

Journalistic Role Performance

A New Research Agenda in a Digital and Global Media Environment

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Global press freedom declined to its lowest point in 12 years in 2015, mainly due to political, criminal, and terrorist forces that sought to co-opt or silence the media in their struggle for power (Freedom House, 2016). As of 2015, only one in seven people around the world lived in a country that had a free media system, a country in which the coverage of news was robust, and the safety of journalists guaranteed. The rest have been living in countries whose press was either “partly free” or “not free” (Freedom House, 2016). As one of the most dangerous places in a world that has seen a recent upswing in violence against journalists, in Mexico, for example, even a car crash is not a simple car crash. “You have to call somebody to make sure you can write about it,” one journalist said, “because it might actually not be an accident but a purposeful vehicular homicide organized by the cartel” (Priest, 2015). And while journalists are aware of how the government and cartels are controlling news stories, self-censoring has become a common tactic. The situation of journalists in Mexico is the rule rather than the exception. Journalists in Russia, China, Turkey, Cuba, Iran, Venezuela, and many other countries from around the world work also under severe and difficult circumstances.

Indeed, the threatening of and harassment of journalists are a global challenge that even affects advanced democracies like Sweden, usually seen as a very safe and free country when it comes to the autonomy of journalists (Löfgren & Örnebring, 2016).

From a practical point of view, autonomy is contingent on the willingness and the ability of journalists to work free from any attempts to censor the press in favor of commercial, political, or managerial goals (Waisbord, 2013). Thus, journalistic autonomy can also be conceptualized as the extent to which journalists can put their professional roles and ideals into practice (Mellado & Van Dalen, 2014)—in other words, the professional role performances we can observe in different countries.

This is what this book addresses. It goes in depth into the concept of journalistic role performance to better understand the importance of studying

professional roles of journalists from its performative level and its contribution to both media studies and the communication field from a global perspective. This is crucial, since professional roles are a key aspect when defining journalism as a profession. Without autonomy, however, and with increasing forms of self-censorship, the roles that journalists may consider as important cannot be translated into an actual journalistic performance; hence, journalism eventually does not serve the purpose it deeply wants to fulfill in society. Different scholars have argued that journalism requires autonomy to serve democracy (Peters & Broersma, 2013; Waisbord, 2013). However, even in the absence of democracy, journalists develop creative strategies to gain and maintain autonomy (Hanitzsch & Mellado, 2011). This may result from “an internal struggle between what the journalists feel they should do (or want to do), and their everyday practice” (Mellado et al., 2012, p. 74)—that is, struggles between the evaluative and the performative elements of journalism cultures (Hanitzsch, 2007; Hellmueller, 2014).

Meanwhile, the blurring boundaries of journalism as well as the changes of its societal role in times of the Internet make it more and more important to define and assess the concrete roles and products that journalists offer to society (Singer et al., 2011). No doubt, important political, economic, and technological transformations around the world, as well as audience fragmentation, have had a significant impact on both the news media environment and journalistic cultures over the past years, creating high uncertainty and excitement about the future of journalism, which make this book timely and relevant.

The speed at which news and information travel within society increases every day, and the privileged space that practitioners once had to inform different audiences is no longer the same. New technologies create opportunities to produce news information that is not the sole domain of professional journalists any longer. Nowadays, citizens create and manage news content. All those changes have helped to dilute the traditional roles assigned to journalists. Furthermore, scholars suggest that journalism is becoming a somewhat redundant practice, and that its roles are gradually eroding (Mancini, 2013; Peters & Broersma, 2013).

In this context, we need to understand how professional journalists see their roles, but at the same time, we also should be able to know how these roles manifest in practice, how that affects news decisions and the outcome of journalistic work in the new media environment, to what extent these news decisions and outcomes differ from communication content by other social groups that are also part of the new media ecosystem, as well as to assert the different locations that journalism has within the public sphere (Conboy, 2004; Witschge, 2012).

Of course, journalistic role performance can be studied at both the production process (news routines) stage and at the news outcome stage, so the performance of roles can take the form of actions performed prior to the output, such as adherence to newsroom routines, interaction with sources, and also the form of the news product.

