtering public opinion. Furthermore, two criteria are essential in selecting issues or events to write about. Most important the topic needs to be relevant for all Finns and it needs to concern an event or issues that occur geographically close to Finland. As a consequence, Finnish journalists primarily cover politics. Another external influence is the government, given that politicians and officials are an important information source. However, at present, these powerful sources became more discreet in sharing information and therefore they rarely lack relevant information. Lastly, an essential factor influencing the news selection is the process of agenda-setting. The findings show that in Finland, at present, there is no longer one party that dominates the agenda; the agenda-setting process is balanced between the journalists, politicians, and the public. Overall, the findings on the (external) factors influencing the work of journalists are duplicating the existing literature (Karppinen et al., 2011).

8.2.4 How do Finnish journalists interpret Finnlandisierung?

A term that is underlying the relationship between Finland and Russia is Finnlandisierung. It is argued that Finland has always tried to maintain both good relations with Russia and the West. It accomplished to enjoy a better relationship with Russia than many other countries in the European Union (EU). Although it is argued that Finland has chosen a side by joining the EU, it is believed that, at present, Finnlandisierung is relevant and should be referred to once in a while. Since the crisis in Ukraine, Finnlandisierung has become more relevant again, especially now with the intensified discussion about joining the NATO. At present Finnish journalists interpret the term as that Finland always takes Russia into consideration when making decisions concerning the country in order to maintain a good relationship. However, journalists feel Finnlandisierung is often used as an accusation, that Finland gets accused of being inferior to Russia as they give up on their independence. A word that is often mentioned is “shamefulness” since Finns feel ashamed of the time in history when Finns went too far in pleasing the Soviet Union.

8.2.5 How do Finnish journalists contribute to the existing image of Russia?

It appears that there are four different perspectives on how journalists “shape” the public image of Russia: the threatening narrative, negative labels, ordinary Russians, and war stories. Over the last couple of years, since the sudden occupation of Crimea by Russia, the Finns have become more worried again about the ability of Russia to confiscate ground or start a war. This is reflected in how Finnish journalists write about Russia. The threatening narrative concerning Russia is reinforced in the content of journalists. In addition to labelling Russia as a threat, Finnish journalists keep the existing image of Russia alive by negatively labelling it. Journalists label Russia as a big, unpredictable, bad, untrustworthy, violent bear. It is believed to be a dictatorship, ruled by an authoritarian dictator that does not allow freedom of speech nor equality. However, it appears that many Finns are interested in stories about the daily lives of Russians. Lastly, journalists seem to keep the image of Russia as “enemy” alive by covering the war stories over and over again, yearly, on Independence Day. Thereby, the war stories became a component of the Finnish national identity.

8.2.6 To what extent do Finnish journalists feel free in writing about Russia?

Finnish journalists claim to feel completely free in writing about Russia. However, some aspects seem to restrict them in their reporting. The first aspect is the Russian cyber-war, the Russian trolls attempt to influence the Finnish freedom of speech. As Finnish journalists

write openly critical about Russia, they believe the Russian trolls try to influence their work by harassing Finnish journalists, by threatening and blackmailing them and spreading lies about them. Beyond doubt, Finnish journalists believe that they are not influenced by this cyber-war. However, it seems that they are restricted in their writing. Several Finnish journalists have been refused to get a visa and were unable to visit Russia. As a consequence, nowadays some newspapers provide the choice to publish (critical) stories on Russia anonymously. Journalists take this option in consideration to prevent themselves from becoming a victim of the Russian cyber-war or of the Russian restrictions. Despite the cyber-war and restrictions, the Finnish journalists are determined never to give up on their freedom of speech when writing about Russia. They try to accomplish this by working with Russian experts and correspondents. Because journalists believe they are specialized in the Russian culture, politics and language and thus can provide them trustworthy information. Besides, these specialists can explain them the underlying meaning of Russian governmental actions and statements.

8.3 Conclusion

To conclude on the main research question: *What is the position of Finnish journalists when it comes to reporting on Russia?* In reporting on Russia, Finnish journalists feel they can be as critical as they want as they feel completely free in their writing. However, it appears that they are restricted in their reporting. Russia tries to influence the freedom of speech of Finnish journalists by having trolls monitoring all Finnish content about Russia. Whenever these trolls do not agree on the content, they try to harass, threaten or blackmail the Finnish journalist by for example spreading lies or by the invasion of their privacy. Although Finnish journalists claim not to be influenced by these troll operations, it seems they are to a certain extent restricted in their writing. Finnish journalists might be restricted to enter Russia by being denied to get a visa. As a consequence, to assure they restrain themselves from becoming a victim of Russian operations, some journalists choose to publish their critical pieces about Russia anonymously. Moreover, there is always an extra "load" when it comes to reporting on Russia and this load has become heavier since the beginning of the Crimea crisis and the reinforcement of the NATO discussion. Due to the Crimea crisis Finns have become more worried, and this has reinforced the threatening narrative. Journalists seem to keep the image on Russia alive by labelling it as a big, unpredictable, bad, untrustworthy, violent bear that is ruled by an authoritarian dictator called Putin. This image is reinforced by

