

# Risk, Victimization and Coping Strategies of Journalists in Mexico and Brazil

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There is an increasing recognition that journalists are exposed to dangerous or hazardous working conditions in many places around the world (Backholm, Moritz, and Björkqvist 2012; Carlsson and Pöyhtäri 2017; Cepeda Robledo 2020; Feinstein, Audet, and Waknine 2014; Flores Morales 2012; Flores Morales, Reyes Pérez, and Reidl Martínez 2014; Newman, Simpson, and Handschuh 2003; Weidmann, Fehm, and Fydrich 2008; Weidmann and Papsdorf 2010). As a result, they are often at risk for repeated exposure to trauma based on what they experience and report upon (Monteiro and Marques Pinto 2017; Osofsky, Holloway, and Pickett 2005). While work-related traumas or stressors from reporting are becoming well documented, particularly for those who cover powerful stories on mass violence (see for instance: Anderson 2018; Newman et al. 2003), it is also true that journalists who remain within the newsroom can also experience dangerous or stressful events or conditions (Feinstein et al. 2014) including forms of workplace violence (Chen et al. 2020; Ferreir 2019). These events and conditions are suggested to be linked to greater macro-related structural risks, including changes to the political economy of news that increase labor precarity (Örnebring 2018), cultural and identity-based risks from oppressive normative systems, including from aggressive partisans and extremists (Brambila and Hughes 2019; Waisbord 2020), and risks originating from weak or

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changing enforcement of the rule of law that increases journalists' vulnerability to corrupt officials, security forces and criminal groups (Gonzalez 2021; Hughes and Vorobyeva 2019).

While previous research has linked these structural risks to the workplace victimization of journalists, it has not considered how the stress caused by being a victim is linked to individuals' emotions and coping strategies. Where violence against journalists continues to be an endemic issue, Brazil and Mexico remain a relative lacuna in the research on how journalists try to cope with these victimization experiences and overall risk (Olson and Hinojosa 2017). Because of this, we consider how greater, macro-level risk-types are tied to the victimization of Brazilian and Mexican journalists, how these specific scenarios impact their emotions, and their coping strategies and capabilities. Specifically, we ask the following research questions: What sources of risks result in the victimization of journalists? Recalling a specific instance, how did journalists initially feel? What coping strategies emerged as a response to their experiences?<sup>1</sup>

We analyze these processes by anchoring our study in the sociology of risk literature (Roeser et al. 2012) with a general strain theory (GST) framework (Agnew 1992, 2006). The integration of the sociology of risk with GST allows us to connect macro-level structures to the individual. The sociology of risk tells us that risks and how they are identified, understood, and sensed by individuals, are situated in various social contexts. Moreover, individuals with different cultural identities and social positions understand and act upon risks differently (Lidskog and Sundqvist 2013). General Strain Theory (GST) provides a framework for understanding how strains, emotions, and coping are interrelated at a more micro level.

Open and closed survey response data from 21 Mexican and 33 Brazilian journalists are used in this analysis. The participants are situated in two sets of "matched" subnational contexts, meaning a context in Brazil and another in Mexico are broadly similar in terms of potential stressors in the work environment. The two cases within each country were selected that differ in terms of type and level of risk. This allows for cross-national and subnational comparisons of similar and different cases that illuminate processes as widely generalizable or contingent upon national or locally specific structures.

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## JOURNALISM AND RISK

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We define risk as a condition, situation, or event that causes journalists to perceive their well-being, professional identity, or professional practice as vulne-

nable to harm (Hughes et al. 2021). The sociology of risk tells us that how risks are identified and understood beyond psychological predispositions can be influenced by how individuals frame and interpret risks based on their cultural and structural positioning within society (Lidskog and Sundqvist 2013). Previous work has highlighted four common sources of risk recognized by contemporary journalists. These risks can be categorized as risk from the developments in the political economy of the news; threats to the rule of law; culturally motivated violence, which include risk towards journalists based on their identity, sexual orientation, and race, among others; and exposure to more acute, environmental or biological hazards (Brambila and Hughes 2019; Dworzniak-Hoak 2020; Ferreir 2019; Örnebring 2018; Reinardy and Zion 2020).

Changes to the political economy of news have resulted in several types of occupational stressors for journalists. These include growing economic insecurity and income precarity, often attributed to downsizing of media outlets, and the growing dependency on freelance piecework (Bakker 2012; Cohen 2012; Compton and Benedetti 2010; Das 2007; Edstrom and Ladendorf 2012; Gollmitzer 2014; Obermaier 2015; Örnebring 2018; Reinardy and Zion 2020; Ryan 2009). These changes may also manifest themselves as organizationally based stressors, including long hours, disruptive schedules, replacement of creative work with mundane tasks, and problems with coworkers and supervisors (Demers, François et al. 2018; Jones and Jones 2019; Nielsen 2016; Örnebring 2009).

Risks associated with a weak or uneven rule of law are attributed to political, financial, and criminal coercion and manipulation, resulting in environments where attacks on journalists essentially go unpunished (UNESCO 2014). Previous work on non-democratic societies has ordinarily emphasized attacks towards journalists from insurgency groups and even organized crime (Repucci 2019). However, democratic societies also document threats and attacks from governments, political parties, and corporations (Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016). Across Latin America, authors have reported that journalists who report on topics pertaining to corruption, human rights, and crime, often experience severe reprisals, including threats and direct attacks from corrupt officials, police, and criminal groups with threats and attacks at times extending towards journalists' families and places of work (Hughes and Vorobyeva 2019; Moskowitz 2020; UNESCO 2014). Investigative journalism in Latin America may yield financial reprisals from advertising sources, including state governors (Podesta 2009; Ramírez and Guerrero 2014). Previous work has also cited instances of journalists working in dangerous environments and even losing colleagues to violence

(Garcés-Prettel et al. 2019; Hughes et al. 2017; Osofsky et al. 2005). Threats by corrupt officials and criminal actors have made Latin America and, particularly, Brazil and Mexico, one of the deadliest regions in the world for journalists (Reporteres Sim Fronteras 2021).

Acute environmental or biological risks, including pandemics and weather disasters, also cause work-related stress. For instance, a study conducted by Shah and colleagues (2021) analyzed how pandemics impacted the safety risks of Pakistani journalists. In this study, journalists reported that they received threats for covering COVID-19 related stories and felt that they were not adequately trained to cover a health crisis as significant as the pandemic. They also highlighted that this lack of training about how to safely report on the pandemic often resulted in journalists not following adequate safety procedures. Work by Weidman and colleagues (2008) found that 92 percent of 61 journalists that covered the South East Asian tsunami had experienced at least four traumatic situations during their reporting. Other work has focused on acute stressors such as witnessing violence and suffering while on assignment or editing photos, which may produce post-traumatic stress disorders (Backholm et al. 2012; Feinstein et al. 2014; Flores Morales 2012; Newman et al. 2003; Weidmann et al. 2008; Weidmann and Papsdorf 2010).