This book contributes to theory building, reconstructing journalism roles through the lens of role performance—a fascinating concept that refers to the collective outcome of concrete newsroom decisions and different journalistic styles, considering different constraints that influence the practice of the profession—but also reconstructing professional roles as objects of study in a more holistic way.

The main goals of this book are conceptualizing and contextualizing the concept of journalistic role performance, but also to address role performance from different methodological approaches, in order to understand journalism culture as a process in which professional roles can be articulate in different manifestations, explaining the relationship and gap between news practices (i.e., journalistic performance) and normative ideals that have been central in the study of journalism in the past; and finally, assessing the contribution of professional journalism to the communication field.

Unwrapping Journalistic Role Performance as Object of Study

Professional roles have been one of the key topics in journalism research over the past six decades, mostly from the perspective of studies on normative standards and especially, journalistic role conceptions. Indeed, a large body of research on professional roles has analyzed both the different roles that journalism should normatively fulfill in society (Christians et al., 2009), as well as the roles that journalists give more importance to when working in different political, cultural, and technological contexts (Hanitzsch et al., 2011; Patterson & Donsbach, 1996; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986, 1996; Weaver et al., 2007; Weaver & Willnat, 2012; Willnat, Weaver & Choi, 2013). As different scholars have documented, in any of the cases, professional roles have been a very Western-oriented stream of research (Hanitzsch, 2007; Josephi, 2005; Mellado, 2015).

However, considerably less attention has been given to the study of the materialization of these roles in both news decisions and the news outcome that reaches the public (Mellado, 2015; Vos, 2002).

Journalism culture implies a particular set of ideas but also practices by which journalists legitimate their role in society and render their work meaningful (Hanitzsch, 2007, p. 369). Authors such as Hanitzsch (2007) and Hellmueller (2014) have specifically suggested that journalism culture manifests not only at the evaluative level (professional views of journalists), but also at the cognitive (perception and interpretation of what news is) and at the performative level (the way journalists materialize their work in practice).

While studying role conception is crucial for our understanding of journalistic culture, the cognitive (e.g., how journalists interpret news events) and—in the case of this volume—the performative level (e.g., how journalists do their work) may provide different perspectives of journalism around the world, especially in countries in which evaluative elements are less articulated in practice.

Although the interest in analyzing how professional roles manifest in practice was discussed in different papers and articles over the last decades, it has only been during the last few years that scholars have become interested in studying role performance as the *loci of empirical examination* (Hellmueller & Mellado, 2015; Mellado, 2015; Mellado & Van Dalen, 2014).

One of the basic assumptions of role conception research is that the way in which journalists understand their roles shapes the news content that they produce. Nevertheless, there is inconclusive evidence to support that relationship within the journalistic field (Mellado, 2015). While some studies argue that there is a significant relationship between role conceptions and journalistic decisions (Kepplinger et al., 1991; Patterson & Donsbach, 1996; Starck & Soliski, 1977), recent research has shown a gap between rhetoric and practice (Mellado & Van Dalen, 2014; Tandoc, Hellmueller, & Vos, 2013; Vos, 2002). Moreover, the gatekeeping theory and an array of sociology of news approaches have suggested that a causal explanation of journalistic performance only based on role conception should be questioned rather than presumed, as journalists are exposed to various forces of influence (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013; Vos & Heinderyckx, 2015).

In that regard, the large amount of interest in the study of professional roles as ideals in comparison to the study of role performance over the last decades may be considered surprising, taking into account the existing theoretical development coming from media sociology and news production studies (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). While these studies have shown that individual factors do have an impact on the actual news content, they have also shown that organizational and extra-organizational factors have much more power in the practice of journalism (Hellmueller & Mellado, 2015).

Also, there is a scarcity of comparative research in journalism studies particularly when it comes to studies that look at media content beyond agenda-setting and framing research. With no doubt, those theories are very important, but explaining the gap between professional norms and journalistic practice is also a crucial piece to understand our profession nowadays, and the study of role performance definitively contributes in that regard (Blumler & Cushion, 2014).

