Article

Journalism beyond democracy: A new look into journalistic roles in political and everyday life

Thomas Hanitzsch
Ludwig-Maximilian University of Munich, Germany

Tim P Vos
University of Missouri, USA

Abstract

Journalism researchers have tended to study journalistic roles from within a Western framework oriented toward the media's contribution to democracy and citizenship. In so doing, journalism scholarship often failed to account for the realities in non-democratic and non-Western contexts, as well as for forms of journalism beyond political news. Based on the framework of discursive institutionalism, we conceptualize journalistic roles as discursive constructions of journalism's identity and place in society. These roles have sedimented in journalism's institutional norms and practices and are subject to discursive (re)creation, (re)interpretation, appropriation, and contestation. We argue that journalists exercise important roles in two domains: political life and everyday life. For the domain of political life, we identify 18 roles addressing six essential needs of political life: informational-instructive, analytical-deliberative, critical-monitorial, advocative-radical, developmental-educative, and collaborative-facilitative. In the domain of everyday life, journalists carry out roles that map onto three areas: consumption, identity, and emotion.

Keywords

Democracy, discursive institutionalism, everyday life, journalistic roles, normative theory

Corresponding author:
Thomas Hanitzsch, Department of Communication Studies and Media Research, LMU Munich, Oettingenstr. 67, 80538 Munich, Germany.
Email: hanitzsch@ifkw.lmu.de

Introduction

Journalistic roles have been the subject of a vast array of studies drawing on a variety of conceptual and methodological frameworks. Early conceptualizations of journalism's functions, such as surveillance, correlation, transmission, and entertainment (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1960), continue to serve as a backbone to normative discussions. In one of the most widely used classifications, Denis McQuail (2000: 79–80) identifies five bundles of roles of the news media, including information, correlation, continuity, entertainment, and mobilization. The analytical tradition of studying journalistic roles went into similar directions, where frequently cited studies by Weaver and Wilhoit (1986, 1996) distinguish between journalists acting as 'disseminators', 'interpreters', 'adversarials', and 'populist mobilizers'.

Yet, both the normative and analytical traditions of conceptualizing journalistic roles have come to a point where they increasingly disconnect with journalism's realities in a global world. The argument that we are going to make in this essay is that roles of journalists have been discussed primarily within (1) a profoundly Western framework oriented toward (2) the media's contribution to democracy and citizenship and that (3) a new and more inclusive classification of roles is needed whereby journalism's relevance to the domains of political and everyday life is better articulated.

First, the focus on journalists' roles in democratic contexts, together with a concentration of scholarly resources in the northern hemisphere, has contributed to a Western outlook that tends to pin journalism to the idea of democracy. To be sure, few would deny journalism's centrality to democratic processes, but democracy is itself not necessarily a prerequisite for journalism (Josephi, 2013). Despite overwhelming evidence for alternative roles exercised by journalists in non-Western contexts (Pintak and Ginges, 2008; Romano, 2005), researchers are only starting to fit such practices into their conceptual models.

Furthermore, journalism scholarship has been occupied for decades with studying the roles of journalists in the political context. Other forms of journalism, such as service or lifestyle news, have been marginalized in scholarly discourse and occasionally discredited as an unworthy other. In a world, however, where working on one's identity is increasingly an individual exercise (Bauman, 2000), journalism is not just about providing orientation in the political arena. Journalists are also expected to perform in the domain of everyday life by providing help, advice, guidance, and information about the management of self and everyday life (Eide and Knight, 1999; Underwood, 2001).

Journalistic roles in the literature

No review of literature can do justice to the breadth of scholarly work on journalistic roles. In this section, we would like to highlight some of the main points and trends in two bodies of literature that we believe are most relevant for our subsequent argument: the analytical and the normative traditions of studying journalistic roles.

The analytical tradition is clearly more prominent within the specialized field of journalism studies; its beginnings are usually attributed to the work of Cohen (1963), who proposed to distinguish between a 'neutral' and a 'participant' role. His work was taken

further by Janowitz (1975) by identifying two similar role concepts, 'gatekeeper' and 'advocate'. Continuing the work of Johnstone et al. (1972), Weaver and Wilhoit (1986, 1996) later distinguished four distinct sets of journalists' professional roles: the 'disseminator', 'interpreter', 'adversarial', and 'populist mobilizer'. The scholarship by Weaver and Wilhoit has sparked a variety of surveys outside the United States that largely followed their original questionnaire (see Weaver, 1998). Drawing on interview data about journalists in 22 societies, Weaver and Willnat (2012) reported that the disseminator, analyst, and watchdog roles were most highly valued by journalists from around the world. However, they noted a great deal of disagreement over the relative importance of journalistic roles, which may speak against the idea of a universal set of professional views in journalism globally.

A growing number of studies look at journalists' roles beyond the Western world. Pintak (2014) found Arab journalists see their mission as driving political and social reform, thus acting as, 'change agents' in the political arena (p. 494). Indonesian and Pakistani journalists were reported to be keen to defend national sovereignty, preserve national unity, and foster societal development (Pintak and Nazir, 2013; Romano, 2003). These and other values emphasized in the global South seem to broadly correspond to the idea of 'development journalism' (Xiaoge, 2005).

This is not to say, however, that journalistic roles are 'contained' within national borders and that they neatly map onto common geographic, political, and cultural boundaries. To the contrary, journalistic roles cut across news organizations and different types of societies. The opportunist facilitator role, for instance, which provides support to political leadership and government policy, is also embraced by groups of journalists in the Western world (Hanitzsch, 2011). At the same time, a number of studies have pointed to practices of investigative journalism in China (Tong, 2011).

Overall, the analytical tradition of investigating journalists' professional views has produced a long list of roles that rarely feed back into conceptual work. In fact, most work on journalists' roles in this tradition is mostly descriptive and regrettably short on theory. A noteworthy exception is the work of Donsbach and Patterson (2004), who organized journalistic roles along two basic dimensions: passive versus active and neutral versus advocate. Another example is Hanitzsch (2007), who suggested journalistic roles be classified along three dimensions: interventionism, power distance, and market orientation.