Culturally motivated forms of risk include risks associated with direct violence including sexual harassment and assault, as well as identity-based harassment and hate speech directed towards female, LGBTQ+ and ethnic minority journalists. Culturally motivated forms of risk include indirect forms of violence as well as the devaluation and denigration of the work of minority and female journalists through reporting norms and news agendas that reflect white supremacy, patriarchy, heterosexism, and devalue feminist epistemologies and communities (Brambila and Hughes 2019). The violence experienced by journalists under culturally based risks can come from multiple actors, including but not limited to politicians, political partisans, and extremist groups outside of journalism, or coworkers and supervisors within news organizations (Brambila and Hughes 2019; Ferreir 2019; Waisbord 2020). Many female journalists report gender-based harassment from colleagues and outside sources, reaching as high as 62 percent in one study of the tech journalism sector, where online abuse is rampant (Adams 2018). An unscientific survey by the International Women's Media Foundation and International News Safety Institute in 2013 found nearly two-thirds of female journalists reported suffering some form of workplace sexual harassment or assault. There is also growing awareness of the threats and retaliations surrounding journalists covering stories about LGBTQ+ people (Iyama 2018).

In sum, free expression and labor advocacy organizations, as well as a large body of empirical research, have documented that multifaceted and pervasive forms of risk have created hostile environments for journalists across the globe. Within these complex environments, journalists learn to navigate their professional identities and responsibilities.

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## VICTIMIZATION EXPERIENCES OF MEXICAN AND BRAZILIAN JOURNALISTS

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Victimization involves targeting or subjecting an individual to cruel or unfair treatment and often involves physical or emotional abuse (American Psychological Association 2020). While victimization is often presumed to be a process occurring at the hands of criminal actors, previous research has documented that victimization comes in various forms and from myriad sources. For instance, research addressing victimization of members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer community (LGBTQ+) has documented that victimization can take the form of verbal, physical, and sexual violence and may include bullying and harassment (Birkett, Espelage, and Koenig 2009; Silverschanz et al. 2008).

### Victimization in Mexico

Journalists in Mexico experience victimization from organized and criminal groups, politicians or other public officials, and many others. Being a victim of targeted violence or working in dangerous conditions has led journalists to self-censor their work by leaving out sensitive information and avoiding topics about government corruption, abuses of power, and relations with criminal organizations (González 2021). *Artículo 19*, a press freedom organization in Mexico City, noted that public officials committed 52 percent of the 507 aggressions Mexico's journalists faced in 2017. Officials, especially at the subnational level, have punished critical journalists by criticizing the accuracy or intentions of their work, filing lawsuits, surveilling journalists and their families, and using threats and intimidation to cause fear (*Artículo 19* 2018). The criminal victimization of Mexican journalists is, of course, well known by now. Criminal groups in some areas of the country pressure journalists to not report some stories or omit specific details within them, demand news organizations to publish certain accounts, and hire or coerce journalists to spy on others (UNESCO 2014). Moreover, while the research on journalist's experience emphasizes the dangers along the northern border of Mexico in states such as Tamaulipas (Cepeda Robledo 2020), journalists are impacted across Mexico (González 2021), including within the states of Veracruz (Del Palacio 2018) and Chiapas (Martínez

Mendoza 2015). Criminal and political victimization of journalists intermingles in local areas where the two forces either work hand-in-hand or because organized crime has become the de-facto governing power.

Another way journalists may feel victimized is when they violate professional standards to satisfy advertisers or bosses who condition ad expenditures to favorable news coverage. For journalists who desire professional autonomy, being vulnerable to advertising pressures may cause internal turmoil, even if it is the price of having freedom in other ways. Journalists often have to adapt discourses of professionalism to accept quid-pro-quo exchanges (Hughes et al. 2017) but at the same time view clientelism as discrediting (Hughes 2006).

Identity-based victimization based on one's gender is also a prevalent issue for Mexican journalists. According to Women Across Frontiers, a nonprofit organization that focuses on journalism from a gendered perspective there were 47 cases of aggression against female journalists in Mexico in 2013. Female journalists experience stigmatizing and misogynistic discourse on social media. While fewer in number, female journalists who have been assassinated are often revictimized by officials who insinuate that their immoral behavior led to their murder (Brambila and Hughes 2019). In recent years, women journalists have created collective organizations such as *Periodistas Unidas Mexicanas* (United Female Journalists of Mexico) to publicly denounce sexual harassment, assault, and pay discrimination cases by fellow journalists and supervisors.<sup>2</sup> Research by Cepeda Robledo (2020) has found that women journalists in Tamaulipas not only experienced wage discrimination across radio, print, digital press, and television media but that 43 percent of all journalists in their sample suffered some form of sexual harassment in the workplace.

While denunciations of violent acts against journalists occur through a network of human rights and policy advocacy groups (Relly and González de Bustamante 2017), empirical research has examined the impact of these assaults. In a nationally representative sample of working journalists in multiple media and news beats (Márquez-Ramírez and Hughes 2017), 40 percent answered that they had been threatened at least once due to work, including 30 having been threatened three or more times. They also reported taking numerous measures to reduce risk, running from being more precise in their reporting (91 percent of the sample) to self-censorship of possibly sensitive material (67 percent), hiding material from untrustworthy coworkers (50 percent), and considering self-exile abroad or in another part of the country (20 percent). A recent study by González (2021) found that Mexican journalists who constantly work under anti-press vio-

lence and dangerous conditions are less willing to engage with specific news stories that might cause harm to them, their families, or colleagues. Experiences of journalists working in Mexico have often resulted in greater forms of psychological distress or mental health problems, which previously was only characterized in war correspondence journalists and not in local journalists that cover conflict stories (Feinstein 2013, Flores Morales et. al 2014 ).

### Victimization in Brazil

Journalists in Brazil also face multiple forms of mistreatment. In the year before our fieldwork in 2018, four radio broadcasters were killed due to their job (National Federation of Journalists 2018). The Committee to Protect Journalists and Reporters Without Borders suggest that corrupt politicians, criminals, or a combination of both were the likely culprits.<sup>3</sup> A general study on freedom of expression conducted by Melo and Gomes (2014) found that murders, threats, and assaults are often aimed at journalists that work in local media outlets, particularly media outlets in smaller cities. Among the statistics of murdered journalists, they also found that victims maintained very close or conflicting relations with politicians and businessmen. They presented evidence that these journalists could not maintain professional relationships with these sources. They also noted that journalists working in small media outlets in the Brazilian Northeast are more susceptible to threats and legal pressures initiated by politicians and local businessmen.

Partisans and protesters also attack journalists in Brazil. In the 2018 electoral year, contentious elections and protests over the imprisonment of former President Lula da Silva put journalists under challenging circumstances. Physical aggression against the press documented by the National Federation of Journalists grew by 36.4 percent compared to 2017. Partisans and protesters were the main aggressors, responsible for 22.2 percent of the cases of violence against journalists (National Federation of Journalists 2018). Verbal aggression, threats, and intimidation expanded as well. Digital attacks as a form of professional risk are also common (Christofoletti and Torres 2018).

As in Mexico, female journalists in Brazil face gender-based harassment and violence from inside and outside their new organizations. In an empirical study titled *Harassment on Digital Platforms, a study of journalists' working relationships in Maranhão* (Bueno, Carvalho, and Amorim 2020), 19 women journalists in the city of Imperatriz, a regional media hub, confirmed they had been victims of bullying, sexual harassment, or both, either online or while reporting or editing. The perpetrators, predominantly men, were usually in leadership or higher positions in the newsroom. Ten



journalists declared they were also harassed by their sources – typically well-known local or regional public figures. WhatsApp was the most common digital platform used in harassment cases (16 respondents). None of the media groups in Imperatriz has established a process to report sexual harassment or bullying (Bueno et al. 2020). Research elsewhere in Brazil by Lelo (2019), documents recurrent bullying situations and violations of professional ethics in newsrooms.

