

**Claudia MELLADO, Lea HELLMUELLER**  
**Journalistic Role Performance: Concepts, Contexts, and Methods**  
*Routledge, New York, 2017, 264 pp.*

For more than four decades, research into journalistic roles has been a study topic of the greatest international importance. Thus, after the pioneering works in the 1990s by professor David Weaver and his colleagues on journalism as a profession in the United States (Weaver, D. H. & Wilhoit, G. C. (1991). *The American journalist: A portrait of US news people and their work*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press; Weaver, D. & Wilhoit, C. (1996). *The American journalists in the 1990s. US news people at the end of an era*. New Jersey: Lawrence Elbaum Associates Publishers; Weaver, D. H., Beam, R. A., Brownlee, B. J., Voakes, P. S. & Wilhoit, G. C. (2009). *The American Journalist in the 21st Century: US News People at the Dawn of a New Millennium*. New York: Routledge) came similar studies within different contexts and countries (Weaver, D. H. & Wu, W. (1998). *The global journalist: News people around the world*. New York: Hampton Pr.; Weaver, D. H. & Willnat, L. (2012). *The global journalist in the 21st century*. New York: Routledge). Several international projects are currently focusing on research into the perceptions of professional roles underpinning each journalistic culture and into the manifestation of such roles within news content. Research is also being approached from a transcultural analysis perspective.

The book we are reviewing is set within the context of a project led by professor Claudia Mellado entitled "Journalistic Role Performance around the Globe". However, it is not a book containing a compilation of empirical studies resulting from the work done by the members of the research team. Instead, the editors have had the discernment to offer us a book whose aim is to provide anyone with an interest in research into the professional roles manifested in journalistic performance with a systematic methodological and conceptual corpus. In this respect, we would highlight the introductory pages dedicated to clarifying the concepts associated with the study of professional roles: role conception, role perception, role enactment and role performance (pp. 5-10), which lead us to the aim of the book: journalistic role performance.

The book is divided into three parts. The first six chapters are given over to the conceptualization of roles in journalistic performance from different viewpoints. In chapter 1, research into role conceptions is critically reviewed. Included within this review are Anglo-Saxon contributions as well as European studies and those conducted within non-Western contexts. Chapter 2 addresses the relationship between professional roles and the historical and social contexts within which they originate and are enacted, making the step from the theorization of roles as ideal types to roles as real historical concepts. Chapter 3 of this part of the book looks at what implications the conception of the audience as citizens or consumers has for the study of professional roles, drawing our attention to the relationship between the demands of the public and of news making. The chapter on epistemologies and professional roles (Chapter 4) brings us to one of the most interesting objects of study in relation to professional roles; the gap between role conception (the ideals expressed by journalists) and role enactment in news content, and the strategies that need to be developed in order to approach their analysis. Professional roles tell us about the functions of journalism in democratic systems, and chapter 5 develops the relationships between role performance and the normative theories of the media. The first part of this book concludes with a chapter devoted to one of the fundamental challenges for the advancement of research into journalistic roles: the conceptualization of role performance in a multi-platform journalistic ecosystem.

The second part of the book is given over to the contextualization of journalistic role performance through four chapters dealing with how different social and professional factors shape professional role performance. News routines are one of the elements that need to be considered in order to understand role performance (chapter 7). Another contextual determinant of journalistic role performance is the dominant institutional logic, which nowadays is the logic of networks (chapter 8). Chapter 9 reflects on the need to consider role performance as a social

phenomenon that is not a monopoly of either the media or journalists, since other social agents have a role to play that is worth investigating. Lastly, chapter 10 discusses the issue of whether the institutional perspective and editorial logic should be included in the framework of analysis of role performance, the aim of which would be to overcome the constraints of research focused on an individualistic conception of professionalism when studying role performance within non-Western contexts.

The final part of the book shows us the different methodological approaches to empirical research into role performance. Chapter 11 describes the different mixed quantitative designs for research into the gap between role conceptions and their manifestation in news content. Chapter 12 proposes a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The last two chapters show how discourse analysis or liquid content analysis are alternatives to the dominant tradition of content analysis.

One of the risks of collective books is the lack of a thread between the different chapters. In this book, however, we find that the editors have done an extraordinary job of coordination; they have managed to get the range of authors –all of whom are internationally renowned experts– to write their chapters in a way that follows the lines of argument presented in the introduction.

In conclusion, *Journalistic Role Performance: Concepts, Contexts, and Methods* may become an essential work of reference for researchers approaching the study of journalistic models and cultures. And, of course, I would venture to invite the editors to promote its publication in other languages, especially in Spanish.

**María Luisa HUMANES**

[mlhumanes@cct.urjc.es](mailto:mlhumanes@cct.urjc.es)