covering the war stories over and over again, yearly, on Independence Day. As Finns are aware that Russia is more than Putin and his government, they love to read stories about the ordinary Russians. Therefore, journalists try to show a different image on the reality of Russia by reporting on the daily lives of Russians.

In summary, the findings of this research show that Finnish journalists do approach Russian sources in a different way than they approach sources from other countries. They approach the Russian sources more carefully. This is reflected in their writing on Russia as some journalists choose to write anonymously. They are aware of the fact that Russia is not like any other country, it takes a risk to write about Russia, as journalists could become victims of the Russian cyber-war (i.e. Russian troll attacks).

8.4 Discussion

The findings show that the five media perspectives on the Finnish national identity as discussed in chapter 4 can be applied to the relationship between Finland and Russia today. The five perspectives concern the following: Russophobia, othering, marginality, Westernization, and Finnlandisierung. Each perspective will be shortly discussed and compared to the findings of this research.

The first perspective, Russophobia, refers to the Finnish hatred towards Russia. The argument of Vihavainen (2004) that "the fear stemming from the apparently asymmetrical setting pitting a small Finland against the all-powerful Soviet Union has been seen as the root cause of Finn's attitude towards Russia" (p. 96) can be verified. Especially in relation to the Crimea Crisis and the intensified NATO discussion, the fear of Russia has been reinforced over the last years. This is reflected in the journalistic content.

The second perspective, othering, concerns the identity building of Finland by focusing on the differences between Finland and other countries. In other words, Finland, the "we" group, is positively defined by preserving the image of Russia as "them" being a threat to Finland. As Brambilla et al. (2016) argue and the findings confirm; the negative, threat image of Russia remains through the content of the Finnish journalists. The journalists refer to the Russian nation as a big, unpredictable, violent bear that is synonymous to conflict. Furthermore, they refer to the Russians as passive underdogs who are oppressed and do not have any opportunities. As a result, journalists put Russia in a problem frame (Brambilla et al., 2016).

The third perspective, marginality, is linked to the idea of nationalism, power, and identity and central to the way the Finns have positioned themselves relative to the West. Meinander (1999, as cited in Browning & Lehti, 2007) argues that after the wars with Russia it became the national mission of Finland to strengthen the heroic historical narratives. It appears that these heroic historical narratives are commemorated, yearly, on Independence Day. In addition, journalists contribute to nation building by emphasizing that Finns are the best in everything. Moreover, they tend to highlight when Finland is internationally remarked.

The fourth perspective, Westernization, was (mostly) apparent in the period just after the Cold War and concerns the emphasizing of the Western origin of Finland (Browning, 2002). Since Finland “proved” to be West by joining the EU in 1995, the term does not seem to be that relevant today. However, the NATO discussion could be interpreted as showing elements of Westernization as it can be argued that Finland wants to emphasize the fact that it is part of the West by joining the organization.

The fifth perspective, *Finnlandisierung*, concerns the process by which a powerful country (Russia) has an influence on the policies of a smaller neighboring country (Finland) while allowing it to retain its independence and its own political system. Moisio (2008) states that, at present, *Finnlandisierung* is believed to be part of the future political choices such as whether Finland should join the NATO. This argument is confirmed by the finding that *Finnlandisierung* has become more relevant again in relation to the crisis in Ukraine and the intensified NATO discussion. It is argued that the crisis has initiated *Finnlandisierung* (again) in relation to the freedom of the press. Finland is aware that joining the NATO will anger Russia and that they might end up in the same situation as Ukraine.

Reflecting upon the relevance, in the introduction it was argued that it is important to explore whether the history is reflected in the way journalists “shape” the public image of Russia. As mentioned, the findings show that the (critical) attitude towards Russia stems from the history of oppression. It is obvious that the history left its marks and has been decisive in the profession of journalism in Finland in general and specific on how Finnish journalists report on Russia. It is not until the Finns recognize Russia aside from their history that the Finnish attitude and thus the public image of Russia will change. At present, by means of a reportage about the daily lives of ordinary Russians, journalists try to show “another reality” of Russia.