The different chapters that compose this volume provide answers to the essential question of how journalists see their roles impact decisions in the newsroom, the negotiation process in how a story is produced, as well as the final news product that is shared with an audience. This question is particularly crucial to enable a cross-national discussion on the visibility of journalistic roles in news, and the gap between role ideals and professional practice (Mellado & Van Dalen, 2014). Of course, an important issue in studying journalistic role performance as well as the gap between ideals and practice is defining and measuring the presence of various journalistic roles in news production and news reporting. No doubt, this is more complex than measuring professional roles in surveys with journalists. This issue is tackled in more depth by this book.

Clarifying Concepts on Professional Roles Studies

If we move to role theory, we find that a role itself can be defined as the expected behavior of people who occupy a particular social status and position in society (Biddle, 1979; Montgomery, 1998)—that is, the function undertaken by someone in accordance with normative demands upon someone in his or her position (Goffman, 1961, p. 85). In this context, a social role can be conceptualized not only as an expected attitude, but also an expected behavior associated with a particular position in a group, organization, and/or society (Coyné, 1984; Lynch, 2007; Turner, 2006).

The differences in the definition of a role as a concept are basically limited by the applied approach or perspective. The functionalist approach—the one used for most of the studies on professional roles within the journalistic field—sees a role as the group of expectations that society places on the individual, creating regular rules and patterns of behavior. It is important to bear in mind, nevertheless, that rules may not apply to everyone, because normative expectations can clash with expectations from various reference groups, such as sources, audiences, and even their personal expectations. The interactionism perspective, meanwhile, sees roles as not fixed or prescribed, but as negotiated and changeable within a particular social process (Blumer, 1969; Lynch, 2007; Vos, 2005).

As it was already mentioned, and subscribing to the latter perspective, in this book we define journalistic role performance as the collective outcome of concrete newsroom decisions and the style of journalistic reporting, considering different constraints that influence and enable journalism as a professional practice.

News content and news decisions are seldom an individual output, and role performance as a concept helps us to connect both journalism and media studies. Indeed, since journalistic role performance focuses its attention on specific journalistic decisions and news reporting styles, the concept then enables us to directly link sociology of news production research with the studies on professional roles, filling a gap in current research literature. Without a doubt, the lack of articulation between both streams of research (Schudson, 2003; Shoemaker & Reese, 2013) has brought different problems, preventing the appearance of theoretical and methodological approaches capable of stretching and articulating the progress that has been made by research on the communication field. This includes designing better measures to study professional roles, and building new conceptual approaches for addressing the gap between norms, ideologies, and practice in a more holistic manner. Both perspectives combined potentially offer strong foundations for evaluating the practice of journalism.

In this context, understanding professional roles as social phenomena allows us to analyze the different stages that compose this complex and fertile construct, moving from the concept of role conception to the concept of role performance.

In fact, when talking about professional roles we can actually refer to at least four different concepts: role conception, role perception, role enactment, and role performance. The implications are located not only at the conceptual level (what are we conceptualizing and operationalizing) but also at the methodological one (how we measure or empirically assess professional roles), so it is important to start this book with some conceptual clarifications of what we mean by these different concepts, and how they can be related, since they will be used for different purposes in the chapters included in this volume.

Although the four concepts can be located at the evaluative level (e.g., the journalist can conceive his or her roles, perceive roles, perceive how he or she does his or her job, and the audience can also perceive and evaluate the performance of the journalists), role performance as a concept itself is located at the performative level, in which the actual practice of journalism comes into play.

The performative level represents the level to be most likely observed by the public and different reference groups, and a platform to articulate the cognitive and evaluative level of journalism cultures (Hellmueller, 2014). The study of role performance enables then an analysis that captures the outcome of newsroom decisions, but also captures the so-called “back-stage” of news production, that is, the negotiations with different reference groups, the search for sources and the verification process (see Table I.1). Meanwhile, at the evaluative level, attitudes, perceptions, and motivations are studied that serve analytical purposes, but do not necessarily translate into journalistic practices.