Economic pressures also appear to cause stress for journalists in Brazil. Poor pay outside of the largest news organizations increases journalists' vulnerability to outside influences on their work in conflict with professional norms (Nicoletti 2020, Lelo 2019). The resulting battle between professional norms and doing what is needed to survive financially sometimes harms journalists' well-being (Dantas 2019), leading to a high turnover of journalists in places such as São Paulo. Ultimately this creates obstacles to forming a professional, supportive community of coworkers (Lelo 2019).

Overall, this research demonstrates that journalists in the contexts of Brazil and Mexico experience victimization from a multitude of actors that appear to be linked to the risk groups and structural conditions mentioned previously. Victimization experiences at criminal groups and other actors are particularly prevalent among Brazilian and Mexican journalists. Lethal threats from corrupt officials, security forces, and criminal actors have resulted in Latin America, particularly Brazil and Mexico, being among the deadliest regions in the world for journalists, with both of these countries ranking among the top 10 countries with the highest unsolved journalist murders as a percentage of the population, globally (Committee to Protect Journalists 2015; Reporteres Sim Fronteras 2021). Other victimization experiences in both countries have been tied to the labor precarity of journalists who work without formal contracts or outside of major cities and the harassment of women and indigenous journalists and other forms.

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#### GENERAL STRAIN THEORY, VICTIMIZATION, AND COPING BEHAVIORS

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General Strain Theory (GST) is a framework for understanding how strains, emotions, and coping are interrelated. This theory is well utilized in victimization studies for instance, see: (Santoro and Brody 2014). GST stipulates that individuals experience various forms of strains (i.e., losing a job or being mistreated by others), triggering negative emotional states (Kubrin, Stucky, and Krohn 2009), which in turn prompts people to engage in coping strategies that may be deemed adaptive or maladaptive. Broadly defined,

maladaptive coping includes behaviors that result in ongoing instances or increase the likelihood of future victimization and include risky behaviors such as substance abuse (Bui et al. 2021). Adaptive responses are defined as the ability of an individual to decrease one's risk for victimization and can include behaviors such as sharing their experiences with others and seeking out advice or support considering their experiences (Bui et al. 2021; Kochenderfer-Ladd 2004). Often this research has found that adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies can be simultaneously adopted in response to the negative emotions that emerge from being strained (Santoro and Brody 2014). There is also evidence that how strained individuals respond is conditioned by factors such as coping resources, coping skills, and emotional support for individuals, among other factors (Agnew 2006).

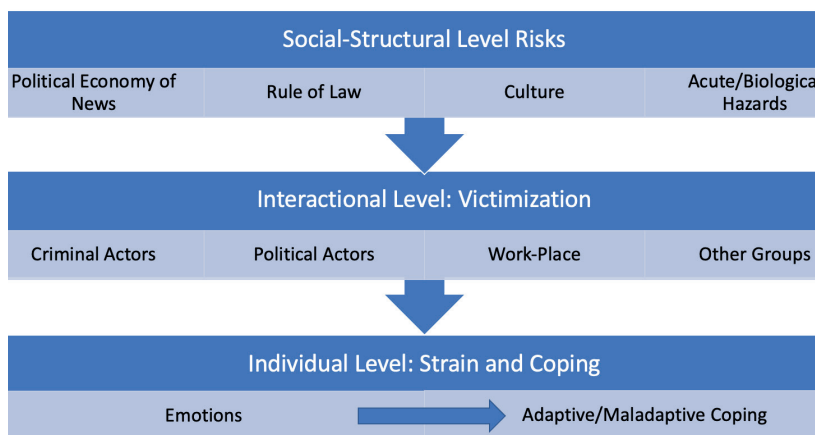
The nature of risk and the broader social environment have been found to shape journalists' coping. In collectivist countries such as Mexico, norms, traditions, and beliefs often influence one's coping strategies and ultimately whether coping is successful (Mesquita, Feldman Barrett, and Smith 2010). Following these general research observations, and considering the collective identities that journalists in challenging environments often form with colleagues on the job, studies on journalists' coping strategies show that coping is often a product of social support groups such as peer networks, advocacy organizations, and coworker groups, as well as families or friends (Gonzalez 2021; González de Bustamante and Rely 2021; Hughes et al. 2021; Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez 2017; Novak and Davidson 2013; Osofsky et al. 2005). Solidarity and the calling forth of professional ideals as support for coping have been observed in individualistic cultures and given journalists' occupational group identities, especially when faced with difficult circumstances. For instance, U.S.-based journalists who covered traumatic domestic events coped by 'remembering their job's higher purposes' or concentrating on their 'work's importance' and talking with colleagues about work experiences (Dworznic-Hoak 2020; Seely 2019). Some studies outside of Mexico and Brazil have found that news managers and organizational support could facilitate coping, predominantly adaptive coping in other, international contexts (Muala 2017) though organizational commitment has often been uneven or inconsistent (Anderson 2018; Greenberg et al. 2009; Simpson and Boggs 1999). However, when lack of social support and the nature of risk makes the possibility of successful coping remote, journalists turn to other forms of coping that reduce their professional autonomy, such as self-censoring or modifying reporting practices in response to threats (Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016; Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez 2017). Unfortunately, few studies explore the link between risk, a victimized journalist's experience of the mani-

festations of these risks, and ultimately journalists' coping strategies to reduce the strain experienced from being victimized.

Moreover, general strain theory has never been utilized to explain strain and coping strategies among journalists as an occupational group. It has rarely been used in international contexts such as Mexico and Brazil. However, while GST centers inquiry on the relationship between victimization stressors at the interactional level, and coping behaviors at the individual level, this helpful approach fails to consider how structural-level processes, including sources of risk, may condition coping.

To bridge this gap and better understand how these coping mechanisms and experiences are related to risk, we must incorporate the sociology of risk framework into our analyses. The sociology of risk allows us to incorporate these structural processes into our theory and ultimately connect structural, interactional, and individual-level processes. Since research in this vein and with journalists is just beginning to explore coping methods, especially in comparative contexts, qualitative data can provide a more nuanced account of how journalists experience strain, the coping strategies they engage, and how both strains and coping attempts are linked to greater social-structural risks. This study advances general strain theory in several ways. First, we provide further evidence stipulating that victimization experiences result in both adaptive and maladaptive coping. Second, we expand the populations and circumstances under which general strain theory has been applied, both in occupation and comparative research design. Integrating this theory with the sociology of risk allows us to answer the following research questions: What sources of risks result in the victimization of journalists? Recalling a specific instance, how did journalists initially feel? What coping strategies emerged as a response to their experiences?