Furthermore, it was argued that considering the history of self-censorship, it would be interesting to explore to what extent Finnish journalists are able to maintain their high level

of freedom when it comes to reporting on Russia. The research provides new insights into the relationship between Finland and Russia by showing that although Finnish journalists emphasize the essential journalistic values of being independent and free, the results show that their independence and freedom is restricted by Russia. By taking the measure of publishing anonymously journalists assure their freedom of speech. However, they contradict themselves in the essential value of being transparent.

A remarkable finding is that the assumption that the subject of the current research (Russia) could be interpreted as a sensitive subject, is highlighted by the fact that at the completion of the interview the majority of journalists wanted to be confirmed that their name would not be used in the research and that their privacy would be guaranteed (i.e. that it would not be able to trace back the source by means of the quotes). Remarkably, one of the journalists shared a personal experience in reference to the Russia cyber-war only when the journalist was sure that the conversation would not be recorded. In addition, some journalists, when making statements concerning Russia, requested that these statements would not be used in the research. These findings highlight that Finnish journalists are constantly aware of Russia and feel (to a certain extent) restricted in their freedom of speech when it comes to Russia.

8.5 Limitations & Future Research

A few limitations can be assigned to this research. Although all national newspapers are located in Helsinki, the findings are not generalizable to the whole Finnish society. The reason is that the research sample only includes journalists from Helsinki. Various journalists participating in the interview explained that in Finland the regional or local newspapers can differ strongly in their ideology. For future research it might thus be interesting to interview journalists from different Finnish regions, to examine whether a difference exists between journalists from different parts of Finland in their positioning towards Russia. Moreover, in reference to the research sample, although 16 of the 18 journalists possessed an expertise in “hard news” (i.e. national/foreign news, politics, economics), two journalists appeared to have an expertise in lifestyle news. Since the two lifestyle journalists provided interesting perspectives or had experience in reporting on hard news, it was decided to include them in the research data. However, the data might have been more valuable if all 18 journalists would have had an expertise in hard news. Related to this argument is that the reliability of the research might improve by including a bigger research sample in future research.

Due to time constraints and the language barrier, the research is limited concerning in-depth research on the existing theories on the subject of the research. The majority of research conducted on the relationship between Finland and Russia is written in Finnish.

For future research, it might be interesting to conduct a content analysis related to the findings of this research. This way it could be examined whether the findings could be traced back to the content of journalists.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview guide professor

Introduction

The aim of the research is to gain insight in how Finland positions itself when it comes to their neighbor country: Russia. I will constantly indicate which subjects I would like to discuss. Subsequently you can report freely. As we discussed earlier, I would like to record the conversation. You declared to agree to this. Is this still the case? This interview will be used as a pilot version for an official supplementary study of the University of Rotterdam (Netherlands). In this pilot study your name will not be enclosed, only your profession. When you do not want to answer a question, this question will be illuminated. Do you have any questions before we start the interview?

Initial question 1

As stated, I would like to explore the current state of the relationship between Finland and Russia. I would like to get a clear image of what your opinion is on this relationship. To begin with, could you sketch/define the relationship between Finland and Russia in general?

- *The relationship from a historical perception*
- *The relationship during the Cold War*
- *The relationship after the Cold War (1990-2000)*
- *The current state of the relationship*

Initial question 2

Now I would like to imagine how Finland has developed itself throughout the history, a history in which first Sweden (14th – 18th century) was present, followed by Russia (18th - 19th century).

- *In what way is Finland shaped by these periods when Sweden and Russia were present?*
- *Swedish period*
- *Russia period*
- *In what way did it shape the National Identity?*
- *Or the Nationalism?*
- *In the literature there are different perspectives discussed when it comes to Russia, academic use different words explaining the Russian image: threat, enemy, fear,*

challenge, anxiety, disapproval, frustration, suspicion, doubt, disbelief, dangerous, unpredictable, the bear. Could these perspectives still be applicable/relevant in 2016?

Initial question 3

I would like to zoom in on this period of Finland being inferior to Russia. I would like to get a more specific image on how this period has shaped the way the Finnish citizens and in general Finland as a country positions itself when it comes to Russia.

- *What is in your opinion the prevailing (Finnish) public discourse concerning Russia? What is the Finnish “talk on the street”?*
- *What is in your opinion the prevailing attitude, among Finnish citizens, concerning Russia?*
- *What is in your opinion the prevailing (Finnish) media discourse concerning Russia? In what way do media write about Russia?*

What aspects do academics focus on or which perspective do they take, when they conduct research on the relationship between Finland and Russia?

Initial question 4

Lastly I would like to discuss how in general Finland sees its role as a country. How Finland provides itself, given its history, considering its geographical position (between west and east).