When we talk about role conception we refer to the purposes of the profession that journalists conceive as more important at the individual level, where the locus of role evaluation is not necessarily related to social consensus.

Role perception more likely refers to perceived role expectations in society. The idea here is that journalists do not conceive a role, but perceive a specific task as socially required. Role perceptions do not necessarily have a location in the conceiver, but might be a followed script that has been internalized and is located in the larger social structure, but did not form a mental representation of that role for a particular journalist. Any journalist may perceive role expectations at any time, but journalists do not always have a self-conceived role, but follow role expectations. For example, journalists perceiving a watchdog role internalize the behavior that is expected as the role *was conceived in society*. Donsbach (2008) argues that, “In a causal model of factors influencing news decisions, role perceptions become an intervening variable that moderates the influence of primary variables such as the news value of people or topics in the news, or subjective beliefs.”

Role enactment (Tandoc et al., 2013; Vos, 2005) is thus conceptually different from role performance in view of the fact that role enactment assesses the putting in practice of a journalistic role focusing on the individual journalist and the need for consistency between his or her role conception and his or her behavior. The desire for consistency is a possible explanation for the

Table 1.1 The conceptual distinction between role conception, role perception, role enactment and role performance in journalism

<i>Role concept</i>	<i>Role conception</i>	<i>Role perception</i>	<i>Role enactment</i>	<i>Role performance</i>
<i>Definition</i>	Journalist's own formulation of the journalistic roles that are most important to them	Journalists' or media's role expectations in society	Individual behaviour materialized in news decisions and journalistic reporting	Collective outcome of concrete newsroom decisions and the style of journalistic reporting
<i>Level of Analysis</i>	Individual level (the locus of role evaluation is not necessarily related to social consensus)	Individual / Organizational level (do not necessarily have a location in the conceiver, it is related to social consensus, and can also be related to the role journalists think is important for the media where they work)	Individual level (need autonomy and consistency between role conception and behavior)	Result of dynamic negotiations of different reference groups
<i>Method of Study</i>	Mostly surveys and qualitative interviews	Mostly surveys and qualitative interviews	Mostly surveys, interviews and experimental designs	Mostly content analysis, textual analysis, critical discourse analysis and ethnography

assumed impact of role conceptions on role enactments (see Tandoc et al., 2013). Within journalism studies, role enactment has been addressed mostly at the evaluative level of analysis, referring to what the journalists think they do, and/or to what extent they believe they can do what is important for them, or for the media where they work. As we just mentioned, role enactment differs from role performance in that it is more difficult to accomplish in journalism, because it implicates journalists' autonomy and freedom over their work to put in practice at the individual level what they think are the most important roles of journalism. Some studies have used the term role enactment to analyze the materialization of journalistic roles in news content (Carpenter, 2015; Tandoc et al., 2013; Vos, 2002; just to mention a few). Nevertheless, because internal and external constraints that impact journalism make the gap between ideals and practice inevitable (Mellado & Van Dalen, 2016), we believe the concept of role enactment may be never fully applied within the journalistic profession.

Of course, we can go more in depth and also interrelate this concept with the two previous ones. In fact, the journalist can be answering two different

questions, when he/she is surveyed, which have different implications. One is to what extent they feel autonomous enough to accomplish what is individually important for them, or to what extent they think they accomplish the roles that are important for the media where they work. Some empirical studies have addressed the study of professional roles from this perspective (Culberston, 1983; Oi, Fukuda, & Sako, 2012; Patterson & Donsbach, 1996; Ramaprasad & Hamdy, 2006; Skovsgaard, Albæk, Bro, & de Vreese, 2013; Weischenberg, Malik, & Scholl, 2006).

