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The Hybridization of Journalistic Cultures: A Comparative Study of Journalistic Role Performance

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Influential research on comparative media systems identifies distinctive models according to which certain countries—particularly advanced democracies—share key features in their journalistic cultures. Revisionist literature has not only emphasized the limitations of such models, but also highlighted the hybridization of journalistic cultures elsewhere. This article tests the hybridization thesis, analyzing the presence of six journalistic roles in print news from 19 countries (N = 34,514). Our findings show patterns of multilayered hybridization in the performance of professional roles across and within advanced, transitional, and non-democratic countries, with journalistic cultures displaying different types of hybridity that do not resemble either existing ideal media system typologies or conventional assumptions about political or regional clusters. The implications of these findings for future studies are discussed.

Keywords: Journalistic Cultures, Role Performance, Media Systems, Content Analysis, Comparative Research.

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The legacy of Hallin and Mancini's (2004) seminal typology of media systems in advanced democracies has prompted a rich and fruitful line of research on how

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journalistic cultures can be comparatively conceptualized and understood. Moreover, the debate on homogeneity/universality vis-à-vis localism/regionalism has gained ground within the journalistic and communication field.

One stream of research has focused on empirically testing, revising, and corroborating the authors' models, particularly through comparative content analyses (Benson, Blach Ørsten, Powers, Willig, & Zambrano, 2012; Brüggemann, Engesser, Büchel, Humprecht, & Castro, 2014; Esser & Umbricht, 2013; Umbricht & Esser, 2014). A second strand of literature has been concerned with developing alternative concepts and models to account for the hybrid nature of both media systems and journalistic cultures across the globe (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015; Guerrero & Márquez-Ramírez, 2014; Hallin & Mancini, 2012, 2017; Mancini, 2015; Preston, 2009; Voltmer, 2012). Finally, a third line of research has analyzed to what extent journalists from different countries differ in their professional roles (Hanitzsch *et al.*, 2011; Weaver & Willnat, 2012; Mellado, Hellmueller, & Donsbach, 2017a; Mellado, Márquez-Ramírez, Mick, Oller Alonso, & Olivera, 2017b; among others).

What these three lines of research share is the implicit aim of exploring whether journalistic cultures are becoming increasingly homogeneous in a globalized world as a consequence of not only technological changes, but also trends such as digitalization, marketization, and liberalization; whether countries with similar regional, political, and media system characteristics are also similar in their journalistic cultures; or whether, conversely, journalistic cultures are displaying contrasting characteristics.

Unfortunately, research on these topics has mostly addressed advanced democracies only. As Hallin and Mancini (2012, 2017) acknowledge, most comparative research, at both the institutional and the empirical level, has had a restrictive focus on known and familiar countries—that is, the United States or those in Western Europe—and has rarely incorporated those from a broader range of regions (*i.e.*, Latin America, Eastern Europe, Africa, or Asia). In fact, transitional democracies and nondemocratic countries are often used to support or refute theoretical models developed elsewhere, instead of being studied in their own right (Gunaratne, 2010).

Moreover, there are still insufficient studies of journalistic cultures that adopt a role performance approach (Mellado *et al.*, 2017a) to compare the presence of professional roles in news content in different parts of the world, even though journalistic professionalization is one of the key dimensions of media system research (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) and of a long tradition of studies of professional roles (Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2009).

While a great deal of comparative research has, in fact, empirically supported the argument that journalists from certain media systems do conceptualize their roles as expected (*i.e.*, more dissemination and detachment in liberal media systems and more interventionism in Polarized Pluralist systems [Donsbach & Patterson, 2004]), most of these findings have dealt with how journalists perceive their roles but not with their actual practice (Hanitzsch *et al.*, 2011; Weaver & Willnat, 2012). Some valuable exceptions have addressed the performance of different journalistic roles albeit at the national or regional level only (Mellado *et al.*, 2017b; Stępińska, Jurga-Wosik,

Adamczewska, Selcer, & Narożna, 2016; Wang, Sparks, Lü, & Huang, 2017). Other studies have corroborated differences in reporting styles across countries but focusing specifically on political news (Esser, 2008; Esser & Umbricht, 2013; Van Dalen, Vreese, & Albæk, 2012), or specific front-page events or topics (Benson & Hallin, 2007).

In contrast, fewer studies have undertaken a more encompassing view of journalism that transcends normative values associated with liberal political functions (Peters & Broersma, 2017). The reliance on normative beliefs to understand occupational ideologies is not surprising considering that the communication field—and with it, the study of journalism—has had a predominantly normative character (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Zelizer, 1993, 2017). This is partly the result of its rootedness in a professional education that focuses mostly on what journalism should be—and in that sense, on its political function—rather than on the multiple functions and possibilities thereof. Waisbord (2013), for example, argues that the normative nature of professionalism has prevented a fuller understanding of how journalists are continually redefining their working conditions and rules.

In a context of increasing demands to conduct more comparative and content-based research that includes a more diverse range of countries, and in line with the recent assertion that media systems are complex and dynamic systems undergoing long-term changes that may be characterized by internal variation (Hallin & Mancini, 2017), this paper tests the hybridization thesis in journalistic cultures. Specifically, our study compares the performance of six journalistic roles commonly identified in the literature—the interventionist, watchdog, loyal-facilitator, civic, service, and infotainment roles—in the national news of 62 newspapers from 19 countries ($N = 34,514$). These countries are located in Western and Eastern Europe, North America, Latin America, and Asia.

This is one of the first studies to date to analyze the materialization of diverse roles—that have been mostly studied separately—with the aim of comparing them cross-nationally. It is also a pioneer in including countries whose journalism models have not been theorized in the same systemic way as those of advanced democracies, and also in analyzing diverse types of news content besides political news. Together, these aspects provide a more dynamic and overall view of the way in which print journalism conveys a wide range of functions across the world.

We assert that broadening our understanding of journalism as a profession, social institution, text, people, and practice—which also includes roles that go beyond political functions alone (Zelizer, 2017)—will reveal neither homogeneity, nor clear-cut clusters of journalistic cultures based on ideal media system typologies or regional or political patterns.

Media systems and journalistic role performance: How do countries belong together?

In the debate about homogeneity, cluster regionality, or hybridity in journalistic cultures, news content studies have found considerable variation in reporting

styles across national boundaries. Many of these studies seem to partially support the argument that some advanced democracies share similar media system and journalistic culture characteristics, particularly in relation to how they approach their audiences, and to how they respond to market pressures (Aalberg, Van Aelst, & Curran, 2010; Curran, Iyengar, Lund, & Salovaara-Moring, 2009). Studies on television news, for example, found that media systems that were more commercialized and liberal, like the one found in the United States, offered more infotainment, less political information, and less hard news to their audiences than the Democratic Corporatist media systems of Northern Europe (Aalberg *et al.*, 2010) or the European media systems in general (Curran *et al.*, 2009; Iyengar, Hahn, Bonfadelli, & Marr, 2009).