**Figure 1:** *Linking Social-Structural Risks to Victimization and Coping*



## METHODS

### Study Design and Recruitment

The study is located in Mexico and Brazil, countries where severe risks to journalists and the ability of some to continue their work are well documented (National Federation of Journalists 2018; del Palacio Montiel, Gómez Rodríguez, and Salazar Rebolledo 2020; Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez 2017). Though on this note, the risks that journalists experience vary significantly across both Mexico and Brazilian states (Brambila and Hughes 2019; González de Bustamante and Relly 2021; Melo and Gomes 2014). Our comparative design takes advantage of the territorial variation in risk within national media systems that have broad similarities in political regime, territorially uneven presence of organized crime, and longer-term political-economic pressures by leveraging comparison on key contextual threats for journalist safety, occupational autonomy, and public-interest professionalism. The selection of matched cases across the countries -- two comparatively peaceful interior cities and two border areas known for organized crime and violence -- allows us to account for context-specific risks, coping mechanisms, and forms of support, as well as identify risks that are present across all four contexts and therefore possibly more universal in formally democratic countries with the uneven rule of law and human rights protections such as Mexico and Brazil. This type of within-system, across-system matched case design is a methodological innovation suggested by scholars interested in the subnational variability of democratic governance and human and civil rights (Snyder 2001). We move into the field of journalism studies, the sociology of risk.

Both Mexico and Brazil constitutionally enshrine formal protections for press freedom, locate most media outlets in private sector companies, and experience clientelism through advertising and direct payments for news content as a parallel (and sometimes dominant) form of media financing that acts as “soft censorship” of critical news content (see: Repucci 2019). They also have numerous critical journalists and news outlets that negotiate around multiple limitations to produce news that monitors power holders and provides vital information to citizens. The majority of Brazilian journalists (59.2 percent) do not belong to any labor organization, although many working in radio (88.3 percent) and online news

outlets (91.8 percent) do (Moreira 2017). Mexican journalists generally reject traditional labor organizations and, since the 1990s, have been organizing organically outside of formal institutions. This has accelerated since 2016 to enhance safety as journalists have faced even more danger since the national government campaigned against drug trafficking that splintered criminal organizations (González de Bustamante and Rely 2021).

This subnational comparative design across two Latin American countries allows for in-system and beyond system comparisons. Within national media systems, we match contexts with different levels and types of risk - one comparative higher because of organized crime threats and the other with relatively higher politically based pressures. Across the systems, we offer two border contexts where journalists have been targeted in the context of rising presence and violence from organized crime and two middle-level cities near national and cultural capitals known for strong and sometimes unrestrained state governors. The first matched pair of study contexts were the states of Puebla in south-central Mexico and the state of Minas Gerais in Brazil. Both are economically in the top quartile of their countries that lie within two hours' drive of national media capitals (i.e., Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro). According to press freedom organizations, journalists in Puebla were subjected to intense pressures by the state governor and his administration in years immediately before the study (Artículo 19 2018). Political pressure typically involves withholding government advertising and includes verbal targeting, arbitrary detentions, and physical attacks during rallies. Threats from organized crime were less intense in Puebla than in the most dangerous parts of Mexico but had been increasing. Two journalists who covered crime have been killed in Puebla since 2012. Like almost all such cases in Mexico, these murders have not been solved. In Minas Gerais, as across the country, independent news bloggers have become more influential. The state concentrates the highest number of cities, 853 towns, many in rural areas. While media access has increased, so has the uptick in anti-press violence, including the recent discovery of a decapitated journalist in 2015 (Smyth and O'Brien 2012).

The second matched pair are two border states where journalists suffer from intense physical violence at the hands of active criminal organizations that use the area trans-shipment zones for contraband and human smuggling. The Mexico research site was Tamaulipas, which lies on the border with the U.S. state of Texas. Between 2000 and 2018, 14 journalists were murdered, and another six were forcibly disappeared in Tamaulipas, according to the press rights advocacy group *Artículo 19*. Some of these deaths involved spectacular public displays as warnings to other journalists.

Self-censorship and news blockades ordered by criminal groups are so pervasive that Tamaulipas was one of five Mexican states described as a "zone of silence" by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in 2018 (Artículo 19 2018, 20). Acre, located in the Amazonian region on the frontier of Bolivia and Peru, remains one of the three less populated states in the country. The state of Acre presents the second-highest average of murders in the country, 62.2 per 100,000 inhabitants, after the state of Rio Grande do Norte, with an average of 62.8 murders per 100,000 inhabitants (Cerqueira et al. 2019).

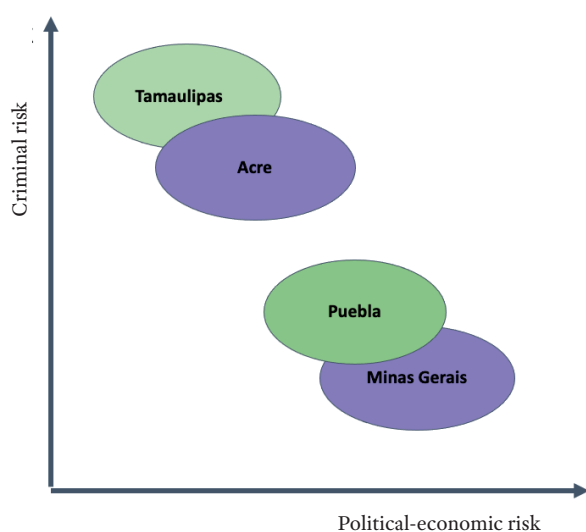
We sought journalists covering higher-risk news beats as freelancers or staff for established news organizations within each area. In both contexts, journalists reported on various topics often perceived to be of higher risk for physical or psychological threats or harassment due to the type of stories they covered. These topics include issues surrounding government, human rights, immigration, drug trafficking, organized crime, and public security issues such as crime and criminal justice. The journalists covered more than one news beat in both countries, including online or digital news, radio, and print. The participants were invited to fill out an open and close-ended, anonymous online questionnaire. The questionnaire was initially written in Spanish by native speakers and then translated into Portuguese by native speakers. Both were back translated into English and cross-checked as a step of verification, resulting in similar translations. We recruited respondents via a snowball sampling strategy initiated through contacts of the authors, other researchers who participated in the Mexico study, and graduate students in the case of Brazil and were distributed using Qualtrics software.

We chose an anonymous online questionnaire to protect participants and because studies suggest that written questionnaires are less likely to cause discomfort to participants who have experienced trauma (Jaffe et al. 2015). Within our survey, respondents were asked to recall a specific work situation in which they believed their physical or emotional integrity was at risk. Next, we asked participants how they felt during the stressful experience and subsequent adverse reaction(s). Finally, we asked about any forms of emotional support they had and how this helped with their coping process.

Responses were organized by location and then by research question. The first and fourth authors independently coded responses within each category into emergent themes using the grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967). There are many benefits to using a grounded theory approach when analyzing qualitative statements. For instance, this method allows us the flexibility to utilize both inductive and

deductive methods to develop our categories that result in emergent themes (Patton 1990) surrounding journalism, risk, victimization, and coping. We had 21 responses from Mexico and 33 from Brazil. 11 of these respondents were from Minas Gerais, and 22 were from Acre. Eight responses came from Tamaulipas, and 13 came from Puebla.