Finally, the concept of *role performance* deals with the manifestation of professional ideals in journalistic practice. Role performance deals with behaviors (actions, processing or gathering reactions) influenced by reference groups, which leads to performing roles (which in journalism has to do with news at different levels of the production process) in a specific group, organization, or society (Biddle, 1979; Burke & Reitzes, 1981). Following this argument, role performance can be seen as an outcome of dynamic negotiations influenced by different internal and external constraints that potentially inhibit, but can also enable the practice of journalism (Mellado, 2015; Vos, 2005). As we know, some roles can be perceived as legitimate, while others are not, depending on multiple reasons. In this context, role performance allows us to assess which proportion of the variance in journalists' news decisions and reporting styles can be explained by a journalist's specific role conception, perception, or perceived enactment, and which proportion can be traced back to other variables that are not in the mix of expectations perceived as legitimate.

Because the performance of a role articulates the relationship between the journalist and different levels of influences, "the concept offers an appealing conceptual bridge between agency and structure" (Lynch, 2007, p. 381).

In any case, one has to keep in mind that although its relevant components are inevitably determined in reference to normative criteria, journalistic role performance is from the outset, not a normative one (Mellado, 2015). In other words: an individual journalist's role performance that differs from the characteristics of his or her role conception, perception, or perceived role enactment is not *per se* an indicator of a malfunctioning news organization because the respective journalist might have his or her "conflictive" roles, the influence of which is reduced in the editorial process, all of which affect and make the outcome of the news become a collective product.

Empirically, the gap between role conception and role performance is measured as the degree of congruency or discrepancy between an individual's role conception/perception/perceived enactment, or even the perceived performance by the audience, and his or her professional practice. Thus, by default, measuring the gap between rhetoric and practice requires a combination of methods on different levels (e.g., the level of individual data where the role ideals and its different inputs are measured in interviews, and the actual professional behavior by means of content analysis, newsroom observation, and the like). The impact of other variables on news decisions

and reporting styles can also be assessed through the interviews or data collected at the organizational and/or societal level.

Some pioneering efforts have started to measure the manifestation of roles, specifically in news content (Tandoc et al., 2013; Van Dalen, de Vreese, & Albæk 2012; Vos, 2002; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996). Tandoc et al. (2013), for example, found that in contrast to self-reported role conceptions of journalists, routine influences and organizational location were stronger and more consistent predictors of role performance. Nevertheless, most of the existing studies do not develop a commonly accepted conceptualization or a methodological standardization of reliable scales.

With the goal of surpassing these shortcomings, one of the latest studies that proposes to analyze both journalistic role performance and the gap between the evaluative level and the performative level of journalistic culture is the Journalistic Role Performance Around the Globe Project, a collaborative endeavor of more than 20 countries that through operationalized and validated measures (Hellmueller & Mellado, 2015; Mellado, 2015; Mellado & Van Dalen, 2016), analyzes the performance of different professional roles in different cultural settings.

Specific studies in this regard have already shown interesting results. For example, by comparing the role conception of Chilean journalists with the news content they produce, Mellado and Van Dalen (2014) studied the gap between role ideals and news outcome, analyzing which roles render a larger gap and also what type of journalists are more likely to accomplish the roles they give more importance to. These authors found a significant gap between role conception and performance especially for the service, civic, and watchdog roles. They also found the gap varies between journalists working at the elite and the popular press, that greater perceived autonomy leads to a smaller gap, while economic and political influences as well as belonging to a beat increase the gap. Meanwhile, Mellado et al. (2016) comparatively measure journalistic role performance in 18 newspapers from five Latin American countries by analyzing the presence of the interventionist, watchdog, loyal, service, infotainment, and civic roles of journalism. The results of that study show that the region is far from homogeneous as different roles and indicators of role performance tend to vary across countries and reflect the region's hybrid media systems and ambiguous journalistic cultures. Moreover, they found that other variables such as "media type," "political orientation," and "news topic" were also significant predictors for all six roles of journalistic performance on various levels.

Furthermore, Hellmueller and Mellado (2016) analyzed journalistic role performances in two different media systems specifically looking at the performance of the watchdog role in Chile and the U.S. The results show that there exists a different professional performance of the watchdog role in the two media systems. The watchdog role in the case of the U.S. was centrally connected to political and government sources in news stories, whereas the watchdog role in Chile was significantly less performed in national news

stories and showed weaker ties to political sources than in the U.S. sample. These results show the differences of journalistic role performance, even though the use of surveys may not have indicated such a gap (Mellado & Van Dalen, 2014).