Nevertheless, and despite the fact that professionalism is one of the key dimensions that has been used to classify different media system models, comparative content analysis has addressed differences in news without explicitly considering the all-encompassing nature of journalistic roles that guide professional reporting, or when they do, by only studying specific countries (mostly from the West) and specific indicators of these roles, such as interpretation versus description in news items (Benson, 2013; Benson & Hallin, 2007; Esser, 2008).

For example, a longitudinal study by Umbricht and Esser (2014; see also Esser & Umbricht, 2013) of print content in Western European countries and the United States partially corroborated the expectations of variation across countries as set out in the literature on media systems. However, the study also found an increasing hybridization: more interventionism in United States news and more objectivity in the European press, making the distinction between journalistic styles less clear-cut than the theoretical models would lead us to expect (Esser & Umbricht, 2013, p. 998).

Benson *et al.* (2012) also found that some characteristics related to professional practices within a specific media system are valid in both online and offline news content (i.e., the French tendency of using deliberation and an authoritative voice), while other news media seem to mix elements of Hallin and Mancini's typologies of media systems (i.e., Danish online and offline news emphasize advertising and information as much as their American counterparts). In other variables, they also found some transition toward the Liberal model, especially visible in the predominance of advertising in online news in Denmark, France, and the United States.

From an institutional perspective, Hallin and Mancini (2004, 2017) have already identified some transition toward hybrid paths. While they give credit to the homogenization thesis, which posits that the media systems of advanced democracies will move in many ways toward the Liberal, Anglo-Saxon model—for example, with the influence of objective, fact-based reporting and increased marketization and commercial pressures worldwide (Hallin & Mancini, 2004)—they have also suggested that media systems change over time and are not monolithic (Hallin & Mancini, 2017). Mancini (2015, p. 36) also recognizes that categories derived from centuries of Western-centrism do not apply easily to other countries, and are insufficient to fully explain what constitutes journalistic practice worldwide.

As the complexity of media systems across the world requires special attention, different scholars have attempted to develop new conceptual frameworks—albeit without proposing specific classifications of countries—such as the “delegative democracy or one-party predominance” used as a model to categorize transitional democracies (Voltmer, 2012); the “captured-liberal” model said to prevail across Latin America (Guerrero & Márquez-Ramírez, 2014); the “pluralist authoritarianism” for the Francophone sub-Saharan Africa (Frère, 2015); or the “partisan polyvalence” in Asia (McCargo, 2012). One of the key implications of their analyses is the suggestion of a potential hybridization of journalistic cultures.

Mancini (2015, p. 33) proposes to address the idea of hybridization in two ways, which are in consonance with our rationale. On the one hand, hybridization points to both external influences and imitation attempts, combined with pre-existing domestic conditions that may influence the original application of foreign models, to the degree that the substance of the imported models is completely transformed. On the other hand, hybridization may also cause elements of various media models existing in other parts of the world to mix together, producing apparently contradictory combinations. In this regard, Voltmer (2012, p. 239) also argues that because media models are quite spread out across space and time, taking regional proximity as a defining element for the specific clusters that may emerge from them makes it difficult to account for the heterogeneity that can be found across regions.

Journalistic role performance in news

As different scholars have clarified (Hanitzsch, 2007; Mellado *et al.*, 2017a), journalistic cultures are complex constructs that manifest themselves not only at the cognitive level (what is news) or at the evaluative level (what journalistic roles are important for the profession), but also at the performative level (the materialization of professional roles in practice).

In the process of the construction of news, journalists occupy a privileged position in the symbolic struggle to draw attention to events, people, and ideas, as well as to set the news agenda (Bourdieu, 1998), by performing different professional roles (Mellado *et al.*, 2017a).

Nevertheless, as a profession, journalism needs autonomy “to develop and maintain certain norms of practice that are determined according to purely technical and expert knowledge” (Waisbord, 2013, p. 45). Recent research on journalism has acknowledged the inevitable gap between what journalists think of their roles in society and the roles they actually perform when reporting on a story (Mellado & Van Dalen, 2014).

In this regard, while previous research on professional roles has recognized the problem of survey-data perceptions as measurements of journalistic practice (Patterson & Donsbach, 1996), other studies have measured the materialization of roles, specifically in news content (Tandoc, Hellmueller, & Vos, 2013; Van Dalen *et al.*, 2012; Vos, 2017). More recent proposals have developed a standardization of measurements

and the operationalization of different professional roles in news (Mellado, 2015; Mellado & Van Dalen, 2014). These proposals operationalize the performance of roles in three main domains: the journalistic voice in the news, the relationship between journalism and those in power, and the way in which journalism approaches the audience.

The “Journalistic Voice” domain deals with the *disseminator-interventionist* stance of journalists in their reporting. The disseminator role focuses on maintaining a strong distance between the journalist and the facts. The interventionist role is present through the journalists’ interpretation, opinion, or other mechanisms. These two poles form a one-dimensional structure, where a higher level of participation of the journalist’s voice in the news item implies higher levels of interventionism (and vice versa).

The “Power Relation” domain is connected with the relationship that journalists have with those in some positions of power. Within this domain we can identify two professional roles. The *watchdog* monitors actors and institutions by denouncing their wrongdoings and holding them accountable. Meanwhile, the *loyal-facilitator* role manifests itself in two ways: Journalism cooperates with those in power by acting as loyal spokespersons, supporting official policies, and portraying institutional elites in a good light, or by focusing on the nation-state, emphasizing national triumphs and prestige. These two roles are independent of each other, because the lesser presence of one does not mean the greater presence of the other.

Finally, the “Audience Approach” domain deals with how journalists approach the public in the news. Within this domain we can identify three independent professional roles. Audiences are considered citizens (civic role), consumers (service role), or spectators (infotainment role). The *civic* role encourages the audience to participate in social, political, and cultural life, informing them on broad political topics. The *service* role views the public as a client, providing information and advice on goods and services that are useful for their everyday lives. Finally, the *infotainment* role relies on different styles and narrative and/or visual discourses to entertain and thrill the audience.

Each role is composed of specific indicators that have been tested and validated by different international studies (Hellmueller & Mellado, 2016; Mellado et al., 2017b; Mellado & Van Dalen, 2017; Stępińska et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2017). Role performance studies conceptualize professional roles as flexible, situational and independent sets of functions that can be combined in various ways across space and time, often subject to adaptation and combination (Hallin & Mellado, 2017).