Rarely has this work been connected to the large and growing body of normative work. Normative theories gained momentum shortly after World War II (WWII), when politicians and academics began to recognize the power of the media to shape public conversation. In the United States, it was the Commission on Freedom of the Press that pointed out in its 1947 report that democracy essentially depends on a free flow of trustworthy information and a diversity of viewpoints. Siebert et al.'s (1956) premise that 'the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates' still finds traction today (p. 1). Journalism's roles need to be understood within the constraints of the relevant political, economic, and social–cultural contexts. Their four models, however, have invited much criticism over the years. Nerone (1995), for instance, argues that Siebert et al. defined the four theories from within one of the four theories – classical liberal.

As Christians et al. (2009) more recently note, most authors identify similar tasks of journalism in society: observation and information; participation in public life through commentary, advice, and advocacy; as well as the provision of access for a diversity of voices. Journalists are charged with acting in the roles of providing surveillance, forming opinion, setting the agenda, acting as a 'watchdog', acting as a messenger and public informant, and playing an active participant part in social life. The authors' own classification of normative approaches distinguishes among four basic media roles: monitorial, facilitative, collaborative, and radical. But even so, these roles, with the possible exception of the collaborative role, were articulated from within Western perspectives and Western notions of democracy.

By acknowledging a revolutionary and developmental role for journalists, Hachten (1981) was one of the first to recognize the need for alternative concepts that are better suited to many countries in the non-Western world. Several scholars from Asia, for instance, link the media's responsibility to the preservation of social harmony and respect for leadership, which urges journalists to restrain from coverage that could potentially disrupt social order (Masterton, 1996; Xiaoge, 2005). The discomfort that many scholars in the global South felt with the adoption of Western normative ideas was perhaps best articulated by Mehra (1989), who argued that 'unlike the individualistic, democratic, egalitarian and liberal tradition of Western political theory, some societies value their consensual and communal traditions with their emphasis on duties and obligations to the collective and social harmony' (p. 3).

As these excerpts from the extant literature demonstrate, we are left with a number of shortcomings when it comes to theorizing journalistic roles. First, analytical and normative traditions have had too little to do with one another. This has been a missed opportunity. Second, many students of journalistic roles take an intimate relationship between journalism and democracy for granted. Before considering a way forward, it is worth briefly considering how these shortcomings have left their mark on role-related scholarship.

While the normative and analytical traditions developed largely separately – for a variety of historical reasons (Park and Pooley, 2008) – their separation obscured important dimensions of journalistic roles. Journalistic roles have frequently been referred to as synonymous with journalistic functions, and roles could just as likely refer to journalists' intentions as to the kinds of content journalists produced. In brief, this failed to distinguish – and make theoretical connections – among normative roles, cognitive roles, practiced roles, and imagined roles, or more broadly, between role orientation and role performance. We theorize about these kinds of roles and their relationship elsewhere; but what is most relevant here is that much of early role-related scholarship failed to fully grasp how roles functioned as institutional norms, indexed to the legitimacy structures of the broader society. Journalism as an institution has found legitimacy, and journalists have found direction for their work in socially situated and discursively constructed norms.

Thus, we can see, for example, how the Liberal hegemony in the West has led to a hierarchy of journalistic roles. Liberalism has made stark contrasts between the public sphere, which includes political life, and the private sphere, which includes the home and consumption (Donohue, 2003). Within Liberalism, the public sphere has taken precedence over the private sphere (Acker, 1990). Journalists have discursively reproduced

this social hierarchy as institutional normative roles. Since politics and democracy are seen as most important, the field has been oriented toward the political functions of the news, with the result that journalism's contribution to the domain of everyday life is pushed to the margins of the debate. Journalists root their legitimacy within the roles of guarding the public interest, holding powers to account, turning public attention to matters of common interest, and incorporating a plurality of viewpoints (Norris and Odugbemi, 2010) with the ultimate goal to form a public that is capable of collective self-governance (George, 2013).

This 'hegemonic model of journalism' recognizes the journalist as an independent public-spirited verifier of factual information as the superego of the news industry, while alternative forms of journalism were cast as the crude 'other' to proper journalism (Nerone, 2013: 446). This is particularly surprising when considering the long tradition of uses and gratifications research, which has identified a number of audience demands journalism caters to in addition to its political functions, including companionship, arousal, relaxation, escape, entertainment, and social interaction (Rubin, 1981). Journalists still practiced alternative roles; however, they have struggled to articulate a normative basis for these roles in the absence of an obvious linkage to Liberalism's privileged political sphere.

Thus, the first shortcoming has led into the second. Western journalism scholarship has reproduced this hierarchy, privileging a journalistic world that is narrower than that which resides in practice. Zelizer (2013) has a point when she argues that 'the idea that democracy is the lifeline of journalism has not been supported on the ground' (p. 465). Journalism has always extended beyond the democratic land – in fact, journalism within democracy is enjoyed only by a minority of the world's population. Zelizer therefore concludes that the centrality of democracy has generated undemocratic journalism scholarship, by which variants of journalisms most germane to the core of democratic theory have been privileged over those that are not.

Journalistic roles have been studied in democratic contexts for the most part and studied relative to news about political life. Understandably, this situation has contributed to a normalization of Western ideals and practices of journalism as the 'professional' standard against which journalism in the non-Western world was gauged. As scholarly doctrine, journalism's existential relationship with democracy is hardly challenged. James Carey famously argued in 1996, 'Journalism is another name for democracy or, better, you cannot have journalism without democracy'. The Western model of journalism assumes that news media are relatively autonomous from the state and that journalists are independent agents engaged in an antagonistic relationship to power while representing the people (Nerone, 2013). The model was exported to the developing world along with many other Western beliefs and practices – a transfer of occupational ideology from the West to countries in the global South (Golding, 1977). Thus, when studies find substantial similarities in journalistic roles around the world, it may well be that these similarities are produced by the normative expectations of the Western standard model that informed most of the questionnaires and which may have caused the journalists' answers to converge with that model (Josephi, 2005).