Challenges for the Study of Journalistic Role Performance

Overall, research on journalistic roles has been based on an implicit model of Western journalistic professionalism but has not generated the same conceptual and empirical understanding across the world, or even across Western countries, especially when we talk about roles as ideals of practice, but also when we talk about the practice of the profession itself.

In fact, while some studies connect the idea of media performance with journalistic roles (Norris & Odugbemi, 2008), other studies address news practice without explicitly considering the roles that are behind those practices, tending to talk more about news culture and media performance than journalistic culture and journalistic performance (Esser, 2008; Esser & D'Angelo, 2003; Muller, 2014). In this book we specifically introduce journalistic role performance from the perspective of journalism studies.

One major challenge observation is the overall dissolution of differences under the influence of epistemologies associated with mainstream U.S. research and the English language as *lingua franca* (Waisbord, 2016). In regard to journalism and communication studies, the translation of concepts goes beyond strictly linguistic matters, but involves ontological translations (between humans) (Waisbord, 2016). Because different contextual conditions existed and still exist (e.g., between Germany and the U.S.), the field of communication developed differently and concepts are interpreted based on the conditions in which they were studied. For example, the historical roots in Germany, which grew out of studies of public opinion and philosophy, opened different discussions on journalism than in the U.S. that are related to fact-finding reportorial work (Schudson, 2001, p. 166). By way of contrast, the French literary and editorial press tradition (*la presse d'opinion*), which is very didactic and interpretative, contrasts sharply with the informational and fact-based journalistic tradition of the U.S. (Benson & Hallin, 2007; Berkowitz & Eko, 2007).

In this context, the distinction and disagreement over the use of the term “role conception” and “role perception” is a reflection of many implicit assumptions that underlie the study of journalistic professionalism discussed in this book. Implicit assumption made research investigating the concept of journalistic roles very problematic—yet, role conception and role perception are widely used interchangeably in empirical research studies across the world as they are the same concept, without considering that they are mostly culturally dependent, and so have to be embedded within a particular context.

Another challenge for the study of professional roles, and specifically, the study of role performance, is that in a global and digital media environment with increased global connectivity, the conceptual boundaries of journalism have shifted, suggesting a “network space” in which journalism occurs (Reese, 2016, p. 3). For many years, journalists have been studied under the umbrella of the news organizations. The level of hierarchy and gatekeeping theory (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009) proposes individual journalists to be embedded within an organizational level of influence over their work and professional attitudes. Further, on the social institutional level and the social system level, journalistic culture is conceptualized as being shaped by the economic, political, and legal system in which journalists operate (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). That is, no doubt, a key theoretical contribution to journalism and media studies. Nevertheless, in a global and interconnected news environment, concepts such as networks become important and journalistic role performances, in the form of scrutinizing and criticizing the government, may be found outside organizational structures—on social media, blogs, or as being produced by freelance journalists who work outside traditional newsroom structures.

Finally, the plurality and situational nature of professional roles is another aspect that future research needs to consider when studying professional roles at any of their stages. Traditional approaches assume that professional roles are fully contracted by behavior and categorized by location, norms, values, or beliefs (Ashforth, 2001). Nevertheless, previous studies already suggest that journalistic roles are relational, situational, can overlap in practice, and hence cannot be considered as discrete categories (Mellado, 2015; Vos, 2005).

As Lynch (2007, p. 379) stated, “multiple roles are a common part of our modern, pluralistic culture,” so role switching or role conflict should not be seen as necessarily a problematic process, but rather as a common experience within the journalistic field. Indeed, it is unlikely that journalists would thwart their different professional roles, but rather they activate them in tandem, depending on a particular situation (DiMaggio 1997; Lynch, 2007). Both expectations and putting in practice of journalistic roles are manifold and ambivalent, and depend on different political, economic, and media systems (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Waisbord, 2013).