**Figure 2:** *Subnational Comparative Design for Mexico and Brazil*



**FINDINGS**

**Structural Effects and Victimization Experience of Brazilian and Mexican Journalists (Interaction)**

We first summarize sources of risk and their reported perceived effects. Respondents were asked to recall a specific work situation in which they believed their physical or emotional integrity was at risk. As a result, journalists often recalled victimization experiences linked to various structural risks, including the labor market and workplace, the rule of law, cultural and identity-based risks. No journalists recalled instances of acute or biological hazards. Rule of law risks from political and criminal actors were universal across our country and region contexts. Most participants discussed previous experiences of intimidation or physical assaults by criminals, police, or politicians, regardless of location. Labor market or more organizationally based risks were most felt in Acre and Minas Gerais in Brazil. Culturally motivated risks were more acute in Acre and Minas Gerais, Brazil. Identity or gender-based threats emerged within the context of Minas Gerais and Acre, Brazil as well as in Puebla, Mexico. Overall, while we saw most of the key types of risk manifest themselves in the victimization experiences of journalists, these risk sources varied by context.

**Rule of Law, Criminal and Political Actors: A Universal Risk**

“Threat” and “intimidation” were the words that journalists in Acre mentioned most when referring to their daily routine of covering local news. Drug and arms dealers in control of trafficking networks in the Amazonian river were identified as the main perpetrators of aggressions against journalists in Acre. Journalists recalled: “We were approached by armed men who told us that we needed to leave; otherwise they would react by shooting”; “I have been intimidated by criminals”; “Intimidation for being in a region where criminal organizations operate”; “Members of a criminal group pressured and intimidated our team.” Acre’s journalists highlighted neighborhoods or areas under the crime domain as high risk for the profession. Criminal factions control entire communities, clusters of neighborhoods, and slums in sections dominated by drug trafficking, establishing their own rules for what they call a “peaceful coexistence.” Journalists on local news beats cover various stories of violence, with murders, fights, shootings, and drug seizures being the most frequent. Many responses used expressions as “peripheral neighborhood,” “criminal faction area,” and “risk area.” Many feared working in a violent environment “as we go to the crime scene.” Respondents said that they suffered threats either inside a police station or covering crime scenes: “I was threatened inside the police station”; “A family tried to attack me while I was covering a homicide - when I turned the camera on, the victim’s son went after me and attacked me physically because he was upset”; “Relatives of victims go to the crime scene and threaten people not to give information to journalists.” Journalists added that they faced situations in which weapons are used: “Threatening with firearms”; “In a peripheral neighborhood I was threatened by a drug addict with a knife.”

In the contexts of Minas Gerais, Brazil, and Tamaulipas and Puebla in Mexico, journalists experienced similar types of threats. In Minas Gerais, Brazil, respondents recalled instances when they were kicked out of a community by criminals while reporting on a story. Another was questioned about why the journalist reported a double homicide story and ultimately threatened to be shot by one individual if they did not leave the area. Others were physically assaulted and had family members indirectly threatened as actors “made it clear that he knew my family and advised me to be careful.” At the same time, another mentioned to the journalist that “they knew I had a child.” However, threats and attacks were not simply relegated to criminal groups but also came from politicians and other outside actors. In one instance, a reporter was directed by a policeman holding a gun to get back in the reporting vehicle. Respondents were also threatened for reporting on suspicious activities of a local politician. Threats and attacks were not relegated to the news scene or reporting sites, as journalists also recal-



led times when outside actors called into their news station to harass them.

Journalists in Tamaulipas, Mexico recalled instances when their workplace was repeatedly attacked with gunfire and grenades; when they had been beaten by armed men and their camera equipment destroyed; had a gun held to their head at a political event, and even suffered getting beaten physically, resulting in the loss of an eye. Others mentioned instances in which they were solicited to write for an organized crime group and were intimidated not to write particular stories, including previously being called out by name in traffic. Others still were told that they were on a blacklist by criminal groups.

Journalists in Puebla recalled threats and harassments from governors, having police officers pointing a gun at them during a crime scene. High-ranking state officials verbally threatened journalists, and businessmen threatened one journalist for reporting on the businessman's parties that included underage minors. Sex traffickers also threatened respondents, and they received threatening messages. Others reported hearing gunshots while reporting crime and recalled constantly being worried that thieves might kill them.

#### **Labor Market and Work-Place Stressors: Acre and Minas Gerais**

Journalists in Acre and Minas Gerais recalled victimization stories often tied to the labor market or workplace-related risks. In Minas Gerais and Acre, journalists often reported that they experienced hostile work environments and claimed that their low wages often interfered with their news coverage capabilities. For instance, in Minas Gerais, one journalist experienced a stressful working environment due to receiving late payments, and when asking about their paycheck, they were ignored. Due to this, their family was financially disrupted. Another in Minas Gerais recounted a story in which their boss sent a WhatsApp message telling them to 'stop complaining about their working hours.' Others in the same region mentioned excessive workloads for a minimal staff and felt emotionally threatened when working more than eight hours a day. Hostilities also manifested themselves in the form of physical confrontations. One journalist recounted such a confrontation with their boss after a divergence in opinions. This encounter involved the boss getting up from his chair, screaming, pointing his finger, and cursing at the individual for not being smart enough. Outside actors even impacted workplace risks. For instance, a mayor of a city indirectly told the journalist that he paid for the wages of the newsroom through advertisements.

#### **Cultural Actors and Aggressions: Acre and Minas Gerais, Brazil**

Brazilian journalists in both Acre and Minas Gerais were exposed to political and social actors who acted aggressively towards them because of ideologically based distrust of the media. These attacks entailed cultural violence due to attacks stemming from partisan groups instead of traditional criminal or political actors and their aggressions being directed at journalists strictly because of their occupation. For instance, in Acre, one journalist recalled being verbally attacked by demonstrators during a protest and told to leave while covering a demonstration on students protesting the readjustment of bus ticket prices. Another recounted that they were once passing through a street where a protest by workers from a general services company was taking place. The protestors recognized the journalist and started to intimidate her based on being a reporter but not showing her credentials or covering the protest. She noted that she was out of the office for the day and could not immediately do anything for the protesters. Instead, she called the office to have someone else come and report the story.

Respondents frequently recalled the period leading up to and after Bolsonaro's election as one of the most stressful times in the newsroom. They dealt with questions from audiences and readers, all the while criticism towards journalists remained high due to the political climate. Nevertheless, journalists emphasized the need to seek impartiality in their reporting continuously. As one journalist in Minas Gerais stated: "In recent years..., we have seen in Brazil a moment of greater passion in the political environment, which results in criticism of the media...We sometimes find ourselves exposed to the judgments of political and social actors and people influenced by one of the dominant political fields just for fulfilling our duty to inform. In some situations, our work is questioned and dishonestly labeled in public and virtual spaces, which, in certain situations, causes emotional distress in professionals." Nevertheless, journalists often worried that they would be negatively marked in the media, ultimately making them a bigger target for groups.

#### **Identity-Based Attacks: Minas Gerais and Acre Brazil, and Puebla, Mexico**

Attacks based on one's gender, racial, or minority status were experienced both in Minas Gerais and Acre, Brazil, and Puebla, Mexico. In Minas Gerais, one journalist recalled being verbally attacked on the internet for an opinion column, with one comment suggesting that the journalist should be 'sexually assaulted.' Another recalled that an army colonel flirted with them while on the job and was pressed to give out their phone number, to which she obliged but later

blocked his number. In Acre, one journalist mentioned that as being a woman journalists that works in the countryside of Acre, it was common to face disrespect when in the field, and she routinely needed a man to travel with her to maintain reporting integrity. One journalist in Puebla recalled covering news about disappeared women and felt particularly strained about reporting on the subject as a woman. Another interviewed opponents of LGBT rights, claiming: "I am part of the LGBT community and couldn't say anything."