One way forward is to revisit assumptions about the binary of the public and private sphere. Theorists have challenged this public–private dichotomy in at least a couple of

ways. One approach has been to point to civic life – with its dynamic community life and nongovernmental voluntary associations – as a kind of third sphere, neither fully political nor private (Putnam, 2000). Another way has been to cut through the public–private binary and to instead focus on a domain of everyday life – a domain that cuts across spheres and points to the lived realities of all persons (Gardiner, 2000; Shotter, 1993). This includes realities such as securing daily provisions, self-maintenance, and entertainment. Through it, all persons must manage their emotional state and negotiate their identity. These everyday activities are not without implications for politics and public life, but also not reducible to the political. Hence, we use *everyday life* here to refer to a broad array of non-political news and to journalists' role relative to this domain.

The discourse of journalistic roles

Journalistic roles have no true essence; they exist because and as we talk about them. In order to be intelligible, they exist as part of a wider framework of meaning – of a discourse. Hence, we conceptualize journalistic roles – and journalism by extension – as discursively constituted. As structures of meaning, they set the parameters of what is desirable in a given institutional context, and they are subject to discursive (re)creation, (re)interpretation, appropriation, and contestation. At the core of this discourse is journalism's identity and locus in society. In this view, journalistic roles represent and articulate discursive positions that compete in a relational structure – the discursive field. This field is the site where various actors struggle over discursive authority in conversations about the meaning and role of journalism in society. In other words, the discourse of journalistic roles is the central arena where journalistic culture and identity is reproduced and contested; it is the place where the struggle over the preservation or transformation of journalism's identity takes place. As a result of this contest, dominant positions in the discourse of journalism crystallize as institutional norms and practices.

We have laid out elsewhere a theory of journalistic roles as discursive constructs (Hanitzsch and Vos, 2017). Suffice it say here that the discourse of journalistic roles legitimizes and delegitimizes certain norms, ideas, and practices. While journalists are the central discursive agents in the articulation of roles (Zelizer, 1993), they do so in an exchange with interlocutors in the broader society and by using a discursive toolkit that the broader society recognizes as legitimate (Carlson, 2015). This is perhaps most obvious during occasions of paradigm repair, where journalists are forced to articulate their normative roles in the face of public scrutiny (Bennett et al., 1985). Normative roles are a source of struggle and can be renegotiated (Rimal and Lapinski, 2015), but they can also 'sediment' as the institutional framework of journalism (Howarth, 2000: 120). To the extent that journalism maintains a degree of autonomy, the field can even solidify around particular roles, creating 'professional' values that outweigh competing societal values (Christians et al., 2009; Schudson, 2001). Institutional roles, then, provide journalists with institutionally specific cognitive scripts for how they think about their own journalistic role during the course of their day-to-day work (Aldridge and Evetts, 2003).

In brief, institutional roles perform a double duty – they act as a source of institutional legitimacy relative to a broader society and, through a process of socialization, they

inform the cognitive toolkit that journalists use to think about their work (Schmidt, 2008, 2010). However, given the hierarchy of societal values that are indexed in normative roles, some journalistic roles have more discursive power than others. In fact, some roles – such as roles that address everyday life – are seemingly under-articulated. This reality, as we have suggested above, reflects not only the biases of the Western journalistic field but also the biases of Western scholars in the normative and analytical traditions. Journalism educators have rarely acknowledged the role they have played – as partners with journalistic practitioners – in articulating journalistic roles (Vos, 2012). With this in mind, we offer here a basis for conceptualizing a more inclusive range of journalistic roles. We acknowledge in doing so that our model cannot be universal. Our theorizing is tethered to the empirical world we know and study. Nevertheless, the ensuing framework is meant to expand the discourse about journalistic roles.

Journalism and the domain of political life

In the domain of political life, journalism addresses its audiences in their capacity as citizens. The purpose of journalism therefore is to provide citizens with the information they need to act and participate in political life and, if given a chance, to be free and self-governing (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001). On a normative level, Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) have identified five main functions and services of the media for political life: surveillance, agenda setting, political advocacy, holding officials to account, and providing incentives for citizens to learn. Christians et al. (2009) suggested a similar list of areas where journalism should contribute to political life: observation and information, participation in public opinion formation, and the provision of access. Ideally, argues Habermas (1989), political deliberation and the formation of public opinion take place in an open arena for public deliberation.

Such a view clearly emphasizes individual liberties and freedom, while other societies may prioritize collective needs and social harmony. Existing catalogues of media functions and services for political life do not sufficiently account for the variation in political cultures and socio-cultural value systems around the world. We therefore suggest a conceptual structure of journalistic roles that we believe is more attuned to the global diversity of co-existing visions of journalism. Based on an extensive review of the literature, we arrange ideal-typical roles of journalists within a circular structure to reflect similarities between roles. A given role bears more similarities with the roles next to it than with those farther away in Figure 1.

Overall, we distinguish between 18 roles that we think account for the universe of politically oriented roles of journalists in Western as well as in non-Western societies. These 18 roles map onto a higher order structure of six elementary functions of journalism addressing essential needs of political life: informational-instructive, analytical-deliberative, critical-monitorial, advocative-radical, developmental-educative, and collaborative-facilitative. Each of these functions carries three specific roles.