Hypothesis

Two key points emerge from this body of research. First, the literature on both media systems and role performance suggests that journalistic cultures across the globe are increasingly difficult to compartmentalize into ideal media system typologies (Hallin & Mancini, 2012, 2017; Mancini, 2015; Norris, 2009). Second, this research also shows the urgent need to expand the studies of journalistic roles in news carried out

at the national or regional level so far—mostly Western democracies—to include a more diverse set of countries, news, and topics, in order to analyze how different conventional assumptions about media systems and regional or political clustering hold true in the performance of different journalistic roles around the world.

The main hypothesis of our study is that the differences in the performance of journalistic roles in news across countries do not show clear patterns that resemble either existing ideal media system typologies or political or regional clusters, but instead reveal patterns of multilayered hybrid journalistic cultures (*H1*).

We argue that if media systems are not monolithic, and that such systems may even become intermingled regardless of their geographical and cultural affinity—as previous authors have suggested (Hallin & Mancini, 2017; Mancini, 2015)—we should be able to find different elements of hybridization in journalistic cultures as manifested in the performance of different roles.

Of course, although the very idea of hybridity may complicate the aim of comparative analysis, it does not make it less important, quite the opposite: The very concept of hybridity reveals the evolving challenges of conducting comparative research and the need to refine its theoretical and methodological bases. Journalistic cultures are not universal and hybridity cannot be expected to be the same for all journalistic cultures, systems, political regimes, or regional boundaries. What we argue is that existing media system typologies, as well as common assumptions about political and/or geographical spaces, do not seem to fully explain the different ways of practicing journalism around the globe.

In this sense, we also discuss the fact that, unlike systemic dimensions or professional norms and ideals that have shown more discernible patterns in comparative studies, journalistic roles in news manifest themselves in ways that are more difficult to fit into existing ideal media system typologies and political or regional clusters when analyzed comparatively and cross-nationally. This is because news content is contingent upon various internal and external influences and therefore demands a closer examination in order to explain the variation and nature of the hybridity.

Methods

This paper is based on data from 19 countries of Western and Eastern Europe, Latin America, North America, and Asia. To obtain an intentionally heterogeneous sample, we selected countries to account for a variety of regions, political regimes, and previous classifications of media systems, such as those in Western Europe and the United States. In line with Hallin and Mancini's heuristic media systems, we include the United States and Ireland for the Liberal model, Germany and Switzerland for the Democratic Corporatist model, and Spain and Greece for the Polarized Pluralist model. We drew from the Democracy Indexes, the Freedom of the Press Reports, among others, to sample transitional democracies and nondemocratic countries from different parts of the world: We included Poland, Hungary, and Russia from Eastern Europe; Chile, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, and Argentina from Latin America;

and the Philippines, Hong Kong, and Malaysia from Asia. We also included two nondemocratic countries: China and Cuba, the latter being a country that is vastly underrepresented in the literature on communication and the media.

We conducted a content analysis on the news published in the most important newspapers of each country. Newspapers were selected instead of other media platforms because of their current potential to actively set the agenda, allocate more resources to cover a wider range of news, and provide more diverse coverage of different issues (Skovsgaard & Van Dalen, 2013).

The selection of two to five newspapers for each country was decided by criteria including size, scope, and orientation of the audience, ownership patterns, political leaning, and the level of influence in setting the agenda, in a way that better represented the diversity and shape of the newspaper market in a given country. Some countries have a significant presence of popular newspapers (therefore, we included popular titles); in others, the regional papers have a broader reach than national newspapers, and others have a predominance of newspapers with a particular political leaning (e.g., overpresence of conservative outlets). In the case of China, for example, we included local newspapers because they have a large audience. In the case of Spain, we could not include popular newspapers because that type of press is nonexistent (see Table 1).

Using the constructed week method, we selected a stratified-systematic sample from two consecutive years between 2013 and 2015 per country. A newspaper edition for each of the 7 days of the week was selected for each semester of each year, making sure that every month was represented by at least 1 day, avoiding overrepresentation of one specific period or event. The unit of analysis was the news story. Within each selected sample, we considered all the news published in sections associated with the National Desk (politics, economy and business, police, crime and court, social affairs, and general national news). In total, our sample consists of 34,514 news stories.

Measurements

The coding manual included variables to operationalize the performance of the interventionist, watchdog, loyal-facilitator, service, infotainment, and civic roles. The indicators were derived from the dimensions proposed by Mellado (2015) to measure professional roles in news content. Although the codebook was based on this prior operationalization, the final instrument used in this study was collaboratively adapted to ensure intercultural validity. We used five indicators to measure the presence of the “interventionist” role: *opinion*, *interpretation*, *proposal/demands*, *adjectives*, and the *use of first person*.

Ten indicators measure the “watchdog” role: *information on judicial/administrative processes*, *questioning by the journalist*, *questioning by others*, *criticism by journalists*, *criticism by others*, *denouncement by the journalist*, *denouncement by others*, *reporting of external investigation*, *reporting of conflict*, or *investigative reporting*. Nine indicators measure the “loyal-facilitator” role: *defense/support activities*, *defense/support policies*, *positive image of the political elite*, *positive image of the economic elite*, *emphasis on*

Table 1 Country Distribution by Newspaper and Total Number of News Items

Country	N	Newspapers
United States	1,421	<i>USA Today, Washington Post, NY Times, LA Times; Wall Street Journal</i>
Ireland	792	<i>Irish Independent, Daily Star</i>
Germany	1,169	<i>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Süddeutsche Zeitung, BILD-Zeitung</i>
Switzerland	2,820	<i>Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Blick, Le Temps, Le Matin, Corriere del Ticino</i>
Spain	2,278	<i>ABC, El País, El Mundo, La Razón</i>
Greece	2,032	<i>Kathimerini, Nea, Eleytheros Typos</i>
Chile	2,582	<i>El Mercurio, La Tercera, Las Ultimas Noticias, La Cuarta</i>
Brazil	2,749	<i>O Globo, O Estado de S. Paulo, Zero Hora, Folha de S. Paulo</i>
Ecuador	874	<i>El Telégrafo, El Universo, El Comercio</i>
Mexico	3,009	<i>Reforma, La Jornada, La Prensa*</i>
Argentina	2,731	<i>Clarín, La Nación, Página/12</i>
Hungary	1,087	<i>Blikk, Bors, Magyar Nemzet, Népszabadság</i>
Poland	1,130	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza, Rzeczpospolita, Nasz Dziennik, Fakt</i>
Russia	1,397	<i>Gazeta, Moskovsky Komsomolets</i>
Hong Kong	1,523	<i>Ta Kung Pao, Ming Pao Daily, Apple Daily</i>
Philippines	2,221	<i>Philippine Star, Abante</i>
Malaysia	808	<i>Berita Harian, Harian Metro, New Straits Times, The Sun</i>
China	3,264	<i>People's Daily, China Youth Daily, Xinmin Evening, Chengdu Economic Daily, Southern Metropolis Daily</i>
Cuba	627	<i>Granma, Juventud Rebelde</i>
Total	34,514	—

progress/success, comparison to the rest of the world, emphasis on national triumphs, promotion of the country's image, and patriotism.