- *From a historical perspective, how did Finland provide itself in their position between the Soviet block and the Western democracy? “Bridge-building role”*
 - *And from a political and ideological perspective (Vision on society → perspectives, ideas, thoughts, feelings concerning politics)*
 - *Or an economic perspective*
 - *Or a nationalism/nationalistic perspective*
- *As for today, how does Finland interpret their position between the Western world and Eastern world?*

How do you see the future (Finland-Russia relationship)? How do you think this relationship will further develop itself?

I think that with this we have a good completion of the interview. Do you have any further comments or remarks? Did I maybe forget to ask something? Or would you like to state something?

Thank you for your friendly cooperation.

Appendix B: Interview guide journalists

Introduction

Demographical information:

Company:

Expertise:

Age:

Years of experience:

The aim of the research is to gain insight in the culture of Finnish journalists, how journalists position themselves. I will constantly indicate which subjects I would like to discuss. Subsequently you can report freely. As we discussed earlier, I would like to record the conversation. You declared to agree to this. Is this still the case? This interview will be used for a master thesis research of the University of Rotterdam (the Netherlands). In this study your name will not be enclosed, only your profession and the company you work for. Do you agree on that? When you do not want to answer a question, this question will be illuminated. Do you have any questions before we start the interview?

Initial question 1

As stated, I would like to explore the journalistic profession in Finland. In this section I would like to know more about the way you see the journalistic profession in general in Finland. First, how would you define your profession as a Finnish journalist? How would you describe your role as journalist? (neutral/factual, critical, skeptical, setting the political agenda)

- *What do you believe are the core values and beliefs of Finnish journalists?*
- *Media are believed to be able to shape values and views and thus the social construction of reality. How do you feel Finnish journalists contribute to the construction of the Finnish reality?*

- *Where do you base your news selection on? What kind of news or events become news?(national, international news)*
- *What kind of (external) factors are possibly exerting influence on your work?*
 - *Do colleagues exert influence on your work? In what way?*
 - *To what extent does the government or media owners interfere in your work?*
- *To what extent do you believe you are able to act as a watchdog? (critical towards all mighty)*
- *Who do you feel set the agenda? Politics or media?(consensus culture “trust culture”)*

Initial question 2

Now that the general role of journalists in Finland has been discussed, I would like to be more specific and zoom in on the ideology and national identity of Finland. In your opinion, which ideologies are carried out by Finnish journalists? What ideas and ideologies do they promote?

- *In what way do journalists shape the National Identity of Finland?*
 - *How do you feel Finnish journalists contribute to cultural sensemaking with reference to (re)construction national identities (reflecting the historical legacies: myths, stereotypes, and stories)?*
- *In what way do Finnish journalists reflect public opinion and ideological debates of the Finnish society?*
- *Could you define the relationship between Finland and its neighboring countries for me from a media perspective?*
- *In what way is Finland positioned in the media when it comes to neighboring countries? How is this translated by journalists in the national identity of Finland?*
- *What minority group, nationality or ethnicity is names the most in Finnish media? Are they referred to in a negative or positive way?*

Initial question 3

In this section I would like to zoom in on the relationship between Finland and Russia. When you think of Russia, what issues and ideas tend to fall under that label?

- *In what way is this relationship in general translated and described by Finnish journalists?*

- *What is in your opinion the prevailing (Finnish) media discourse concerning Russia? How do Finnish journalists represent Russia and Russians in the media?*
- *How do you feel the Finnish journalists contribute to the reality of Russia?*
- *In what way do Finnish journalists construct or shape the Finnish national identity when it comes to Russia? What kind of national identity perspectives do you believe are existing when it comes to Russia?*
- *In the literature there are different perspectives discussed when it comes to Russia, academic use different words explaining the Russian image: threat, enemy, fear, challenge, anxiety, disapproval, frustration, suspicion, doubt, disbelief, dangerous, unpredictable, the bear. Are these perspectives still be relevant in 2016?*
 - *How are these perspective translated in the media by journalists?*
- *To what extent you feel you, as a journalist, need to act as a bridge builder between the Western and the Eastern world? What is your role in this?*
- *A term related to this is “Finnlandisierung”, how do you interpret this term? Do you believe it is a positive or negative term?*
- *Do you believe, that at present, Finnlandisierung is covered by journalists? In what way?*

Initial question 4

Lastly, I would like to ask: *to what extent you feel free in your writing when it comes to content on Russia?*

I think that with this we have a good completion of the interview. Do you have any further comments or remarks? Did I maybe forget to ask something? Or would you like to state something?

Thank you for your friendly cooperation.