The *informational-instructive* function most closely pertains to the idea that citizens need to have the relevant information at hand to act and participate in political life. Central to this function is the understanding of journalism as an exercise of information transmission, information (re-)packaging, and storytelling. In the news media, the
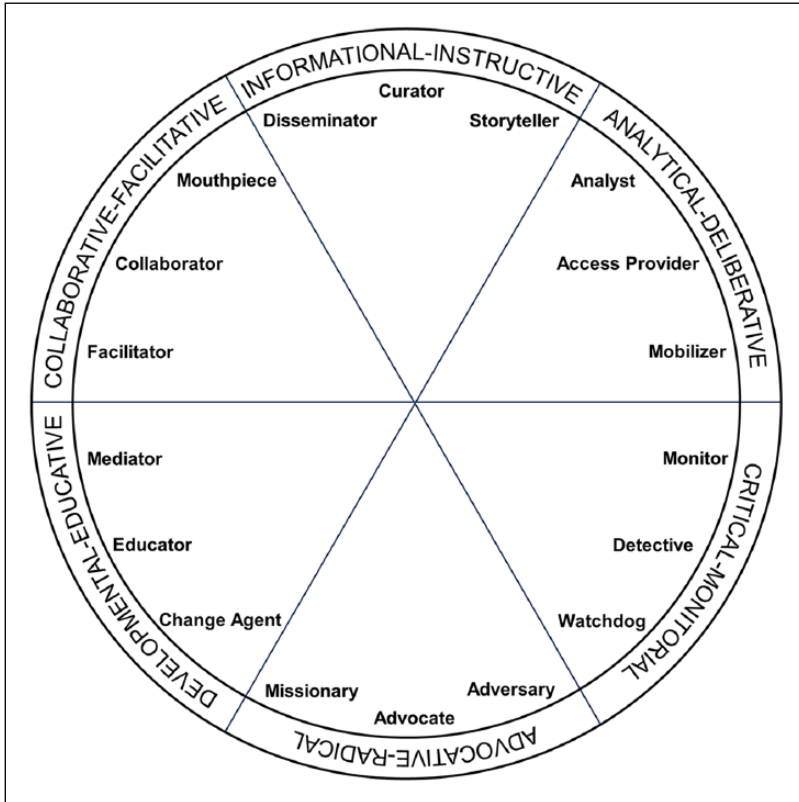
Figure 1. Journalistic roles in the domain of political life.

informational-instructive function is addressed by three roles, two 'classic' and one fairly recent:

- The *disseminator* role is closely associated with the idea of information distribution (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1986). Based on the idea that as journalists should, and can, report things 'as they are', they tend to see themselves as detached bystanders, adhering to strict neutrality. Journalists then often depend on official sources, serving society in the capacity of an 'official register' or a 'minute taker'.
- The *curator* is a relatively new role that has gained relevance in a time when information is available in abundance and can be shared via social media. The curating journalist finds, organizes, contextualizes, and shares the most relevant content on a given topic (Deshpande, 2013). In other words, curators identify, organize, and repackage information into deliverable packages and make it available for their users.
- The *storyteller*, or narrator, puts the world into perspective by providing explanation, background, and context – something that often gets lost in breathless 24/7

news. The narrator role places the news of the day into larger narratives that often extend over time, taking into account the past, the present, and the (envisaged) future.

The *analytical-deliberative* dimension pertains to journalistic roles that are politically more active and assertive by making a direct intervention in a political discourse (e.g. by news commentary), by engaging the audience in public conversation, by empowering citizens, or by providing means for political participation:

- The role of the *analyst* is primarily focused on providing analyses of events in the news (Johnstone et al., 1972). It places a strong emphasis on subjectivity and opinion, in a much more explicit manner than the storyteller, by tracing causes and predicting consequences.
- The *access provider* role features participative elements by providing the audience with a platform and a forum to express their views (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996). In so doing, the access provider aims at engaging the people in public conversation by giving the various stakeholders in society a chance to articulate their interests and thus contribute to public deliberation.
- The *mobilizer* role puts even more emphasis on political involvement by proactively encouraging audience members to participate in the political domain (Weaver et al., 2007). Embracing this role means to act as agent of empowerment (Romano, 2003) by framing the news 'in a way that invites people into civic activity and political conversation' (Rosen, 2000: 680).

The *critical-monitorial* function sits at the heart of the normative core of journalists' professional imagination in most Western countries. This dimension is grounded in the ideal of journalism acting as 'Fourth Estate', with journalists voicing criticism and holding powers to account and, in so doing, creating a critically minded citizenry (Christians et al., 2009: 30):

- The *monitor* is the most passive of the three critical-monitorial roles. This role corresponds with an understanding of journalists as critical observers of political conduct. The monitor role is not an active pursuit; it essentially responds to political misconduct as journalists happen to become aware of it.
- The role of the *detective*, by way of contrast, is defined through the investigative practices it employs to scrutinize claims and statements of the government and to gather information about issues journalists conceive as suspicious (Meyen and Riesmeyer, 2012; Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996). Detectives are the prototype of the 'investigative journalist', for whom investigative practice is at the heart of their professional identity. Another element of this role is verification, which has become increasingly central to electronic media in routines to authenticate material provided by external sources.
- The *watchdog* role is even more active and assertive by comparison. Journalists who embrace this role proactively scrutinize political and business leaders; they provide an independent critique of society and its institutions (McQuail, 2000).

> The watchdog's legitimacy to act in the political arena is most strongly anchored in journalism's institutional position vis-à-vis powers that be.

A defining feature of the *advocative-radical* function is the journalist's position toward loci of power in society – in other words, their 'power distance' (Hanitzsch, 2007: 373). Roles that belong to this domain compel journalists to conceive of themselves as 'participants' (Cohen, 1963: 20) in political discourse who bring an ideological bias to the discussion (Statham, 2007):

- *Adversary* journalists deliberately posture themselves as countervailing force to political authority (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1986). In this tradition, journalists often position themselves as 'mouthpiece of the people' (Chan and So, 2005), trying to give 'the people' a voice in the news (p. 73). Such a 'radical' role entails elements of hostility in the journalists' positioning toward the government (Christians et al., 2009: 31).
- The *advocate* considers herself a spokesperson for specific groups of people and their causes or – more generally – for the socially disadvantaged (Janowitz, 1975). Identification with a particular group is thus essential for this role, with journalists acting as campaigner, as 'lobbyist', as a 'voice for the poor' (Pintak and Nazir, 2013: 649), or as supporters of specific causes, such as the preservation of Arabic culture or the interests of Palestinians (Ramaprasad and Hamdy, 2006).
- The *missionary* role, first described by Köcher (1986), is primarily about the promotion of particular ideals, values, and ideologies. Different from the advocate, the missionary does not act on behalf of others but engages in campaigns out of a personal motivation. Journalists embracing this role may propagate a certain political ideology (Köcher, 1986) or cultural, spiritual, and moral values (Ramaprasad and Hamdy, 2006).