Four indicators measure the “service” role: *impact on everyday life, tips and advice (grievances), tips and advice (individual risks), and information/consumer advice.* Six indicators measure the “infotainment” role: *personalization, private life, sensationalism, scandal, emotions, and morbidity.* Finally, nine indicators measure the “civic” role: *citizen perspective, citizen demand, credibility of citizens, education on duties and rights, background information, local impact, citizen questions, information on citizen activities, and support of citizen movements.*

More specific information on their operationalization can be found in Mellado (2015) and Mellado and Van Dalen (2014). The six journalistic roles were examined through the explicit presence/absence of specific indicators in news. Based on role theory, we assumed that journalistic roles might overlap, so these measures were treated as nonmutually exclusive (Lynch, 2007).

Local teams in each country were trained in the application of a common codebook translated and back-translated from English into Spanish, Chinese, Portuguese, Russian, Polish, Malay, German, French, Italian, Hungarian, Filipino, and Greek.

Considering that several concepts are inevitably culturally bound, we took a three-step strategy to test for intercoder reliability between and within countries. First, we conducted a pretest among local researchers from each country to ensure a common understanding of the codebook. Second, we conducted a pretest among coders within each country. Two to six coders per country were trained by their respective local researcher for 40 hours in total in the application of a common codebook. The actual coding did not begin until intercoder reliability tests among coders were satisfactory. Third, we calculated an intra-country posttest between coders. Based on Krippendorff's formula (Ka), final global intercoder reliability was .74. The variation of intercoder reliability per indicator within each country ranged from .70 to .81 (see global intercoder-reliability per role in Table 2).

Prior to our main analyses, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for each analyzed domain. CFA was performed using Mplus 7.0.¹ Within the journalistic voice domain, the "interventionist" role showed a very satisfactory fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 455.630$, $p < .001$), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .041 (90% confidence interval [CI] = .037, .045), comparative fit index (CFI) = .967, and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = .933. Within the power relations domain, the "watchdog" and the "loyal-facilitator" roles provided a good fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 5607.823$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .032 (90% CI = .032, .033), CFI = .916, TLI = .905). Finally, within the audience approach domain, the model composed of the "service," "infotainment," and "civic" roles also showed a satisfactory good fit with the data: $\chi^2 = 3453.338$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .025 (90% CI = .025, .026), CFI = .972, TLI = .967. We identified each solution as providing a better account of the data than other competing solutions. The standardized factor loadings for the three CFAs were high, while indicator reliabilities (squared multiple correlations) were satisfactory for the individual factors.

Following CFA results, the items were combined together according to each dimension (range: 0–1), resulting in a final score for each role for each news story. A higher score thus expressed a higher performance of each journalistic role, and vice versa. For descriptive purposes, we calculated the raw scores (sum of points divided by the total items in each role). Meanwhile, we used factor scores to test for differences in the presence of the six roles in news content among the 19 countries. As each role represents a latent variable, the factor score is technically a better measurement due to the weighting of its constituent indicators according to each item's contribution to that latent variable (DiStefano, Zhu, & Mindrila, 2009).

In order to identify the relatively homogeneous groups that emerged from our sample, we conducted a two-stage cluster analysis of the 19 countries for each domain. To identify the optimal number of clusters, we performed a hierarchical cluster analysis using Ward's algorithm and Squared Euclidean distance as a

heterogeneity measure. The criteria used to decide the cluster solution were the level of heterogeneity of the cluster, the clarity of the dendrograms, as well as the interpretability of alternative solutions. In order to validate the cluster solutions found using the hierarchical algorithm, we also used the k-means method for each domain.

Results

Table 2 summarizes the descriptive measures for all roles by country. In the following subsections, we will present the results for each role performance domain separately. First, we report the differences among countries in relation to the performance of each role, as well as descriptive results. Second, we show the results of a set of cluster analyses that we performed by domain. In relation to the performance of the different professional roles, these analyses allowed us to identify country groupings.

Journalistic voice: The interventionist role

Overall, the results suggest that journalists from the United States, Latin America, Europe, and Asia are more disseminative than interventionist since the indicators that compose the interventionist role were less present in their news ($M = .21$; $SD = .21$). Nevertheless, significant differences emerged when comparing the 19 countries analyzed ($F = 158,116$; $df = 18$; $p = .000$; $\eta^2 = .08$).

The grouping of the 19 countries in our sample according to their position on the interventionist role results in four clusters, as shown in Figure 1.

The first cluster includes Ireland, Malaysia, the Philippines, Mexico, Brazil, and Ecuador, all of them with a lower presence of the interventionist role. The clear position of Ireland in the disseminator role suits the “informational style of journalism” that exists in the Liberal model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 198). Transitional democracies from Asia and Latin America also belong to this cluster. Our findings, however, show that the two countries from our sample that represent the Liberal model—Ireland and the United States—are clearly polar opposites in terms of their interventionist voice, as shown by the cluster dendrogram. In fact, the United States belongs to a second cluster along with a transitional democracy like Argentina, leading the performance of interventionism. In the case of the United States, the result is in line with previous research that found higher levels of interpretation and opinion in the United States’ media than expected (Benson & Hallin, 2007; Esser & Umbricht, 2013).

A third cluster shows a kind of middle ground space in this domain, but closer to the disseminator role, with Cuba, Spain, Germany, and Switzerland—a nondemocratic country and three advanced democracies—with only Germany and Switzerland being theoretically similar (Corporatist model).