Considering the great changes that the public and society are undergoing, it seems to be necessary to constantly revise the role performance of journalism on a cross-national and cross-cultural level.

This is connected with other aspects that this book addresses across its chapters. Roles are not good or bad *per se*, or normatively required versus normatively avoided. In democracy, for example, journalists may be considered detached watchdogs (Hanitzsch, 2011), but at other times, the role of an advocate, loyal, or service would be more appropriate, particular in political systems that are going through important political transitions. According to Christians et al. (2009, p. 19), “Normative means that explanations are based

on choices among cultural values and ultimately on some premises about the nature and purposes of human existence.” This book shows that normatively accepted roles are not necessarily the same in all cultures and historical processes, and do not necessarily translate into the same role performances.

Studying journalistic performance through the lens of professional roles is far from being a mere academic exercise since the way in which news information is delivered has a profound impact on citizens, on governance, and on the democratic construction of a specific national system. In this sense, this book advances on the conceptual, contextual, and methodological context that should be addressed when approaching professional roles, and particularly journalistic role performance.

The Chapters of This Book

Based on the previous conceptualization, this edited volume lays out the conceptual and methodological framework to introduce and define the concept of *journalistic role performance* from different perspectives. Specifically, this book extends our knowledge on the study of professional roles within the field, providing an important resource for scholars, students, and journalists for understanding both the normative standard and the practice of the profession across the globe.

The first part of this book deals with the conceptualization of journalistic role performance as an object of study, setting the basis for the importance of studying professional roles from a performative perspective. Chapter 1 revisits studies on journalistic role conceptions from across the world to understand underlying assumptions that have guided this stream of research. The chapter by Claudia Mellado, Lea Hellmueller and David H. Weaver defines professional role ideals and explains the importance of their normative dimension and how they have been developed in other cultural settings. At the same time, the chapter addresses conceptual and methodological limitations of the study of professional role conceptions worldwide, among them, the lack of theorization of professional roles within the journalistic field, the Western bias inherent in journalistic role conception studies, as well as measurement issues, arguing for an urgent need to develop original methodological approaches through collaborative research able to evolve in the study of professional roles within the journalistic field.

While chapter 1 revisits six decades of studies on professional role conceptions, contributions, and shortcomings, chapter 2 offers a historical approach to address the study of professional roles. Specifically, Tim Vos examines various characteristics of roles that emerge from historical analysis, as well as those historically contextual and contingent factors that influence the characteristics of roles, analyzing the coupling of roles, the historical arc of roles, and the granularity of roles. As Vos suggests, social and institutional roles have emerged through a process of construction, so roles are historically constructed and only understood within their historical context.

In chapter 3, Morten Skovsgaard and Peter Bro conceptualize role performance from the perspective of audiences. The authors argue that a distinction between the audience as citizens and the audience as consumers is helpful in understanding professional roles in the mediated public sphere that characterizes the 21st century. What is important about that conceptualization is the potential gap between journalists' role conceptions or perception and their role performance, if news organizations shift their balance toward the audience as consumers rather than citizens, as the news product is perceived as a corporate entity to sell to consumers.

In chapter 4, Henrik Örnebring explores what happens when we shift the focus from epistemology to epistemic practice when moving from role conceptions to role performance. The tension between the professional role ideals and the actual performance of journalism is the focus of this chapter, discussing the notions of objectivity, how epistemology and epistemological beliefs have been linked to role ideals in survey studies, and how epistemology is linked to role performance. He argues that new methodological strategies are needed, and he explains how ethnographic studies could greatly contribute to the study of epistemic practice to be able to observe the process of performing a particular epistemic practice.

Because of the tradition of studying professional roles on a normative level, in chapter 5, Martin Eide takes normative theory as a point of departure examining the link between journalistic norms, its performance and democracy. He specifically asks about what we have to consider when studying normative categories through journalistic role performance. In other words, if we study journalistic role performance considering the normative components of professional roles, what do we have to consider in terms of theoretical conceptualization and validity of the construct of professional roles?