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### EMOTIONS AND COPING: CONNECTING THE INTERACTION TO THE INDIVIDUAL

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Next, we asked participants to recall how they felt during the stressful experience and any subsequent adverse reaction(s) then or from other work-related incidents. We then asked respondents what personal strategies and resources had helped them cope with the stressful situation mentioned. In addition, we asked whether respondents belonged to any journalist groups, what activities they engaged in with this group, and whether this had benefited them. Journalists everywhere mentioned both acute emotions, including feeling helpless, humiliated, sad, angry, and generally uneasy. Further, the feelings often resulted in physical manifestations of stress. Both adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies emerged across our study contexts, both within the short and long-term. However, journalists across our areas of study overwhelmingly exhibited adaptive coping strategies, predominantly in the long term. Adaptive strategies include leaving a job for a better work environment, changing news beats, or self-censoring their work as a safety precaution. Other adaptive coping strategies included sharing experiences with colleagues to obtain emotional support and individualized activities such as meditation, exercise, and writing poetry. Others coped by engaging in safety training, collaborative reporting, and collaboration with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Maladaptive strategies, such as alcohol abuse and emotion-based eating. Though, our results suggest that the coping strategies often varied by context.

Moreover, there is a distinction between coping strategies that involve journalists engaging with more collective-based endeavors, including working with CSOs or organizing for better working conditions, and those that chose to cope by protecting themselves without engaging in more collective behaviors. Findings of this study suggested that this fell in line with our original matched pairs design with Acre and Tamaulipas engaging in more individualized coping techniques, including taking safety into their own hands and avoid-

ing risky situations or self-censoring. Respondents in Minas Gerais and Puebla were more willing to engage in collective efficacy or working with outlets to meet their needs. However, respondents in Minas Gerais exhibited more censoring behavior activities than Puebla.

### Risk and Emotions Leading to Coping

In Minas Gerais, respondents recalled generally feeling helpless, humiliated, indignant, anxious and afraid and vulnerable, distressed, discouraged, angry, felt that they lacked the confidence to conduct their work effectively, and generally felt unhappy. A journalist that had a physical altercation with her boss, which involved the boss getting up from his chair and screaming at her, recalled 'feeling like an object' and feared that her boss would physically beat her. Others feared not only for themselves but also for their family members. The individual who experienced financial insecurity worried about how her precarious work situation and income ultimately affected their time with their family. She felt that "all of my efforts and my family to graduate as journalists had been in vain, and the company didn't care about me." Another reporter recalled being threatened by an officer who stated that the officer knew her family and should be careful about what they reported. This journalist explicitly mentioned that she was afraid something would happen to her family, particularly her son, and questioned how far one should get a story. Ultimately this person thought it was wise to move away from specific, professional themes and censor themselves. The emotions journalists felt also manifested themselves into physical symptoms. Respondents recalled feeling heart palpitations and excessive tiredness. Others recalled having trouble sleeping, difficulty working, headaches, stomach issues, herpes, and skin breakouts. Others reported having panic attacks. One journalist, in particular, contributed her breast cancer diagnosis to her stressful work situations, as she stated that according to the doctors, her breast cancer has a relationship to stress and anxiety related to the job.

In Acre, many felt a lack of support and protection while performing their job. There was a general disbelief in the judicial system, as well as in the employers. This can be found in statements such as: "I felt that the media organization did not offer me any security conditions to do the work I was assigned to"; "It is a feeling of helplessness, that you are not free to walk alone if you want to"; "I need the job, it is very difficult to get a job as a journalist"; "Very humiliated, perhaps due to the company's positioning at the local and national level."

In Puebla, respondents recalled feeling a general unease and threatened, sad, angry, stressed, powerless, upset, and restless. Others mentioned feeling worried that during reporting that they might

be shot and couldn't quickly flee a situation with no help nearby. The individual who reported on disappearances of women recalled feeling sad and angry at the disappearances. While many felt these psychological-emotional responses to strain, others mentioned feeling physical pain, experiences insomnia, and general exhaustion.

In Tamaulipas, journalists experienced physical manifestations of stress, including facial paralysis, hypertension, and "physical pain." Their psycho-emotional symptoms included feelings of distress, powerlessness, foolishness, confusion, anger, and indignance. One journalist recalled being beaten by armed men and having their camera broken and worried that they may be beaten again in the future.

### **Tamaulipas and Acre: Individual Coping and Self-Censorship**

Tamaulipas and Acre were more likely to highlight individual means of coping and often stressed the need to change how they performed their jobs, including self-censoring for protection.

In Acre, instead of considering the employer responsible for avoiding risk situations, journalists placed the responsibility for their safety on themselves and failed to mention that the judiciary and media companies are accountable for supporting their safety. "Stress only causes negative reactions, so it is up to us to look for ways to change its source and deal with its repercussions." Journalists often stressed the need to have "more prudence in everyday life" or have "learned to be more attentive." Journalists also changed behaviors in ways that curtailed reporting practices, including avoiding circulating neighborhoods dominated by crime factions in an unidentified news vehicle, and would not get out of the car to photograph. Others started to not mention criminal groups in their stories. At times, journalists highlighted the need to wear safety protection, such as vests. Still, others stressed that they could not do anything to contribute to resolving risk. For instance, some mentioned that "we cannot improve much. We deal with unpredictable things." Another replied, "There is no time for that [to deal with those types of things/thoughts]." Nevertheless, some journalists in Acre did engage with some adaptive, short-term activities to deal with strain. This included spending more time with friends and family, therapy, and engaging in physical activities such as sports.

In Tamaulipas, emotion-focused self-help strategies, including making artwork, meditating, and focusing on family were common. Others engaged in short-term maladaptive coping strategies such as engaging in smoking marijuana. Coping strategies focused more on changing personal behaviors, including more long-

term strategies of 'preparing myself' to react better next time. Others still thought it was best to curtail coverage. This was especially the approach for journalists who recalled experiencing physical danger or attacks as their stressful experience. These journalists primarily relied on switching news beats, reducing exposure while reporting, or changing employers. Coping strategies also included speaking to supportive colleagues, watching movies, and doing housework after being badly beaten in retaliation for a story. This respondent, in particular, illustrated how coping strategies could be both long-term and short-term as she eventually switched news outlets and news beats to reduce stress.

### **Puebla and Minas Gerais: Collective Coping and Action**

Journalists in Puebla and Minas Gerais did engage with some maladaptive and adaptive coping strategies that focused on individual actions to handle stressful experiences. However, in contrast to journalists in Tamaulipas and Acre, journalists in Puebla and Minas Gerais were also more likely to engage in collective coping strategies in the long term.