A fourth cluster includes transitional democracies (Poland, Hungary, Russia, Hong Kong, and Chile), one nondemocratic system (China), and one advanced

Table 2 Six Dimensions of Journalistic Role Performance

Roles/Countries	Advanced Democracy										Total
	United States (Liberal)	Ireland	Germany (Corporativist)	Switzerland (Democratic Corporativist)	Spain (Polarized Pluralist)	Greece (Polarized Pluralist)	Chile (Transitional Democracy)	Brazil (Transitional Democracy)	Ecuador (Transitional Democracy)	Mexico (Transitional Democracy)	
Interventionist (Ka = 0.74)	.32 (.19)	.09 (.17)	.22 (.17)	.21 (.22)	.19 (.23)	.25 (.25)	.23 (.20)	.12 (.18)	.12 (.16)	.14 (.21)	
Watchdog (Ka = 0.73)	.09 (.11)	.05 (.11)	.08 (.13)	.02 (.05)	.12 (.14)	.12 (.14)	.01 (.05)	.09 (.14)	.04 (.08)	.09 (.13)	
Loyal-Facilitator (Ka = 0.72)	.01 (.04)	.02 (.09)	.01 (.04)	.01 (.03)	.03 (.08)	.05 (.10)	.01 (.05)	.03 (.10)	.07 (.14)	.04 (.11)	
Civic (Ka = 0.75)	.12 (.15)	.03 (.10)	.05 (.10)	.01 (.05)	.04 (.12)	.11 (.17)	.03 (.07)	.05 (.11)	.08 (.17)	.08 (.15)	
Infotainment (Ka = 0.76)	.07 (.13)	.03 (.10)	.09 (1.5)	.04 (.10)	.02 (.07)	.06 (.10)	.08 (.15)	.05 (.11)	.05 (.13)	.04 (.11)	
Service (Ka = 0.72)	.02 (.07)	.03 (.13)	.03 (.09)	.02 (.07)	.03 (.11)	.04 (.13)	.04 (.12)	.04 (.13)	.13 (.22)	.03 (.10)	
Non-democratic											
Roles/Countries	Transitional Democracy										Total
	Argentina	Hungary	Poland	Russia	Hong Kong	Philippines	Malaysia	China	Cuba	Non-democratic	
Interventionist (Ka = 0.74)	.30 (.21)	.26 (.27)	.27 (.28)	.24 (.24)	.25 (.17)	.15 (.11)	.15 (.19)	.24 (.19)	.19 (.25)	.21 (.22)	
Watchdog (Ka = 0.73)	.08 (.12)	.09 (.15)	.13 (.16)	.07 (.09)	.01 (.11)	.04 (.09)	.05 (.10)	.01 (.04)	.01 (.05)	.06 (.11)	
Loyal-Facilitator (Ka = 0.72)	.03 (.08)	.01 (.05)	.02 (.07)	.05 (.12)	.01 (.03)	.01 (.04)	.11 (.13)	.03 (.07)	.34 (.26)	.03 (.10)	
Civic (Ka = 0.75)	.07 (.16)	.02 (.09)	.06 (.13)	.09 (.11)	.00 (.00)	.03 (.07)	.08 (.15)	.00 (.00)	.07 (.16)	.05 (.12)	
Infotainment (Ka = 0.76)	.09 (.17)	.07 (.15)	.10 (.19)	.07 (.13)	.06 (.12)	.03 (.08)	.08 (.14)	.04 (.10)	.00 (.00)	.05 (.13)	
Service (Ka = 0.72)	.04 (.13)	.06 (.17)	.07 (.17)	.05 (.13)	.00 (.12)	.05 (.12)	.04 (.11)	.00 (.03)	.03 (.11)	.03 (.12)	

Note: Mean and standard deviation (in parenthesis).

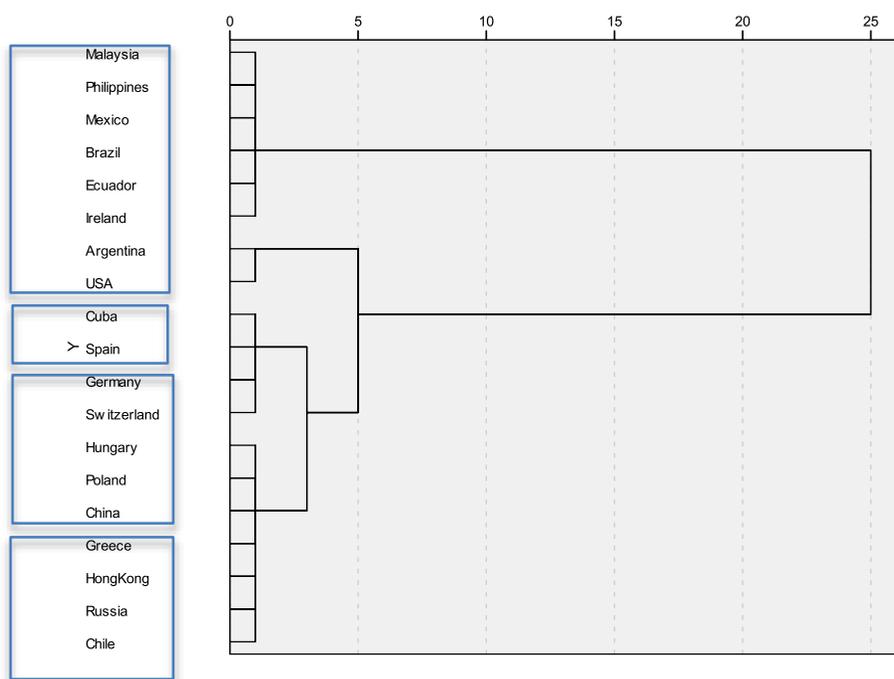


Figure 1 Dendrogram for the Journalistic Voice Domain using Ward Linkage (rescaled distance cluster combine).

democracy (Greece), all with a significant presence of the interventionist role in the news stories of their press.

Power relations: The watchdog and loyal-facilitator roles

Overall, the presence of the watchdog role ($M = .06$; $SD = .11$) is twice that of the loyal-facilitator role ($M = .03$; $SD = .10$) in the print media of the 19 analyzed countries. In other words, when positioning themselves in relation to institutions of power, journalists generally tend to be more critical than loyal. Nevertheless, these results change significantly when comparing roles among countries. The difference is significant for both the watchdog ($F = 253,911$; $df = 18$; $p = .000$; $\eta^2 = .12$) and the loyal-facilitator roles ($F = 546,397$; $df = 18$; $p = .000$; $\eta^2 = .22$). In both cases, the effect sizes are substantial—in fact, country differences for these roles explain more variation than any other role—indicating an important link between roles and de facto powers in the countries in question.