The *developmental-educative* dimension is similar to the advocative-radical function in that it is profoundly interventionist. It compels journalists not to stay apart from the flow of events but to participate, intervene, get involved, and promote social change (Hanitzsch, 2007). However, the developmental-educative dimension takes this intervention beyond the discursive realm of journalism by promoting real-world change:

- The *change agent* – a role that is particularly pertinent to transitional and developing societies – advocates for social change and drives political and social reform (Chan et al., 2004; Hanitzsch, 2011; Pintak, 2014). This role corresponds to the empowerment approach in development journalism, foregrounding quality of life, social equity, citizen participation in public life, and human development (Romano, 2005).
- The *educator* role most strongly embraces the pedagogic function of journalism, with journalists acting in the capacity as 'teachers' (Schramm, 1964: 140). Serving as educators, journalists raise public awareness and knowledge about a perceived problem (Statham, 2007).
- The role of the *mediator* is primarily concerned with social integration and reducing social tension (McQuail, 2000). The mediator serves as a bridge especially in

heterogeneous societies by reinforcing social harmony and attachment to society, by forging commonality of values, and by contributing to conflict resolution. A popular application of this role is 'peace journalism' (McGoldrick, 2000).

The *collaborative-facilitative* dimension, finally, entails an understanding of journalists acting as partners of the government and supporting it in their efforts to bring about development and social well-being (Christians et al., 2009; Hanitzsch, 2007). Journalists who embrace this role tend to be defensive of authorities and routinely engage in self-censorship; they often remain markedly paternalistic toward 'the people'. A collaborative-facilitative attitude may be forced upon journalists through means of coercion, but it can also be based on a shared commitment to mutually agreeable means and ends (e.g. 'development'; Christians et al., 2009):

- As *facilitators*, journalists feel it is their social responsibility to assist the government in its efforts to advance the social and economic development of the country (Wong, 2004). This approach to development journalism often emphasizes nation building and the preservation of national unity (Pintak and Nazir, 2013; Romano, 2003). Journalists in this tradition often voluntarily collaborate with governments that are seen as offering unity and stability (George, 2013).
- The *collaborator* goes much further, subscribing to the idea that as public communicators, journalists are not distinct from but part of the 'state apparatus'. In this capacity, they are expected to defend the government and its policy in a 'propagandist role' (Pasti, 2005: 99) or as 'agitators' (Wu et al., 1996: 544). Journalists tend to agree that press freedom should be limited according to the nation's economic priorities and development needs (Romano, 2005).
- The *mouthpiece* role is similar to the disseminator outlined above: Journalists very much draw on official information, which is then relayed to the people. In this view, it is the job of the journalist to provide legitimacy to the government by explaining political decisions to the people and guiding public opinion (Lee, 2001), for example, in the tradition of the Mexican 'oficialista' (Hallin, 2000: 99). The mouthpiece often ostensibly tries to 'improve communication' between officials and citizens (Chan and So, 2005: 73).

Journalism and the domain of everyday life

One of the most significant transformations of our time has been a remarkable shift from a media focus on public affairs to a focus on the domain of everyday life. Championing the values of market capitalism, the media increasingly emphasize the private and individual needs of consumers (Brunsdon et al., 2001; Taylor, 2002). Audiences are addressed less in their role as public citizens concerned with the social and political issues of the day, but rather in their role as clients and consumers whose personal fears, aspirations, attitudes, and emotional experiences become the center of attention (Campbell, 2004).

The ubiquity of lifestyle content, celebrity coverage, and other kinds of 'soft' news in the media is journalism's response to the call of modernity, driven by individualization and emancipatory value change (Hanusch and Hanitzsch, 2013). Processes of individualization

instigated a fundamental transformation of society, in which traditional social institutions, such as family, school, and church, are losing their authority to provide collective normative orientation (Beck, 1992). Although this change is more pronounced in Western market economies and post-industrial economies, it is not limited to these societies. In many parts of the world, traditional institutions continue to lose grip on people's lives, with the result that ways of life – or lifestyles – and identities have increasingly become a matter of individual choice.

At the same time, sociologists and political scientist are observing what Inglehart and Welzel (2005) call an 'emancipative value change' (p. 1). Based on a large number of cross-national surveys, Inglehart (1997) noted a shift from survival values to self-expression values in post-industrial societies, which brings increasing emancipation from both religious and secular-rational authority and a stronger emphasis on self-expression values. This value change goes along with an emphasis on freedom of choice and equality of opportunities, priorities for lifestyle liberty, gender equality, and personal autonomy (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). Emancipative values are more evident in post-industrial societies, where economic resources for survival are generally secured. Such increase in wealth and prosperity leads to more options and flexibility in shaping one's identity and lifestyle, especially when lifestyles are articulated through visible attributes such as purchasable products and patterns of leisure-time activities (Chaney, 2001; Taylor, 2002).

Hence, in a time and in places where traditional social institutions cease to provide a normative framework, the media have to some extent take over this role, filling the void through providing collective orientation in an increasingly multi-optional society (Hanusch and Hanitzsch, 2013). Given the historical, discursive toolkit available to them, it should be unsurprising that journalists have been slow to articulate this role in normative terms. Nevertheless, journalism regularly provides help, advice, guidance, and information about the management of self and everyday life through consumer news and 'news-you-can-use' content (Eide and Knight, 1999; Underwood, 2001). This advice, guidance, and information can come with profound consequences. For example, it can contribute to individuals with severe body image issues, resulting in death (Grabe et al., 2008). It can lead to awareness about one's sexual orientation, leading to emancipation (or social judgment). Public health and public policy can be interconnected with one's identity, with consequences for one's emotional well-being and consumption behaviors. Everyday life is not devoid of political significance.

It is for these reasons that we believe journalism also carries out a number of important roles in the domain of everyday life. We are certainly not the first to make this point: A large number of studies in the uses and gratifications tradition have pointed to the non-political utility of news (Rubin, 1981). However, this line of research has not been sufficiently incorporated into the study of journalistic roles. Following from the above dimensions of social transformation, the roles of journalism in everyday life map onto three interrelated spaces of everyday needs: consumption, identity, and emotion.