In Minas Gerais, journalists adopted some short-term adaptive coping strategies. Adaptive coping strategies included engaging in individualized activities to cope, stressing family time. They also engaged in physical activity, including sports and the gym, consumed movies and T.V. series, played electronic games, and meditated. Maladaptive, individualized coping strategies included: feeling anger at the moment that resulted in them not thinking clearly and yelling back at their bosses. Another journalist faced with a verbal and potentially physical altercation fell silent and froze, unable to react to the situation they were experiencing. Others admitted to often blaming themselves for what happened at the time and also being impulsive in action.

Long-term coping strategies were also maladaptive and adaptive in nature. Long-term maladaptive strategies included unhealthy eating due to stress. The journalist who expressed this directly tied their unsafe work environment and inability to get adequate compensation on not having access to healthier food options. "I felt emotionally threatened when I often worked more than 8 hours a day as a journalist, without adequate remuneration, and with payment delays. I believe that I have an unhealthy diet due to stress in an attempt to compensate for this discomfort." Other, long-term adaptive strategies included changing their place of employment to a higher-paying area and seeking a milder or more peaceful newsroom to work. Working with legal representation was also noted, with one journalist expressing that having a lawyer fighting on their behalf made them feel safer. Others

sought reprieve through seeking out psychological and psychiatric treatment, which in some instances resulted in long-term medication use. Several journalists mentioned establishing boundaries between work and private life, including the need to turn off technology, including WhatsApp. Others said they saw a necessity to spend time with friends and family and appreciated relying on friends and family for emotional and financial support. Moreover, several journalists highlighted utilizing and relying on coworkers and activities geared towards helping journalists respond to work-place strains, indicating that they engage in more collective forms of coping. One such journalist, a union representative, believed that colleagues greatest support should be given to colleagues, regardless of whether they were working for competitors or within the same company. In one instance this journalist aided a colleague who was being harassed during a political demonstration simply for being a part of a national media outlet. This individual expressed their support by mitigating the bullying through maintaining a calm, relaxed demeanor and engaging in dialogue with the demonstrators.

Journalists in Puebla also adopted short and long-term adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies. Adaptive strategies included therapy, engaging with friends and family, and colleagues. Activities with colleagues included engaging in safety training, vigilance, talking to others, engaging in spiritual practices, and writing about their experiences. However, while journalists in Minas utilized more long-term coping strategies, including collective action and working with their peers to improve their overall conditions, journalists in Puebla took this a step further through organizing and advocating for speaking out politically to get better support for journalists. This included respondents wanting to put collective pressure on institutions that are resulting in the strain of journalists. Those in Minas Gerais were not as likely to take their forms of collective action to this level. Journalists in Puebla strongly emphasized safety and professionalization and the necessity to put collective pressure on the government to improve their safety. This included documenting aggression towards journalists, producing public statements, and protesting. One participant claimed that these activities are “a protective mechanism, to take care of each other because collaboration is essential in journalism study.”

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## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

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This study sought to explore the link between greater, macro-level risk types, victimization experiences, how these specific scenarios impact the journalists emotions, and ultimately document their coping strategies and capabilities among Mexican and Brazilian

journalists. Using the sociology of risk, we expand the population and circumstances under which general strain theory has been applied, both in occupation and comparative research design.

This exploratory, qualitative study suggests that the risk types one faces vary by context, as do the coping strategies in which journalists utilize. Journalists often recalled victimization experiences linked to various structural risks, including labor market and workplace risks, the rule of law, cultural and identity-based risks. Instances of acute or biological risk were not mentioned. While we saw most of the risk types manifest themselves in the victimization experiences of journalists, these risks varied by context, which ultimately impacted the coping strategies journalists mentioned. Findings from this study suggest the need to reconceptualize the victimization experiences of journalists and continue to consider how risks based on context ultimately impacts the type of victimization journalists will face. Despite having a near-universal victimization experience at the hands of political and criminal groups due to the weak rule of law, other risks also warrant attention as they open up the potential for other forms of victimization. This work also stresses the necessity documented in other research to expand our understanding of workplace violence, including *within* the newsroom (Chen et al. 2020; Feinstein et al. 2014; Ferreir 2019), and on identity-based risks in various contexts, particularly due to non-state actors (Brambila and Hughes 2019; Cerqueira et al. 2019, Waisbord 2021).

This study also found that journalists engage with a variety of adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies. Adaptive strategies included leaving a job for a better work environment or changing news beats, sharing experiences with colleagues to obtain emotional support, and even individualized activities such as meditation, physical exercise, and others. Maladaptive strategies included alcohol abuse, and emotion-based eating, among others. While our work highlighted the nuances between adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies, and whether these coping strategies were either utilized to cope immediately after journalists felt strain, or involved more long-term behavioral changes that facilitated coping over the long durée, perhaps our most pertinent finding was the distinction between coping strategies that involve journalists engaging with more collective-based endeavors, including working with CSO's or organizing for better working conditions, compared to those who chose to cope by protecting themselves without engaging in more collective behaviors.

This finding contributes to general strain theory in many ways. Currently, general strain theory has considered both adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies



and how they can operate in tandem (Broidy and Santoro 2018). However, this theory does not, until now, consider how these coping strategies are implemented in both long- and short-term durations, nor has it considered how these coping strategies can be implemented either individually or collectively, although collective coping behaviors have been implied in other studies (Broidy and Santoro 2018).

The matched pairs design used in this study identified the predominant use of collective coping strategies among participants in the context of Puebla and Minas Gerais, as compared to journalists in Tamaulipas and Acre, who utilized more individual styles of coping. Within Tamaulipas and Acre, where violence was more intense and physical, engaging in more individualized coping techniques, including taking safety into their own hands and avoiding risky situations, was prevalent. In Minas Gerais and Puebla, respondents were more willing to engage in collective efficacy or work with outlets to meet their needs. While speculative in this study's findings since we did not explicitly ask why participants selected the coping strategies mentioned, we suspect that within Tamaulipas, journalists may have a general distrust that collective action would not provide an acceptable response from the government or their employers. While Mexican journalists have traditionally rejected labor organizations within formal institutions, some have still been willing to participate in social support and advocacy groups with peer networks and advocacy organizations (Gonzalez 2021; González de Bustamante and Rely 2021; Hughes et al. 2021; Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez 2017; Novak and Davidson 2013; Osofsky et al. 2005). Given this and the tactics of violent organized criminals in Tamaulipas, another possibility is distrust even of colleagues since these organizations pay and pressure journalists to inform on newsroom happenings (*Artículo 19* 2018). However, this interpretation remains tentative given lack of direct evidence. Previous work has suggested that for the most part Brazilian journalists are not organized under any labor organizations, excluding radio and online news outlets (Moreira 2017). However, this work suggests that in some areas, journalists organize through non-traditional channels. We are unsure whether the participants in Acre feel efforts to organize would be unsuccessful, some level of distrust of other journalists or some other disincentive of collective action and collegial support. Future work should better consider why journalists in

these particular contexts are organized over others, and to differentiate between organizing through traditional networks versus more organic types of organization. This line of research is especially needed in Brazil, where the research on violence against journalists needs to be expanded. Nevertheless, matched pairs design and the general strain theory framework allowed us to observe these nuances across participant contexts and experiences.