The grouping of our 19 countries results in six clusters, as shown in Figure 2. The first cluster is comprised of Hungary, United States, Germany, Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina, representing four transitional and two advanced democracies,

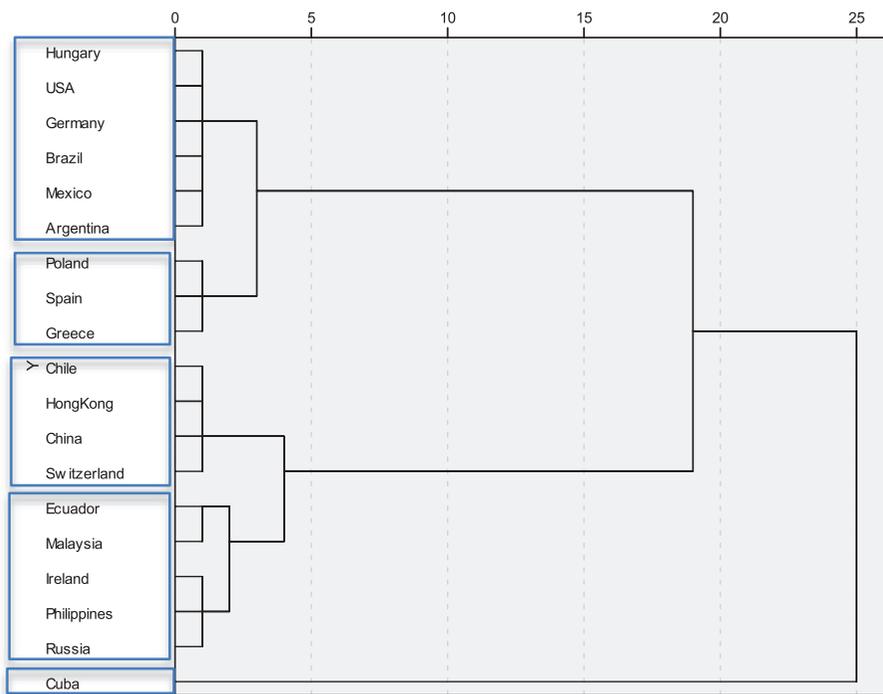


Figure 2 Dendrogram for the Power Relations Domain using Ward Linkage (rescaled distance cluster combine).

standing out with comparatively higher levels of the watchdog role than the loyal-facilitator role.

The second cluster consists of Spain and Greece—two advanced democracies belonging to the Polarized Pluralist model—and Poland as a transitional democracy. These countries rank highest for this role, at some distance from the first cluster, and they also rank higher in the watchdog role than in the loyal-facilitator role. In the case of Spain and Greece it is important to bear in mind the context of political instability, economic crisis, and social protests during the time of data collection—particularly in the Greek case—that may have prompted a major watchdog function.

In the third cluster, we find Chile, Hong Kong, China, and Switzerland, countries that presented the lowest performance of both the watchdog and the loyal-facilitator roles in comparison to the other countries. One is a nondemocratic media system, two are transitional democracies and one corresponds to an advanced democracy. Journalism is neither critical nor loyalist in this group of countries that, in structural terms, seem to have little in common apart from the influence of commercialism. The low performance of this role is a surprising result in the case of China, where the State still exercises great control over the press (Wang et al., 2017).

Two transitional democracies—Malaysia and Ecuador—comprise a fourth cluster, comparatively showing a higher performance of the loyal-facilitator role. Ireland (Liberal model), and the Philippines and Russia (transitional democracies) constitute the fifth cluster of this domain, with scores closer to the watchdog role than to the loyal-facilitator role. Finally, Cuba stands alone, with the highest presence of the loyal-facilitator role due to State management and control of the media.

Audience approach: The civic, infotainment, and service roles in news

In global terms, for the 19 analyzed countries, journalists' performance of the civic ($M = .05$; $SD = .12$) and the infotainment roles ($M = .05$; $SD = .13$) in the news they published is generally higher than that of the service role ($M = .03$; $SD = .12$). However, the performance of these three roles changes significantly across countries. The effect size is higher for the civic role ($F = 166,718$; $df = 18$; $p = .000$; $\eta^2 = .08$), and smaller for the infotainment ($F = 75,196$; $df = 18$; $p = .000$; $\eta^2 = .04$) and the service role ($F = 72,807$; $df = 18$; $p = .000$; $\eta^2 = .04$).

The grouping of our 19 countries results again in six clusters, as shown in Figure 3.

The first cluster—which represents countries with a higher performance of the civic role, a relatively higher performance of the service role and a lower performance of the infotainment role—includes Cuba, Spain, Ireland, the Philippines, Mexico, and Brazil, a mix of advanced democracies, and transitional and nondemocratic countries.

The second cluster includes China, Hong Kong, and Switzerland (nondemocratic regime, transitional, and advanced democracy, respectively) showing a higher performance of the infotainment than the civic or the service role. The virtual absence of the civic role in Switzerland fails to confirm the characteristics of a Democratic Corporatist system, which allegedly “tends to emphasize the duty of the State to provide conditions for full participation of all citizens in social life” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 161). However, the results may shift when considering the strong position of public broadcasting in Democratic Corporatist media systems, as in the case of Switzerland or Germany.²

The following cluster includes Greece (Polarized Pluralist model) and the United States (Liberal model). Both scored the highest in the civic role, which, in the case of the United States, supports theoretical expectations from heuristic media system models, but, in the case of Greece, refutes those expectations. Chile, Hungary, and Germany—two transitional democracies and one advanced democracy—comprise a fourth cluster, with a greater presence of the infotainment role, with scores higher than the global average.

The fifth cluster is composed of Russia, Argentina, Poland, and Malaysia, all representing transitional democracies from different regions. They show a higher performance of the civic role, a higher performance of the infotainment role, and a comparatively lower performance of the service role. Finally, Ecuador is the only country in the sixth cluster, with its highest performance in service and a relatively lower performance in the other two roles.