The area of *consumption* has gained currency in journalism as the news media are increasingly addressing audience members in their capacity as consumers by featuring various kinds of purchasable products and patterns of leisure-time activities, thus contributing to the construction of consumer lifestyles (Chaney, 2001). Consumption is closely related to performative aspects of lifestyles that engender a great deal of
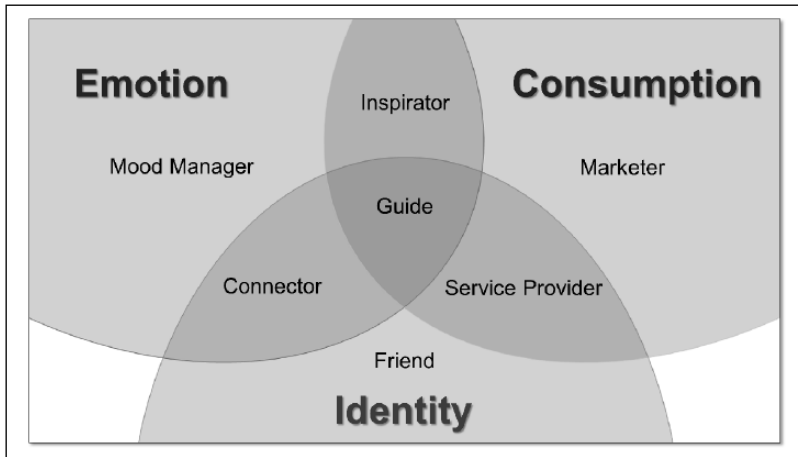
Figure 2. Journalistic roles in the domain of everyday life.

consistency in individuals' behaviors. Taylor (2002), for instance, argues that lifestyles are 'performed improvisations in which authenticity is an entity which one can manufacture' (p. 481).

The area of *identity* becomes more relevant for the news media as identity work in modern societies is more than ever an individual exercise. Individuals are no more 'born into' their identities; identity is transformed from a 'given' into a 'task', charging the actors with the responsibility for performing that task and for the consequences (Bauman, 2000: 31). In other words, identity work in modern societies is not necessarily predetermined by social origin and social background, but is increasingly an individual responsibility. People are not only confronted with an increased plurality of options, they also have more flexibility in choosing between them. This is where they need orientation for the management of self and everyday life, and for developing as sense of identification and belonging.

Finally, the area of *emotion* is concerned with the affective, emotional, and mood-related experience of news consumption, which is established as a major determinant of selective exposure to media content (Zillmann and Bryant, 1985). In this view, journalism can contribute to affect regulation by helping individuals regulate mood and arousal and can stimulate rewarding social and cognitive experiences that contribute to emotional well-being in more complex and sustainable ways (for instance, by fostering a sense of insight, meaning, and social connectedness; Bartsch and Schneider, 2014). The emotional features of journalism are clearly growing in importance but greatly underestimated in its appeal and, therefore, little appreciated by journalism researchers (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013). As we will argue below, emotion in the news goes much beyond mere entertainment and relaxation but provides inspiration and a sense of belonging (Rubin, 1981).

Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between these three areas and the journalistic roles that correspond with them. We propose a classification of seven ideal-typical roles of journalists in the domain of everyday life. Some of these roles are 'purer' in the sense that

they more generically cater to the needs in one of the three specific areas – consumption, identity, and emotion – while other roles are addressing two or all areas simultaneously:

- The *marketer* is most closely tied to the sphere of consumption. Journalists who embrace this role promote lifestyles and purchasable products of various kinds, thereby potentially serving their advertising clients (Meyen and Riesmeyer, 2012).
- The *service provider* caters to a hybrid social identity – partly citizen, partly consumer, and partly client (Eide and Knight, 1999). Service providers offer practical information and advice on services and products. Different from marketers, they are more independent and act on behalf of their 'clients', that is, the members of their audience.
- The *friend* is the role that most typically addresses audience needs in the area of identity. As a companion, and sometimes even therapist, the friend helps audience members navigate the difficult task of identity work and the complex world of social relationships (Rubin, 1981).
- The *connector*, at the intersection of identity and emotion, connects the members of the audience to their communities, and to society in the broadest sense, by providing a sense of belonging, and by contributing to shared consciousness and identity.
- The *mood manager*, who is most genuinely placed in the realm of emotion, primarily contributes to the management and regulation of emotional well-being (Zillmann, 1988). In this capacity, journalists may act as entertainer (Johnstone et al., 1972), or more generally as provider of positive experience.
- The *inspirator* addresses the needs of audiences in both the area of consumption and emotion. In this role, journalists provide inspiration for new lifestyles and products, and they tie them to a positive attitude toward life.
- The *guide*, finally, addresses the needs in all three areas and is, therefore, the most generic role of journalists in the domain of everyday life. Guides, or navigators, provide orientation in an increasingly multi-optional world in daily life, for example, by presenting exemplars of (more or less) desired lifestyles through celebrity news (Hanusch and Hanitzsch, 2013).

Conclusion: Journalists' roles – Discourses in a field of struggles

Despite their centrality to our understanding of journalism's place in society, normative and analytical traditions of conceptualizing journalistic roles have come to a point where they increasingly disconnect with journalism's very realities in a global world. We argue that roles of journalists have been discussed primarily within a Western framework oriented toward the media's contribution to democracy and citizenship. In so doing, journalism scholarship privileges a vision of journalism that is narrower than reality, and it fails to account for distinctive approaches in non-democratic and non-Western contexts, as well as for forms of journalism beyond political news.

We conceptualize journalistic roles as discursive constructions of journalism's identity and place in society. Over time, these roles have solidified as institutional norms and

practices. As structures of meaning, they set the parameters of what is desirable in a given institutional context, and they are subject to discursive (re)creation, (re)interpretation, appropriation, and contestation. Hence, the institution of journalism as it exists today represents the 'state of play' in an ongoing struggle over discursive authority in conversations about the meaning and role of journalism in society. We have argued that the discourse of journalistic roles pertains to two important areas: political life and everyday life.

To be sure, these two domains may be analytically distinct, but they are increasingly interrelated in practice. More than ever, emotion plays into political news, and many functions placed in the political domain have important consequences in everyday life. Furthermore, journalists usually embrace multiple roles simultaneously, often depending on situation and context. Not always do these roles harmonize with one another, which is then a source of role conflicts.