In the final part of the conceptualizing section, Claudia Mellado and Tim Vos examine the structural limits that media platforms place on journalistic role performance and posit a means for assessing role performance across platforms. In chapter 6, they conceptualize the uniqueness of role performances in print, broadcast, and digital platforms—that is, characteristics of roles that are unique to the media platform in which the role is performed but also make the case for performance criteria that are applicable regardless of platform.

The second part of this book contextualizes journalistic role performance, discussing media sociological concepts and how they apply to its study, addressing influence factors and specific journalistic contexts that shape how journalism performs its roles in society.

News routines, role performance, and change guide chapter 7. In this chapter, Ryfe contextualizes role performance within the routines of journalists, arguing that the performance of journalism lie at the heart of journalism, as it is through justifications for their routines that journalists and others create a shared understanding of what journalism is, and is for,

making a conceptual connection between role ideals and role performance when news decisions take place within the newsroom.

In chapter 8, Wilson Lowrey adopts both a repertoire approach and an institutional logic approach to help explain gaps between journalistic ideals and practice contextualizing digital networks as an emerging digital logic that impose new roles for journalists. In this chapter, Lowrey argues that while traditional journalistic logics of performance are challenged, the new media environment of digital networks is not yet fully legitimated, with journalists finally pursuing hybrid role arrangements.

In chapter 9, David Domingo and Florence Le Cam propose to look beyond the newsrooms, at the networked public sphere, in order to explore how journalistic roles can explain the increasing engagement of a diversity of social actors in the production of newsworthy materials. Specifically, the authors analyze the dialogical processes of co-construction of journalistic roles—both at the evaluative and at the performative level, through the interactions of the diversity of actors that engage in the process of news production, outside the traditional journalistic world.

Finally, in chapter 10, Silvio Waisbord addresses journalistic performance beyond the Western world. Waisbord argues that the rift between journalists' declared beliefs and actual practice in the global South should not be interpreted simply as an empirical gap. Rather, it reflects the limitations of an analytical approach to the study of journalistic roles, ethics, and practice grounded in a problematic conception of professionalism. Moreover, the author's suggestion is to bring closer the study of media ethics with the institutional sociology of newswork to contextualize journalistic performance.

The third and final part of the book addresses different methodological approaches to the study of journalistic role performance. The chapters included in this section of the book discuss various challenges and possibilities of studying the manifestation of professional roles in journalistic practice.

In chapter 11, Arjen Van Dalen, Claes De Vreese and Erik Albaek discuss the advantages of approaching the study of journalistic role performance from a mixed quantitative methods approach over single-method designs. Specifically, the authors present emerging standards of studies that combine survey and content analysis, discussing the implications of using mixed methods to study the relation between ideals and practice within journalism.

In chapter 12, Jane Singer addresses aspects of journalistic role performance that are best studied with a combination of methods, arguing that a qualitative approach should be the starting point: "The larger conceptual issue is that with a nuanced and rapidly changing topic such as journalistic role performance, findings based on content creators' articulation of their experiences and perceptions seem particularly valuable as a basis for ongoing exploration of practitioner roles and the activities surrounding their performance."

In chapter 13, Tom Van Hout and Eva De Smedt bring to the forefront the study of journalistic performance through discourse analysis, expanding the long tradition of more quantitative research within the study of

professional roles. Specifically, they do that by asking how professional roles are performed in interaction between journalists and their reference groups during the news production process.

In the final chapter of the book (chapter 14), Michael Karlsson shows how researchers can approach and measure journalistic role performance in a digital news environment, proposing the differences *vis-à-vis* analogue media and potential changes due to digital media in the way journalistic performance should be measured. Specifically, the author suggests what he calls a “liquid content analysis” as an alternative content analysis approach to measure journalistic role performance in digital media.

All of the chapters combined provide a thorough theoretical understanding of the processes of professional practice in relation to the ideals of professional roles, deconstructing professional roles as an object of study, contextualizing journalistic role performance based on different reference groups and the new media ecosystem, as well as outlining different methodological approaches to the study of professional roles, and specifically journalistic role performance, from a holistic perspective.

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