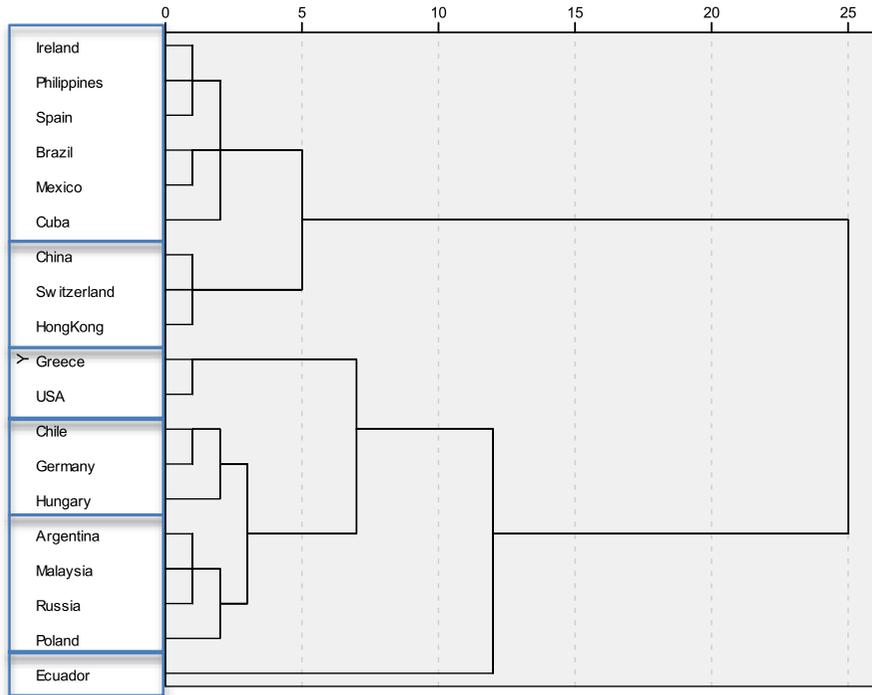


Figure 3 Dendrogram for the Audience Approach Domain using Ward Linkage (rescaled distance cluster combine).

Discussion

The main concern guiding this study was to know the extent to which professional role performance reflected patterns of hybridization in journalistic cultures across different types of countries around the globe, and the type of hybridization that emerges when comparing journalistic cultures.

According to standard assumptions stemming from the literature on media system research, journalists from advanced democracies, with more solid media markets and higher levels of journalistic professionalization, would have been expected to perform the watchdog role more prominently in news, whereas journalists from transitional or nondemocratic countries would have been expected to display the loyal-facilitator role. In consolidated market economies, the infotainment and the service roles could also have been expected to prevail. Also, previous studies on role conceptions would lead us to expect that journalists in transitional and developing countries are more likely to show a more interventionist role (Hanitzsch et al., 2011; Weaver, 1998; Weaver & Willnat, 2012). However, when looking at the performance of professional roles across countries belonging to different regions, under different political regimes—some of which are classified in ideal media system typologies—our results do not give strong support to these expectations.

Overall, the most performed roles in descending order are the disseminator, watchdog, civic, and infotainment roles, although significant differences emerge in the presence of the six roles analyzed in news—especially in the watchdog and the loyal-facilitator roles, followed by the civic and the interventionist roles—when comparing across countries, which do not correspond either to existing ideal media system typologies, or to clearly discernible patterns around political regime types or regional clusters.

Instead, our results reveal multilayered patterns of hybridity in journalistic cultures when looking at a more diverse range of countries, which includes not only advanced but also transitional and nondemocratic countries, thus supporting our main hypothesis.³ Moreover, our data show that even within advanced and transitional democracies, or nondemocratic countries, there are mixtures and nuances in terms of how journalists perform different roles in news.

The only role that shows global homogeneity is the disseminator role, in line with previous assumptions coming from both media system (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) and role conception studies (Hanitzsch *et al.*, 2011; Weaver & Willnat, 2012). Regardless of region or political status, journalists around the world seem to have assimilated the fact-based, opinion-free informational template of journalism, although results vary significantly in the degree to which opinion and a more active stance of the journalists prevail.

In contrast, roles that involve the adoption of a certain stance toward either powerful institutions or audiences do merit a far different interpretation. Globally, watchdog, civic, and infotainment roles all followed suit in order of importance, whereas the loyal-facilitator role was the least present across countries, except for Cuba. This is, in fact, one of the few countries where theoretical expectations are met with respect to high interventionism, loyalism, and low infotainment in the press, and where the characteristics of its political system appear to strongly shape the news.

Another key finding is that differences in role performance do not support previous ideal media system typologies for advanced democracies (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), as had been previously found by other studies that empirically tested different variables against these systems (Brüggemann *et al.*, 2014). While some media system characteristics might impact the performance of certain roles, our results can attest to the fluidity and dynamism of roles and their contingency upon a variety of factors beyond the structure, the system, or their normative conception (Vos, 2017), especially when comparing a wider range of countries and news.

The only two cases where advanced democracies that have been classified into specific media system models (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) also share commonalities in the performance of some roles were Spain and Greece, which group together in the Power Relations domain; and Germany and Switzerland, which comprise the same cluster in the Journalistic Voice domain—although other countries were also part of their respective clusters.

At the national level, while countries such as Ireland confirm the expectations of a liberal media tending toward a disseminative type of reporting, other so-called Liberal

journalistic cultures, such as the United States, instead rank higher in contrasting traits such as interventionism (Esser & Umbricht, 2013), with an intermediate position regarding, for example, the watchdog role. Indeed, two countries belonging to the Polarized Pluralist model, like Greece and Spain, perform the watchdog role at a higher level than the United States. In this regard, our data show that journalists from countries that have experienced some sort of political turmoil in recent years and that are not normally associated with this role perform a monitoring function at a much higher level than other countries associated with it at the normative level.

This result gives support to two important theoretical arguments: Interaction with the political system is an important factor in shaping how journalism and news media work (Mancini, 2015); and professional roles are contingent upon the changing nature of local sociopolitical conditions, whereby the specific historical context significantly matters when analyzing the performance of journalistic roles (Vos, 2017), such as the trend toward more opinionated journalism in the United States.

The data also show that for some domains, regional-country grouping tends to match certain common expectations, albeit only partially. Although they always appear in clusters alongside other countries, China and Hong Kong group together in all analyzed domains. The same happens with Russia, Hungary, and Poland for the Journalistic Voice domain, and also with Russia and Poland for the Audience Approach domain, supporting existing literature on similar trends in postcommunist countries (Gross & Jakubowicz, 2013).

Regarding the other roles and cases, our results show that journalistic cultures are heterogeneous and hybrid in the sense that they display a different range of contrasting roles in print news, as is also the case in role conception literature. Second, role clusters by domain are also hybrid: Countries that group together in a certain cluster have often little in common with each other. In this regard, our data do not support the idea of geographic or sociopolitical homogenization in advanced democracies, since Western European countries and the United States were all scattered across different clusters, and rarely grouped together.

With respect to transitional democracies and nondemocratic countries, our data show twofold support for multilayered hybridization in journalistic cultures. First, transitional democracies do not form a unified cluster in any role, as they are also scattered across clusters with advanced democracies and nondemocratic regimes, both when analyzed by domain and globally. This result no doubt re-opens the opportunity to search for new ways of categorizing emerging democracies beyond their mere political regime or geographical location.