There are several limitations to this study. This study is restricted in generalizability as we utilized snowball sampling strategies to recruit journalists (Noy 2008; Patton 1990). In addition, the small sample size of this study makes this research somewhat exploratory. Future research in this area would benefit from a more generalized, quantitative approach to understanding violence against journalists and coping strategies, including a study that better represents the journalist workforce. We believe that future work that takes this approach may better understand the severity of violence against journalists and the forms and success of their coping. In addition, it may allow us to see the seriousness of the rule of law risks and the workplace, cultural, and even identity-based risks. Even with these limitations, the richness of our qualitative data allows us to contribute to the research on the empirical work of violence against journalists within Mexico and Brazil, which is still relatively new and contributes to the building of general strain theory. To date, none of the work has analyzed how general strain theory can be utilized to explain strain and coping strategies among journalists, who are a group that faces considerable occupational risk in many parts of the world.

Matched-pairing design also provides us a better framework for policy making since it reveals how certain risks and victimization experiences become embedded in particular parts of Brazil and Mexico, thus allowing us to consider relevant policy responses to protect journalists and allocate resources to those who need support. We hope this study can contribute to the discussion surrounding victimization of journalists, coping and ultimately push policy forward in a way that provides resources to improve journalists' overall safety and working conditions.

## NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> See the organization's social media accounts, such as @periodistasPUM, on Twitter.

<sup>3</sup> Sewe reports here: [https://cpj.org/data/killed/2018/brazil/?status=Killed&motiveConfirmed%5B%5D=Confirmed&type%5B%5D=Journalist&cc\\_fips%5B%5D=BR&start\\_year=2018&end\\_year=2018&group\\_by=location](https://cpj.org/data/killed/2018/brazil/?status=Killed&motiveConfirmed%5B%5D=Confirmed&type%5B%5D=Journalist&cc_fips%5B%5D=BR&start_year=2018&end_year=2018&group_by=location) and <https://rsf.org/en/news/radio-journalist-who-annoyed-politicians-murdered-bahia-state>

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## ABSTRACT | RESUMÉ | RÉSUMO

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### **Risk, Victimization and Coping Strategies of Journalists in Mexico and Brazil**

**Risque, victimisation et stratégies d'adaptation des journalistes au Mexique et au Brésil**

**Risco, vitimização e estratégias de enfrentamento de jornalistas no México e no Brasil**

**En.** There is a growing recognition that journalists are exposed to dangerous or hazardous working conditions in many places worldwide. These conditions are suggested to be linked to greater macro-related structural risks, including changes to the political economy of news that increase labor precarity, cultural and identity-based risks from oppressive normative systems, aggressive partisans and extremists, and risks originating from weak or changing enforcement of the rule of law that increases journalists' vulnerability to corrupt officials, security forces and criminal groups. While previous research has linked these structural risks to acts of workplace victimization of journalists, it has not considered how structural risks are connected to the subjective experience of victimization, which includes emotional upheaval and varying coping strategies. Anchoring this study in the sociology of risk literature with general strain theory, this study considers how greater, macro-level structures are tied to journalist's victimization, emotions and coping using open and closed survey response data from 21 Mexican and 33 Brazilian journalists. Survey data was collected through matched subnational context designs and snowball sampling strategies. Findings show that journalists recalled victimization experiences that were linked to labor market and workplace risks, risks associated with the rule of law, culturally based risks, and identity-based risks. As a result, journalists engaged in short and long-term coping strategies. Coping strategies were also either individualistic or collectivist in nature, with coping strategies ultimately being influenced by country and regional contexts.

**Key words:** journalism, risk, victimization, general strain theory, coping

**Fr.** Il est de plus en plus reconnu que les journalistes sont exposés à des conditions de travail risquées ou dangereuses dans de nombreux endroits du monde. On admet par ailleurs que ces conditions sont liées à des risques structurels macroéconomiques plus importants, notamment les changements dans l'économie politique de l'information qui augmentent la précarité de la main-d'œuvre, les risques culturels et identitaires liés à des systèmes normatifs oppressifs, à des partisans et des extrémistes agressifs, et les risques découlant d'une application faible ou mouvante de l'état de droit qui accroît la vulnérabilité des journalistes face aux fonctionnaires corrompus, aux forces de sécurité et aux groupes criminels. Si des recherches antérieures ont établi un lien entre ces risques structurels et les actes de victimisation des journalistes sur leur lieu de travail, elles n'ont pas examiné comment les risques structurels sont liés à l'expérience subjective de la victimisation, qui comprend un bouleversement émotionnel et diverses stratégies d'adaptation. Ancrant cette étude dans la sociologie du risque et la littérature autour de la théorie de la tension générale (*general strain theory*), cette étude examine comment les structures plus importantes, au niveau macro, sont liées à la victimisation, aux émotions et à l'adaptation des journalistes en utilisant les résultats à une enquête par questions ouvertes et fermées de 21 journalistes mexicains et 33 brésiliens. Les données de l'enquête ont été recueillies dans des contextes subnationaux similaires et grâce à des stratégies d'échantillonnage en boule de neige. Les résultats montrent que les journalistes témoignent d'expériences de victimisation liées aux risques associés au marché et au lieu de travail, à l'État de droit, aux risques culturels et aux risques liés à l'identité. Par conséquent, les journalistes ont adopté des stratégies d'adaptation à court et à long terme. Les stratégies d'adaptation peuvent relever d'une nature individualiste ou collective et elles sont influencées par les contextes nationaux et régionaux.

**Mots-clés :** journalisme, risque, victimisation, théorie générale de la tension, adaptation

**Pt.** Há um reconhecimento crescente de que os jornalistas estão expostos a condições de trabalho arriscadas ou perigosas em muitos lugares do mundo. Sugere-se que essas condições estejam ligadas a maiores riscos estruturais macro-relacionados, incluindo mudanças na economia política de notícias que aumentam a precariedade do trabalho, riscos culturais e de identidade de sistemas normativos opressores, partidários agressivos e extremistas e riscos originados de uma aplicação fraca ou de alterações legais que aumentam a vulnerabilidade dos jornalistas a funcionários corruptos, forças de segurança e grupos criminosos. Embora pesquisas anteriores tenham vinculado esses riscos estruturais a atos de vitimização de jornalistas no local de trabalho, não se considerou como os riscos estruturais estão ligados à experiência subjetiva de vitimização, que inclui distúrbios emocionais e várias estratégias de enfrentamento. Ancorado na sociologia da literatura de risco com a teoria geral da tensão (*general strain theory*), este estudo considera como estruturas maiores de nível macro estão ligadas à vitimização, emoções e enfrentamento do jornalista usando dados de resposta de pesquisa aberta e fechada de 21 jornalistas mexicanos e 33 brasileiros. Os dados da pesquisa foram coletados por meio de projetos de contexto subnacional correspondentes e estratégias de amostragem por bola de neve. As descobertas mostram que os jornalistas lembraram experiências de vitimização que estavam relacionadas aos riscos do mercado de trabalho e do local de trabalho, riscos associados ao Estado de direito, riscos de base cultural e riscos de identidade. Como resultado, os jornalistas se engajaram em estratégias de enfrentamento de curto e longo prazo. As estratégias de enfrentamento também eram de natureza individualista ou coletivista, com as estratégias de enfrentamento sendo, em última análise, influenciadas pelos contextos nacionais e regionais.

**Palavras-chave:** jornalismo, risco, vitimização, teoria geral da tensão, estratégias