Overall, we hope that the conceptual approach advanced in this essay can bring some clarity to discussions of journalistic roles and set the stage for subsequent additional normative theorizing about under-articulated roles. Our framework is deliberately tailored to the realities in Western and non-Western contexts, and it is more inclusive by also considering branches of journalism other than political news. Not only does such a view make journalism scholarship more 'democratic' (Zelizer, 2013) and less phobic of 'soft news', it also accounts for the fluid nature of journalistic roles in a changing world (p. 469).

Funding

References

Acker J (1990) Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender & Society* 4: 139–158.

Aldridge M and Evetts J (2003) Rethinking the concept of professionalism: The case of journalism. *British Journal of Sociology* 54: 547–564.

Bartsch B and Schneider FM (2014) Entertainment and politics revisited: How non-escapist forms of entertainment can stimulate political interest and information seeking. *Journal of Communication* 64: 369–396.

Bauman Z (2000) *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.

Beck U (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: SAGE.

Bennett WL, Gressett L and Haltom W (1985) Repairing the news: A case study of the news paradigm. *Journal of Communication* 35: 50–68.

Blumler JG and Gurevitch M (1995) *The Crisis of Public Communication*. New York: Psychology Press.

Brunsdon C, Johnson C, Moseley R and Wheatley H (2001) Factual entertainment on British television: The Midlands TV Research Group's "8–9 Project". *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 4: 29–62.

Campbell V (2004) *Information Age Journalism: Journalism in an International Context*. London: Arnold.

Carey J (1996) Where journalism education went wrong. *Presentation at the Middle Tennessee State University*. Available at: https://lindadaniele.wordpress.com/2010/08/11/carey-where-journalism-education-went-wrong/

Carlson M (2015) Metajournalistic discourse and the meanings of journalism: Definitional control, boundary work, and legitimation. *Communication Theory*. Epub ahead of print 4 November. DOI: 10.1111/comt.12088.

Chan JM, Pan Z and Lee FLF (2004) Professional aspirations and job satisfaction: Chinese journalists at a time of change in the media. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 81: 254–273.

Chan MJ and So CYK (2005) The surrogate democracy function of the media: Citizens' and journalists' evaluations of media performance in Hong Kong. In: Romano A and Bromley M (eds) *Journalism and Democracy in Asia*. London; New York: Routledge, pp. 66–80.

Chaney D (2001) From ways of life to lifestyle: Rethinking culture as ideology and sensibility. In: Lull J (ed.) *Culture in the Communication Age*. London: Routledge, pp. 75–88.

Christians CG, Glasser TL, McQuail D, et al. (2009) *Normative Theories of the Media: Journalism in Democratic Societies*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Cohen BC (1963) *The Press and Foreign Policy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Commission on Freedom of the Press (1947) *A Free and Responsible Press – A General Report on Mass Communication: Newspapers, Radio, Motion Pictures, Magazines, and Books*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Deshpande P (2013) Why curators matter now more than ever. *The Huffington Post*, 3 December. Available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/pawan-deshpande/why-curators-matter-now-m_b_4037594.html

Donohue KG (2003) *Freedom from Want: American Liberalism and the Idea of the Consumer*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Donsbach W and Patterson TE (2004) Political news journalists: Partisanship, professionalism, and political roles in five countries. In: Esser F and Pfetsch B (eds) *Comparing Political Communication: Theories, Cases, and Challenges*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 251–270.

Eide M and Knight G (1999) Public/Private service: Service journalism and the problems of everyday life. *European Journal of Communication* 14: 525–547.

Gardiner ME (2000) *Critiques of Everyday Life*. London: Routledge.

George C (2013) Diversity around a democratic core: The universal and the particular in journalism. *Journalism* 14: 490–503.

Golding P (1977) Media professionalism in the Third World: The transfer of an ideology. In: Curran J, Gurevitch M and Woollacott J (eds) *Mass Communication and Society*. London: Arnold, pp. 291–308.

Grabe S, Ward LM and Hyde JS (2008) The role of the media in body image concerns among women: A meta-analysis of experimental and correlational studies. *Psychological Bulletin* 134: 460–476.

Habermas J (1989) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Hachten WA (1981) *The World News Prism: Changing Media, Clashing Ideologies*. Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press.

Hallin DC (2000) Media, political power, and democratization in Mexico. In: Curran J and Park M-J (eds) *De-Westernizing Media Studies*. London: Routledge, pp. 97–110.

Hanitzsch T (2007) Deconstructing journalism culture: Towards a universal theory. *Communication Theory* 17: 367–385.

Hanitzsch T (2011) Populist disseminators, detached watchdogs, critical change agents and opportunist facilitators: Professional milieus, the journalistic field and autonomy in 18 countries. *International Communication Gazette* 73: 477–494.

Hanitzsch T and Vos TP (2017) Journalistic roles and the struggle over institutional identity: The discursive constitution of journalism. *Communication Theory* 27: 115–135.

Hanusch F and Hanitzsch T (2013) Mediating orientation and self-expression in the world of consumption: Australian and German lifestyle journalists' professional views. *Media, Culture & Society* 35: 943–959.

Howarth D (2000) *Discourse*. Buckingham: Oxford University Press.

Inglehart R (1997) *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Inglehart R and Welzel C (2005) *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Janowitz M (1975) Professional models in journalism: The gatekeeper and the advocate. *Journalism Quarterly* 52: 618–626.

Johnstone J, Slawski E and Bowman W (1972) The professional values of American newsmen. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36: 522–540.

Josephi B (2005) Journalism in the global age: Between normative and empirical. *Gazette* 67: 575–590.

Josephi B (2013) How much democracy does journalism need? *Journalism* 14: 474–489.

Köcher R (1986) Bloodhounds or missionaries: Role definitions of German and British journalists. *European Journal of Communication* 1: 43–64.

Kovach B and Rosenstiel T (2001) *The Elements of Journalism*. London: Atlantic Books.

Lasswell H (1948) *The Structure and Function of Communication and Society: The Communication of Ideas*. New York: Institute for Religious and Social Studies.

Lee C-C (2001) Servants of the state or the market? Media and journalists in China. In: Tunstall J (ed.) *Media Occupations and Professions: A Reader*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 240–252.