Also, there is no significant evidence to support the idea that journalists in transitional democracies are more likely to be interventionist, as previous studies on role conceptions have found (Hanitzsch *et al.*, 2011; Weaver & Willnat, 2012). This issue reflects not only a normative-practice gap (Mellado & Van Dalen, 2014), but also the need for more qualitative research to ascertain how journalists really understand their roles in different parts of the world.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to test the hybridization thesis in journalistic cultures, examining how countries cluster together with respect to the performance of professional roles in news, as had been the case with media system and role conception research.

Our study offers compelling evidence about the multilayered hybridization of journalistic cultures at the performative level, showing that the presence of professional roles in news reflects heterogeneous, but at the same time, fluid and dynamic journalistic cultures, thereby challenging many assumptions and past arguments. Indeed, our results reveal that although hybridity seems to be a global phenomenon, it manifests itself in different ways in the performance of roles across a diverse group of countries. Unlike standard expectations based on previous research that found consistency across some countries sharing key characteristics with respect to certain roles endorsed by journalists, our results do not support the idea of geographical, political, or ideal media system grouping. Instead, we found that the hybrid mixture of traits that belong to different theoretical expectations is the norm in the performance of journalistic roles in news across and within advanced, transitional, and nondemocratic countries.

Waisbord (2013) emphasizes that to fully understand the changing cultures of journalism, questions about the exporting of Western ideals no longer seem to capture the dynamic landscape of professional role performance. Under this lens, we interpret our findings in light of “the tensions of globalization between the forces of homogenization and heterogeneity, and the dynamic character of cultural formation and change” (p. 229).

Indeed, while the literature on media systems has yielded clear clusters in some Western-based studies analyzing specific characteristics from the institutional, normative, or role-conception perspective—and particularly evident when using small country samples—according to our study, there are important indicators of increasing hybridization at the performative level, especially when integrating a broader, more plural, and undertheorized sample of countries, as well as a more diverse type of news beyond the front page or political events alone. The reason for this might be that, unlike normative values that are easier to transfer through journalism education and global discourses of professionalism (Deuze, 2005; Zelizer, 2017), reporting practices that lead to actual role performance are constantly mutating and could be mediated not only by societal, organizational, and individual factors (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013), but arguably by the local context of news (Waisbord, 2013). As Vos, 2017, p. 55) argues, specific contexts shape the presence of journalistic roles, and this process is not always as straightforward as common assumptions might suggest.

In this regard, our study argues that the “hybrid” performance of roles across a variety of countries might not only be attributed to the media system, the political regime, or the geographical region, but also to the nature of news production in itself. Indeed, one possibility is that other variables might better explain the clustering of

countries regarding the performance of certain roles, thereby opening up important opportunities for future comparative research.

Judging by the effect size in role differences, only those associated with the Power Relation domain — especially loyalism — seem to be linked to a higher degree to characteristics of regional, political, or media system clusters. While differences between countries are important for some roles, research also needs to assess the importance that factors such as organizational (market orientation, political leaning, platform, public vs. private media), news routines (beats, sourcing, resources, digitalization, convergence processes), as well as other unaccounted variables play in the performance of roles in news.

Although this is a pioneering study in measuring the performance of journalistic roles in different continents, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, future research must include countries from Oceania, Africa, and the Middle East. In our case, while every attempt was made to incorporate researchers from these countries, a lack of resources prevented them from joining the study. Africa, in particular, is a sensitive case, since it has been absent from most cross-national studies and we need to acknowledge that results might show a more complex picture if the sample could include countries from this region.

In addition, future studies could broaden our understanding of role performance in different media systems by comparing our results for the print press to other news platforms, such as television, radio, online, and also social media.

Moreover, future studies need to dig deeper into each of the domains analyzed here in order to examine how the mixtures of traits that shape the clustering of countries in this study belong to different theoretical traditions, and how we could go forward to explain substantial differences between journalistic role performance in different systems, and to find meaningful patterns of differences and similarities, since they are not all hybrid in the same way.

We are aware that the analysis of one single dimension — in this case the performance of professional roles — cannot illustrate the entire picture regarding differences among countries in journalistic cultures; hence, future studies should integrate other traits that characterize media system models in different countries, in order to know, for example, whether the level of commercialization, or the presence of historically strong public media, explains the differences of role performance in a different way.

In order to be more specific about the type of hybridization we found, this study shows the importance of future studies that could break down the broad findings in greater detail for particular systems (e.g., using smaller samples or specific roles or news topics), as well as the use of qualitative analyses. More specific patterns might be also explained by developing new typologies or by identifying variables that would account for particular findings. As we can see, one of the values of this study actually lies in pointing us toward these tasks, with the aim of addressing the wide range of questions that we need to answer in the future. For example, our data show that the United States, Brazil, and Mexico have a similar presence of the watchdog role. However, reading specific literature on Latin American journalism (Guerrero

& Márquez-Ramírez, 2014; Waisbord, 2000), we might suspect that we need to look more closely at “what kind” of watchdog journalism this actually is, in what context it may appear, and so on. The same would be true of watchdog reporting in Spain or Greece.

Despite all these limitations, this study has important implications for the communication field, as it shows that when considering the performance of essential roles of journalism in society, ideal media models or conventional assumptions about journalistic cultures fail to work, so future efforts to categorize journalistic roles according to regional, political, or ideal media system typologies should not downplay the important nuances and mixtures between and within different journalisms across the globe.

Since today a single and stable model of professional journalism seems to be absent (Mancini, 2015), hybridization is a useful analytical way of understanding journalistic cultures, within a context where not only the practice of journalism in specific countries displays particular roles, but also where the roles form noncohesive clusters of apparently dissimilar countries. In this sense, we consider hybridity as a general perspective that helps to frame which kinds of hybridization develop under what circumstances, as well as more specific kinds of explanations. All of this supports the urgent need to develop new theoretical and methodological approaches that provide fresh insights in order to better explain the differences and similarities of journalistic cultures across the globe. Since identifying the variables that explain journalistic role performance is paramount, our study calls for more dialogue between professional role studies, media system research, and studies on news production, in order to identify the key variables that will help to broaden our knowledge of this hybridization.

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Notes

- 1 The model fit was assessed using the following criteria: chi-square value (χ^2), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; smaller than .05), the comparative fit index (CFI) value (>.90), and the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI) value (>.90).
- 2 Since for Switzerland we included newspapers in German, Italian, and French, we reconducted the cluster analysis as well as the other tests considering only those newspapers written in German, to compare with our results from Germany, but the differences remained.

- 3 This holds true both when analyzed separately across the three domains—journalistic voice, relation with power, and audience approach—or when comparing the clustering of countries taking the six journalistic roles together.

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