McGoldrick A (2000) Peace journalism – An introduction. In: Friedrich Ebert Foundation (ed.) *The Media in Conflicts – Accomplices or Mediators?* Bonn: FES, pp. 19–24.

McQuail D (2000) *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*. London: SAGE.

Masterton M (ed.) (1996) *Asian Values in Journalism*. Singapore: AMIC.

Mehra A (1989) *Press Systems in ASEAN States*. Singapore: AMIC.

Meyen M and Riesmeyer C (2012) Service providers, sentinels, and traders. *Journalism Studies* 13: 386–401.

Nerone J (1995) Revisiting four theories of the press. In: Nerone J (ed.) *Last Rights: Revisiting Four Theories of the Press*. Urbana, IL; Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, pp. 1–30.

Nerone J (2013) The historical roots of the normative model of journalism. *Journalism* 14: 446–458.

Norris P and Odugbemi S (2010) Evaluating media performance. In: Norris P (ed.) *Public Sentinel: News Media and Governance Reform*. Washington, DC: World Bank Publications, pp. 3–29.

Park DW and Pooley J (eds) (2008) *The History of Media and Communication Research: Contested Memories*. New York: Peter Lang.

Pasti S (2005) Two generations of contemporary Russian journalists. *European Journal of Communication* 20: 89–115.

Pintak L (2014) Islam, identity and professional values: A study of journalists in three Muslim-majority regions. *Journalism* 15: 482–503.

Pintak L and Ginges J (2008) The mission of Arab journalism: Creating change in a time of turmoil. *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 13: 193–227.

Pintak L and Nazir SJ (2013) Pakistani journalism: At the crossroads of Muslim identity, national priorities and journalistic culture. *Media, Culture & Society* 35: 640–665.

Putnam RD (2000) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Ramaprasad J and Hamdy NN (2006) Functions of Egyptian journalists: Perceived importance and actual performance. *International Communication Gazette* 68: 167–185.

Rimal RN and Lapinski MK (2015) A re-explication of social norms, ten years later. *Communication Theory* 25: 393–409.

Romano A (2003) *Politics and the Press in Indonesia: Understanding an Evolving Political Culture*. London: Routledge.

Romano A (2005) Asian journalism: News, development and the tides of liberalization and technology. In: Romano A and Bromley M (eds) *Journalism and Democracy in Asia*. London: Routledge, pp. 1–14.

Rosen J (2000) Questions and answers about public journalism. *Journalism Studies* 1: 679–683.

Rubin AM (1981) An examination of television viewing motivations. *Communication Research* 8: 141–165.

Schmidt VA (2008) Discursive institutionalism: The explanatory power of ideas and discourse. *Annual Review of Political Science* 11: 303–326.

Schmidt VA (2010) Taking ideas and discourse seriously: Explaining change through discursive institutionalism as the fourth 'new institutionalism'. *European Political Science Review* 2: 1–25.

Schramm, W (1964) *Mass Media and National Development: The Role of Information in Developing Countries.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Schudson M (2001) The objectivity norm in American journalism. *Journalism* 2(2): 149–170.

Shotter J (1993) *Cultural Politics of Everyday Life: Social Constructionism, Rhetoric and Knowing of the Third Kind*. Toronto, ON, Canada: University of Toronto Press.

Siebert FS, Peterson T and Schramm W (1956) *Four Theories of the Press: The Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility, and Soviet Communist Concepts of What the Press Should Be and Do*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Statham P (2007) Journalists as commentators on European politics: Educators, partisans or ideologues? *European Journal of Communication* 22: 461–477.

Taylor L (2002) From ways of life to lifestyle: The 'ordinari-ization' of British gardening lifestyle television. *European Journal of Communication* 17: 479–493.

Tong J (2011) *Investigative Journalism in China: Journalism, Power, and Society*. London: Continuum.

Underwood D (2001) Reporting and the push for market-oriented journalism: Media organizations as business. In: Bennett WL and Entman RM (eds) *Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 99–116.

Vos TP (2012) 'Homo Journalisticus': Journalism education's role in articulating the objectivity norm. *Journalism* 13: 435–449.

Wahl-Jorgensen K (2013) The strategic ritual of emotionality: A case study of Pulitzer Prize-winning articles. *Journalism* 14: 129–145.

Weaver DH (ed.) (1998) *The Global Journalist: News People around the World*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.

Weaver DH and Wilhoit GC (1986) *The American Journalist*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Weaver DH and Wilhoit GC (1996) *The American Journalist in the 1990s: U.S. News People at the End of an Era*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Weaver DH and Willnat L (eds) (2012) *The Global Journalist in the 21st Century*. New York: Routledge.

Weaver DH, Beam RA, Brownley BJ, et al. (2007) *The American Journalist in the 21st Century: U.S. News People at the Dawn of a New Millennium*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Wong K (2004) Asian-based development journalism and political elections: Press coverage of the 1999 general elections in Malaysia. *Gazette* 66(1): 25–40.

Wright WR (1960) Functional analysis and mass communication. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 24: 610–613.

Wu W, Weaver D and Johnson OV (1996) Professional roles of Russian and U.S. journalists: A comparative study. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 73: 534–548.

Xiaoge X (2005) *Demystifying Asian Values in Journalism*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish.

Zelizer B (1993) Journalists as interpretive communities. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 10: 219–237.

Zelizer B (2013) On the shelf life of democracy in journalism scholarship. *Journalism* 14: 459–473.

Zillmann D (1988) Mood management through communication choices. *American Behavioral Scientist* 31: 327–341.

Zillmann D and Bryant J (1985) Affect, mood, and emotion as determinants of selective exposure. In: Zillmann D and Bryant J (eds) *Selective Exposure to Communication*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, pp. 157–190.

Author biographies

Thomas Hanitzsch is chair and professor of Communication in the Department of Communication Studies and Media Research at LMU Munich. A former journalist, his research focuses on global journalism cultures, war coverage, celebrity news, and comparative methodology.

Tim P Vos is chair and associate professor of Journalism Studies and Coordinator of Global Research Initiatives at the School of Journalism, University of Missouri. His research areas include media sociology, policy, and history. He is co-author of *Gatekeeping Theory* and co-editor of *Gatekeeping in Transition*.